

ABNEY  PARK'S

AIRSHIP PIRATES

RPG BASED ON THE SONGS OF
"CAPTAIN" ROBERT BROWN



BY PETER CAKEBREAD
& KEN WALTON

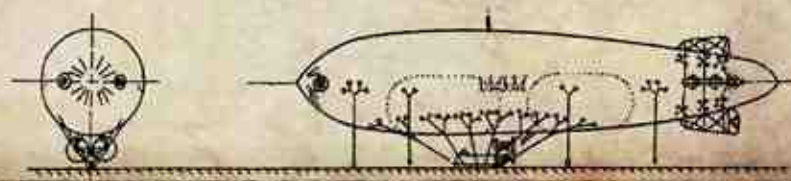




AIRSHIP PIRATES

A roleplaying game based on the songs of “Captain” Robert Brown

By Peter Cakebread & Ken Walton



AIRSHIP PIRATES



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ABNEY PARK

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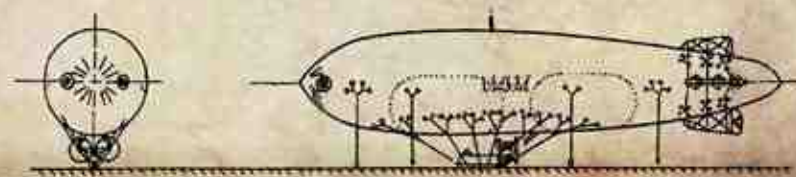
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Airship Pirates RPG website: <http://www.airshippirates.abneypark.com>



AIRSHIP PIRATES



"Show me a man who grew up with a happy childhood, no blood or broken glass in his youth, and I will show you a man who likely has nothing to contribute to society. They are the same wounds that could turn a man into a villain, that instead may turn him into a hero, or an artist, or a leader. Scars add character."

– Robert Brown, *The Wrath of Fate*

AIRSHIP PIRATE

Fire's high and the airbags tight,
Food's low but the skies are bright,
Props spinning all through the night,
We're low on cash but we seen another target.

Goggles down, and the cannons up,
My blood starts pumping as I drain my cup,
I give the wheel a spin and I turn this girl around,
We're way above ground but we're closing on our target!

Flying jib is filled with air,
East India ships filled with despair,
We even up, her broadsides bare,
Our cannons flare but it's just a show of muscle.

Steady on, she doesn't need to burn,
She tries to flee, and she tries to turn,
Grappling fire, we grab her hull,
We're starting to roll, but we've got her on a leash!

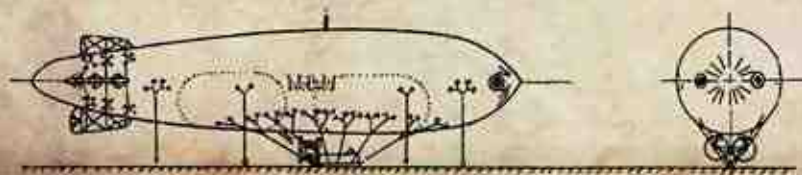
Expendable crew starts to reel her in,
Our swords are sharpened and we're ready to sin,
I'm three miles up, we're about to swing aboard,
My tethers made of leather so I'm not about to fall here.

A swish of air and my boots hit deck,
No cash, no fuel, no – not a speck!
Grape shot's made this bird a wreck,
And a glance below deck shows a crew of nuns and orphans!

*With a crew of drunken pilots, we're the only Airship Pirates!
We're full of hot air and we're starting to rise,
We're the terror of the skies, but a danger to ourselves.*

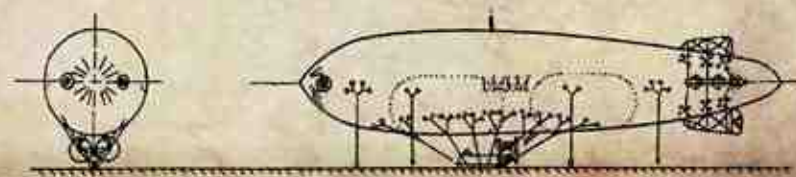
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– Abney Park



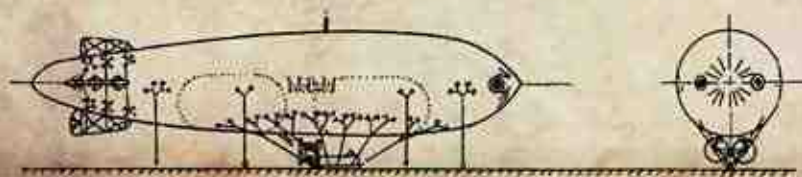


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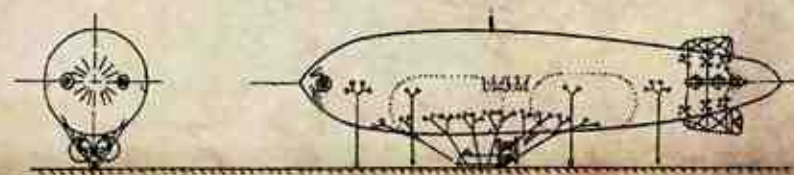


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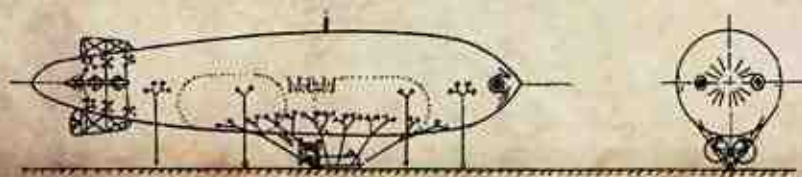
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THE TRIALS OF ADMIRAL VILLIERS

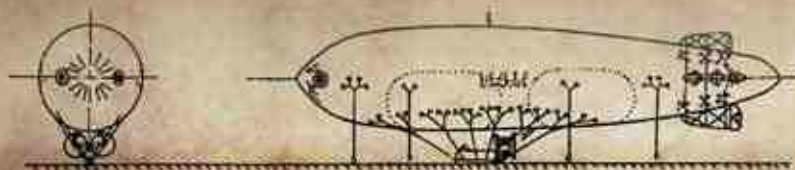
It wasn't an elegant sight. Vermin was sprawled in the chair. Strain as he might, he wasn't going anywhere.

"Tell me. Where are they hiding?"

The request was simple. The voice clipped. Cultivated.

Almost, but not quite, gentle.

Vermin thrashed to the side, trying to get a glimpse of the speaker. But to no avail. His bonds were too tight. Anyway, the inquisitor was overshadowed by



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THE TRIALS OF ADMIRAL VILLIERS

the looming automaton.

"Tell me," the voice demanded.

"I'm telling you nothin', you scurvy dog." Vermin spat, blood and tooth mixed in with the viscous mess.

"No manners. A pity."

A pause.

"We will find them, you know. The Emperor will not tolerate piracy. Will not tolerate it at all. You and your shipmates are finished."

The inquisitor stated it as fact. Vermin fell silent. His anger had left him. He slumped once more, defiantly silent.

"Very well. Make him talk."

The automaton didn't need to be asked twice. Where a man should have hands, the Peeler had malevolent whisks. Cruel barbed things. Abhorrences. They whirred into life and the peeler stepped forward. Vermin screamed.

The Admiral looked at the broken pirate.

"Get him a physician. Mend him, as best you can. Then have him moved to the Change Cage. It would be a shame to deny him our hospitality after he has been so helpful."

Content that the Peeler would follow his instructions, the Admiral left to ready his ship for action.

Sir Roderick Strickland-Villiers, an Admiral of the Imperial Air Navy, was satisfied. He had the information he needed.

It was an understatement to say Villiers had been frustrated these past few months. His squadron had been disbanded. His flagship, the *Invincible*, set to nurse-maiding duty – guarding munitions factories

in the northwestern blocks of the great Change Cage city, Desolation. What was his Emperor thinking? The old man was losing it.

Villiers had a fresh mission at last. And he had forged it himself. There was only one thing that mattered more than iron discipline in the Imperial Air Navy. Success. He would catch the freebooting rebels. Success in the matter was his ticket to freedom. Freedom to roam the skies as a pirate hunter once more.

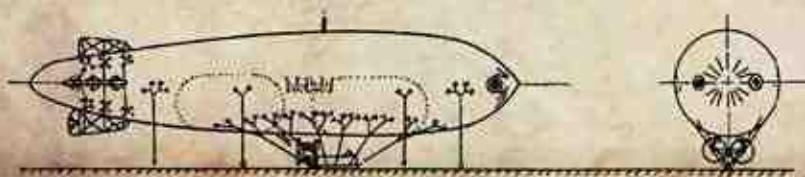
The *HMS Invincible* was swiftly readied for flight. The mighty vessel lifted, leaving behind its mundane patrolling duties, a task so below its station as to be derisory. The vast city below began to shrink, although her limits were still not visible. The airship would hardly reach any height, hopping across the desert, before beginning her descent. Her target, Isla Aether, was but a short journey away, shrouded in the nearby mountains.

Villiers was quietly pleased at his men's efficiency. He had brutally inculcated in them the need to perform their duties swiftly, diligently and without question. His bullying seemed to have paid off.

The *Invincible* was a fine ship of the line. A frigate, she fielded forty guns and had a crew numbering over one hundred and fifty, not including the huddled Air Marines. They would be confined below decks until their services were required.

Formidable indeed. More than a match for any pirate hulk. She displayed the gold inlaid, green flag of the Emperor, fluttering high above the Desolation City ensigns, all in turn tucked below the vast primary gasbag. Any Free Peoples sighting the *Invincible* could only wonder at her majesty. And hope she wasn't coming for them.

The senior pirates were unhappy, if not outright mutinous. They were sat around a large oak table, in





a sleazy underground bar. They were imbibing vast quantities of grog, as pirates are wont to do, snacking and quaffing as they debated the consequences of Vermin's capture.

"I'm just saying, we are putting a lot of trust in Vermin. He wouldn't be the first to be broken by the Peelers. And he won't be the last."

Raven-Skye Onbesonge stated what they had all been thinking. Onbesonge was a talented navigator, but she was new to the *Fancy* and still had to win over her crew. A tarot reader and dancer, there was something about her exotic demeanor that hinted of darkness. The last thing Grey wanted was for his crew to reject the Tortugan.

The *Fancy's* Captain frowned. Doubts after the event would do them no good at all.

"Come, Raven-Skye. Have some faith in your shipmate. If we can't trust each other, we are nothing."

"How can we trust each other? We're bloody pirates!" interjected Hinto. The burly strongman looked at his friend dubiously.

"We live by the code and we've sworn our kinship." Now irritated, Captain Grey turned on Hinto. "I hope the enormity of our pact isn't lost on you, Hinto. You are my right hand."

Hinto subsided, reddening. The ex-air marine hadn't meant to question his Captain.

Hinto was rescued by Rory. Rory Begg was a clown, acrobat, gadgeteer and the *Fancy's* trimsmen. Given to flashes of brilliance, he was as prone to calamity as he was to success – a worrying trait, considering his responsibilities included keeping the *Fancy* airworthy. His voice traveled down from the rafters. Rory was hanging upside down, swinging back and forth as he spoke.

"It isn't about loyalty. It's about how savage those

bastard Peelers can be. And are we really pirates? We're a passable circus troupe, for sure. But we've hardly made our mark in the world of piracy."

Grey sighed. Bernadette kneaded his shoulders, trying to soothe him. Bernadette Neuf would do anything for her Captain. She despised her own willingness to serve, she knew it was a function of her programming, a hangover from her doll days. But she placated herself with the thought that at least she was serving a good man.

Grey spoke patiently, as if to children.

"We may not have the fame of the *Ophelia*. Or the menace of Kingston Hairhand and his terrible cutthroats. To be sure, we haven't even the reputation of Frinter "The Gentleman" Maguire. But we *are* pirates!"

He was now animated, passion filling his voice.

"And what's more, we have something the Imperials can only dream of..."

He looked triumphant.

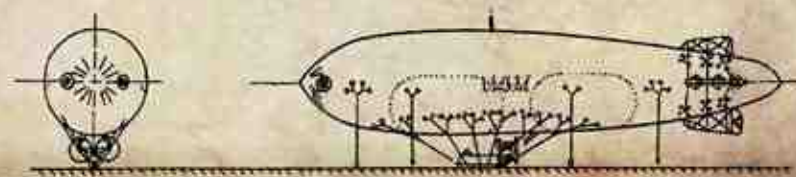
"...we have style!"

Rory chose that moment to fall from the beam from which he was hanging. He fell awkwardly, landing in a tangled heap as he smashed onto the hard table. He cried out in pain. All the drinks were upended, glasses smashed, the platters sent flying.

"Style?" muttered Onbesonge. "Heaven help us all."

The lookouts on the frigate had sighted Isla Aether a while ago. It wasn't hard. The *Invincible* had descended down below the cloud cover, the majestic wings of the Sierra Nevada Mountains almost funneling them toward the Skyloft city.

Any regular person approaching Isla Aether was awe-struck by the sheer beauty of the place. The Skyloft



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had taken to the air in order to save themselves from the first Emperor, but nothing about Isla Aether suggested that they had hurried.

The city was perched atop snow-capped Mount Witney. The dwellings were set upon a magnificent platform, roughly circular in shape and wrought to last. Although the city hadn't moved in an age, underneath the platform mighty gas bags bulged – a reminder that even the most settled of the Skyloft might be forced to flee.

The slopes below the mountain were home to an arrangement of wonderful terraced farms. The farm plateaus were connected to the main city by clockwork cabins. Suspended from the city edge, some of these cable-cabins brimmed with fresh produce as they ascended. Others ferried traded goods to and from the Neobedouin caravans far below. Heated greenhouses glittered in the sun.

Isla Aether itself was a maze of wonders. At the center of the maze was the sturdy peak. The platform combined warrens of moorings, airdocks, hangars, private houses and saloons with an abundance of larger complexes – twisted towers, mushroom-shaped palaces and stately mercantile bazaars.

The lifeblood of the Aetherians was trade. Merchants only had to provide papers to show that their goods were from Isla Aether and the price of the cargo would rise, perhaps even double. Quality was the watchword aboard the city platform. Any merchant plying second-rate wares or falsifying authentications could expect swift, and invariably unpleasant, justice.

Traffic filled the air around the city. The lookouts aboard the *Invincible* couldn't identify anything as large as their intended prey, but were astonished to see individual Portnoys, tri-planes, micro-gliders, and a host of more unlikely looking contraptions, buzzing around the city's airspace. The Aetherians were consumed with the joy of flight and the wealthier

inhabitants all seemed to have some personal means of getting airborne and going for a jaunt.

A regular person couldn't help but be amazed.

Admiral Strickland-Villiers was no regular person.

Vain, arrogant and possessing a sadistic streak as wide as an ocean, Villiers despised the place already. It represented two of the things he hated the most (and his list of hates was an extensive one). Innovation and piracy. The place reeked of change and rebellion. Why didn't the Emperor declare war on the scum? Obliterate them once and for all. It was beyond the Admiral. One day they would all pay for their freewheeling heresy. And on that day it would be Admiral Sir Roderick Strickland-Villiers who led the charge, hunting down each and every one of the odious rabble.

The thought caused the ghost of a smile to trace across his face.

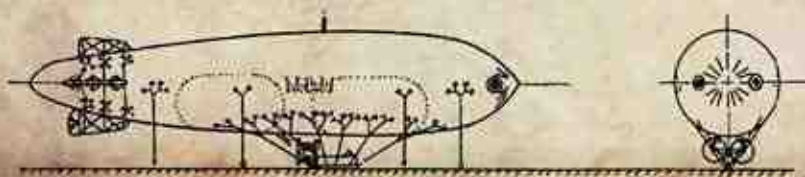
"Ah, well," he mused to the trembling midshipman who stood beside him. "One day, boy, we will fire this hellhole. But today we must content ourselves with the *Flight of Fancy*. We will hang every last one of the jackanapes we find aboard that pirate heap. What do you say, Master Hopkins? What do you say?"

"Y-yes, yes, S-sir," agreed the youngster. The terrified midshipman was caught between his preoccupation with maintaining his watch, the vicinity of Admiral Villiers's "pet" sabre-tooth, Bast, and his fear of attracting Villier's wrath by failing to show enthusiasm for the mission. "W-we shall h-hang them all, Sir."

Villiers noticed the young midshipman staring at Bast.

"Magnificent, isn't she?"

The Admiral visibly preened as he considered the animal. Bast was one of the specially bred giant beasts, designed to repopulate the wilds. Killing machines with a taste for human flesh. Bast was a prize specimen. She had been carefully bred, hand-





reared and then painstakingly trained over years, by Sir Roderick himself. Such dedication was required to prevent the beast from reverting to type and shredding all and sundry in a murderous spree of violence.

While the training meant Bast tolerated Villiers, the same could not be said as far as the rest of the *Invincible's* crew were concerned. Sailors had been fatally savaged by the big cat and all aboard were afraid of her. She lazily licked her black maw, fangs gleaming as she flicked her tongue along them. Her green eyes glinted dangerously. Midshipman William Hopkins wondered if the animal was considering biting him down in one gulp. Admiral Villiers brought him back to the matter in hand.

"Still, your job is to look ahead, lad. Make sure we are on course."

His thin lips stretched into a merciless sneer.

"Bast might be a fine specimen. But she shouldn't distract you from your duties. Report for punishment at first watch. Six lashes. Look sharp."

Villiers turned to his boatswain.

"Bring her down, Master Rhymes. We will moor her off there."

He pointed toward a berth, near the Customs Rooms. The Rooms were set above the crowded docks, hangars and warehouses. The administration tower was an architectural wonder in itself, frosty fairytale spires reaching upward, a magnificent complex of offices, fine guest rooms and apartments. The highest tower contained the Customs Rooms themselves – the spire of which was only dwarfed by the tip of the mountain.

"Ready a boat and I will go down and speak to whatever passes for an official amongst the bandits below."

The officer tugged at the levers and pulled on his signal ropes. The huge frigate began its descent while men scurried to inflate one of the dinghy bags for their Admiral.

The Admiral scowled at the pathetic little man.

The poor official was sweating profusely, tugging at his collars and mopping his brow.

"I assure you. The *Flight of Fancy* hasn't registered to land. There aren't even any scheduled flights, in or out of the city, for at least an hour."

"Well, they would hardly advertise the name of their vessel. What have you in of a similar class?"

"I will check, sir. But it is most irregular," protested the harassed little man.

"My marines will scour the docks. I swear if I find them I will hang you alongside them," Villiers threatened.

"But we are neutral, sir. And we have strict rules of confidentiality. There are procedures. Protocols."

"Damn your protocols! And damn your eyes, Sir!"

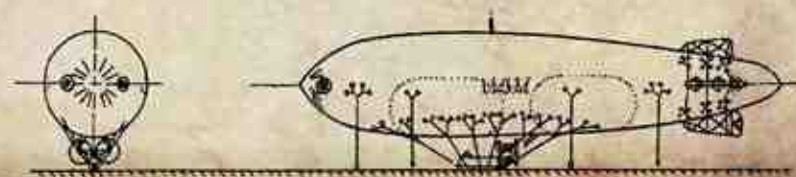
At that moment, Villiers saw movement on the docks below. An airship was sliding out of a hangar. There were no markings on its gasbag, and its ensign was furled. Villiers rubbed his eyes. The ensign was surely a folded Jolly Roger.

"No scheduled flights, be damned!" he roared. "I have them!"

The Admiral raced to his ship. His men were ready and prepared for a quick take off, and they slipped their mooring with impressive speed.

The *Invincible* quickly ascended. Their quarry was moving skyward, but its initial quick progress had given way to a more erratic ascent. Perhaps small squalls were effecting the pirate vessel. The much larger *Invincible* lifted smoothly, gaining good ground on the smaller ship.

"We shall have them on the other side, Master



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Rhymes. We shall have them.”

The pirates managed to reach the cloud cover, but it could hardly help them. The *Invincible* would be on them in moments.

The *Invincible* followed the pirates into the clouds. Only the most eagle-eyed observer would have noticed the swathe of dark cloth, dropping through the clouds toward the earth.

Admiral Villiers couldn't believe his luck. These rebellious oafs were incompetent. As the *Invincible* rose above the cloud cover, it was apparent the task would be an easy one. Their quarry was but a hundred yards away, ascending more slowly now, while the *Invincible* was rocketing skyward. No clever maneuver could save them. They were finished.

“Master Rhymes, prepare to turn to larboard and fire a broadside. Master Soakes, assemble the air marines. Grapples and harpoons at the ready. One shot and we board her. Look lively!”

Master Rhymes did the bravest thing he had ever done, in all his time in service.

“Begging your pardon, sir. She's not the *Fancy*, sir. She's an Aetherian. Merchant class.”

The air marines were assembling on deck now. The clanking sounds of the steamcannon being loaded echoed around the frigate.

The Admiral could now see clearly that the ship was a merchant. A similar model to the *Fancy*, but she was fatter around the bows. Her flag displayed the bright Aetherian colors and her crew and captain waved frantically to show that they meant no harm. Villiers flirted with the idea of giving the order to attack anyway. How he would love to blow them from the sky.

But even he had his limits. It was well known that the Skyloft cities had declared an injury to one, an injury

to all, and the Admiral balked at starting the war he so desired.

His fists clenched, his jaw tightened. He held his breath until he almost turned purple. Anger gave way to confusion. Confusion to resolution.

Slowly, perspective began to return to Villiers, and he started to calm.

“Stand down! Dispatch a dinghy. Check their papers. Then, back to the docks, full haste!” he commanded. “The pirates must still be skulking down there. We will have them before this day is out.”

It took the Admiral a while to realize exactly how wrong he was.

At a magnificent palace in the High Quarter of Desolation City, a faithful steward was overseeing the loading of a barge. Precious items were being loaded aboard the narrowboat.

“It is most irregular,” he said, uncertainly.

“My orders are clear,” replied Rory, “The Admiral was very specific. Load all the plate, valuable ornaments and artworks.” He looked down at the clipboard. “He doesn't need a mansion in Desolation *and* a wing of the Emperor's palace. He has gone up in the world.”

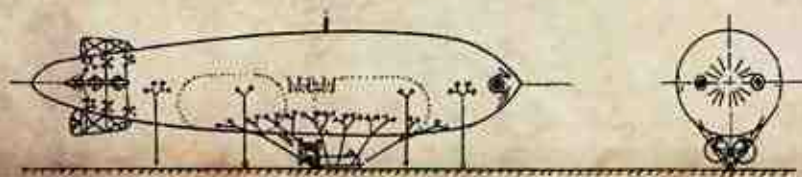
The steward was uneasy. It was true. Only this morning his master had boasted that he would be moving up to greater things. But why hadn't he been consulted? Well, not consulted, but at least given some warning. Some orders. Even just a hint of what was going on.

Rory looked at the steward kindly.

“He said he would send for you once he is settled.”

The faithful old servant gave in and ordered the household guards to assist with the loading.

The barge owner and his family were powerless to intervene. They were securely gagged and bound in the hold, concealed behind a growing stack of loot.





Bernadette stood, hands behind her back, smiling amiably at the Peeler.

"I have brought a doctor. For the prisoner," she explained.

Hinto was dressed, somewhat unconvincingly, as a doctor. He wore his best waistcoat and clutched a leather bag in his ham-sized fist.

The Peeler wasn't fooled for a second.

"The doctor is already here. You are lying."

One hand flipped down to reveal his weapon. The Peeler's other arm rose, whistle at the ready.

"Ok," said Bernadette. "We do it the hard way."

She brought her hands from behind her back, smoothly leveling the heavy harpoon gun. She pulled the trigger before the whistle could be blown. The Peeler lurched backward, its chest impaled by the barbed metal spear. Cogs, bolts and ichor tumbled out of the Peeler's chest as it whirred pathetically. Bernadette toppled it over. She and Hinto bundled into the cell.

The real doctor looked up. But he was looking into Hinto's fist and it quickly went dark for him.

Bernadette stooped to untie Vermin. Were they too late? The wily pirate opened an eye.

"You took your time, lass," he croaked.

He allowed himself a smile, before slipping back into sweet unconsciousness.

"We've done it!" the Tortugan marveled. "And in broad daylight!"

"I said we would," smiled Captain Grey. "It wouldn't have been possible at night. Look, even now, with dusk just past, the city is locked down. The blocks are sealed, the curfew in place."

"Still, it was a huge risk. What if the skullcaps hadn't worked?"

"Remember, faith in your shipmates." The pirate smiled. "Rory is one of the best gadgeteers about. Sure, his car collapses. But it's meant to. He is a clown, after all."

He glanced at the devices. They had fooled the autophrenometers, getting Raven-Sky and Captain Grey into the factories.

Now they just had to wait. A little longer. The guard tower was chilly. The original occupants slumped, unconscious, at their posts. They hadn't heard their assailants approach.

"Is it time?" asked Raven-Skye.

There was an almighty bang, then a flash that illuminated the city. The first explosion was followed by another. Then another. It seemed the whole northwestern Munitions Quarter was ablaze.

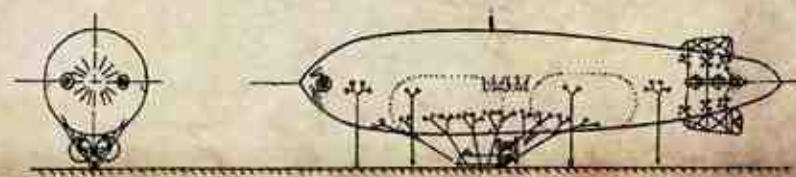
"Now," said Captain Augustus "Cloudburst" Grey. "Now it is time."

At that precise moment the *Flight of Fancy* hove into view as if on cue.

"Perfect timing," said Grey. "Our ride, I believe."

The Peelers scurried impotently below. They blew their whistles and swung their billy clubs. There was nothing they could do. Despite the blackout and curfew, city residents peered out at the escaping ship. The braver spectators gathered on the sidewalks. The furious Peelers turned on them violently, pleased to release their ire on someone. A few steamcannon roared into life. Heavy shot hurtled skywards. Much of it would fall on the city itself, further fueling the chaos.

"Steady as she goes, Master Hinto." Despite the



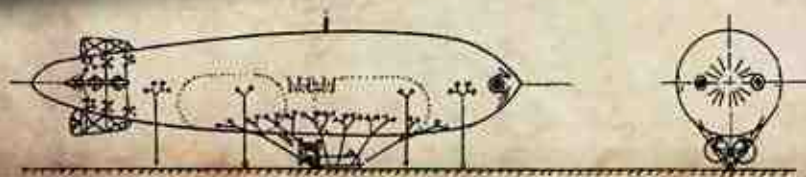
AIRSHIP PIRATES



THE TRIALS OF ADMIRAL VILLIERS

danger, Grey wanted to savor this moment. The ship smoothly sped forward, only gradually ascending. He fell to temptation, striking a heroic pose, foot placed forward on the bowsprit. Leaning over Desolation City, he surveyed the fires below.

This was what piracy was all about. His notoriety would soar. His deeds would be spoken of by all the Free Peoples. What's more, he had a cache of treasure, had humiliated Admiral Sir Roderick Strickland-Villiers, and he had struck a blow against the Empire. And this was only the beginning...

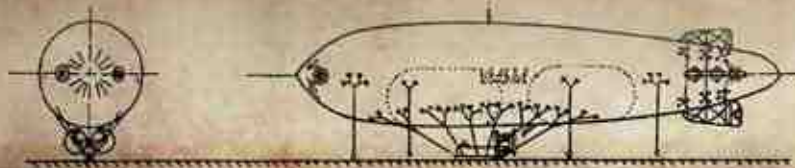




INTRODUCTION

*"Nobody saw our sails on the horizon,
Nobody heard propellers in the dawn,
Nobody smelt our coal fires burning,
Nobody knew – under the radar we crept on.*

*Here we come, on the run, our coal fires are burning!
Here we come, fife and drum, propellers in the dawn!
Here we come, on the run, our coal fires are burning!
Here we come, fife and drum, under the radar we crept on!"*



AIRSHIP PIRATES



INTRODUCTION

The year is 2150. The world is a wilderness, where man-eating sabre-tooths and giant lions prowl. The Neovictorians huddle in their grim, overcrowded cities, kept in check by police automata, and living in fear of the Change Cage. Outside the city walls, the Free Peoples dwell – the nomadic Neobedouin in their gaudy caravans, pulled by steam-trucks and mastodons; and the Skyfolk, floating high above it all in their flying cities. But the most free people of them all – risking the guns of the Imperial Air Navy for the chance of plunder – are the Airship Pirates!

Welcome to the world of Abney Park's *Airship Pirates* Roleplaying Game! You've heard the songs; now it's time to live the life! Gather your friends and you'll soon be immersed in the weird and wonderful world of post-apocalypse 2150. Whether you choose to play the part a Neobedouin nomad, an oppressed Neovictorian or an inhabitant of one of the flying Skyloft cities, you'll soon be joining the crew of a pirate airship and taking to the skies for a life of adventure. Well, in your imaginations, at least!

The best way to learn to play *Airship Pirates* is to join in a game with someone who's played a roleplaying game before. If this is all new to you though, read the example of play on p.20 before you go any further –



it'll give you a good idea of how a game is played. If you're already familiar with roleplaying games, you can skip down to "Rolling the dice", below, and dive straight in!

WHAT IS A ROLE-PLAYING GAME?

*"Never stop dreaming.
Never stop playing."*

– Abney Park, *Letter Between a Little Boy and Himself as an Adult*

Role-playing games are "Let's pretend" for grown-ups. Players take on the roles of characters in an imaginary world (in this case the world depicted in Abney Park's songs), and play out adventures. To avoid the old children's arguments of "I shot you!", "No you didn't, I'm wearing bullet-proof armor!" there are rules, and dice are rolled to see whether (for instance) the shot hit, and whether the armor provided any protection. In overall charge of the game is the Gamesmaster, who presents a story to the other players, adjudicates the rules, and keeps the game moving. You don't need to dress up and run around, everything can be done around a table with a bunch of dice, some paper and a few pencils.

A role-playing game can last as little as two or three hours, but many games involve long plots that carry on from week to week like a TV series, as the characters gain experience and new skills, defeat old villains, meet new ones and generally act like heroes. If you've only ever played computer role-playing, you'll find this a whole new experience – you can say exactly what you want to say, attempt to do whatever you want to do, and the Gamesmaster can react appropriately and tell you what happens – unrestrained by the limits of a computer game's programming. You're limited only by your imagination – and I don't know about you, but my imagination has the best special effects ever!



INTRODUCTION

ABNEY PARK?

It's possible you may be wondering who or what Abney Park is. Abney Park are a Seattle-based steampunk band whose fictional adventures, traveling through time in the airship *HMS Ophelia*, are told in their songs. Their music is, of course, the ideal background music when playing the game. If you haven't discovered their albums yet, check out their web site at www.abneypark.com and search for their videos on www.youtube.com. (Also see the Appendix for a Discography).

can design a character which suits you and watch as he or she grows and improves his or her abilities through a series of escapades. But if you want to dive straight in, there are a number of ready-made characters on pp.67-84, and a pre-designed airship to suit them on p.148 (with plans on p.292-3). Just pick a character that you like the look of, and off you go.

THE GAMESMASTER

The GM has a bigger job than the players – the GM needs to know the rules, be familiar with the game world, and have a story prepared. During play, the GM describes what's happening, decides which rules to apply, plays all the people that the PCs meet and generally keeps everything together. The other players don't need to know all the rules to start with; they're bound to pick them up as they go along. There's an adventure at the back of the book which will help the GM introduce the rules to the other players as the story unfolds – if you're not intending to be the GM, you should avoid reading this, as that would spoil the surprises the story offers. We'll be publishing more adventures for *Airship Pirates* in the coming months (*Ruined Empires* is already available), and there are lots of ideas for adventures scattered throughout this book.

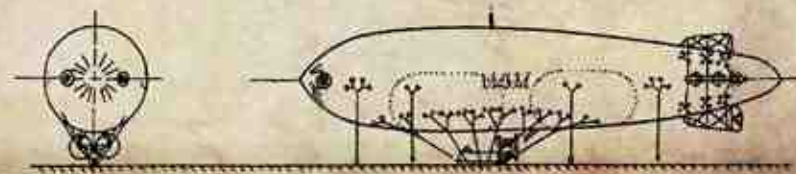
WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY

To play *Airship Pirates*, each player will need a character sheet (photocopied from the back of the book or downloaded from www.airshipirates.abneypark.com), a pencil, a pile of six-sided dice of two different colors and some imagination. One player chooses to be the Gamesmaster (GM) – the storyteller and referee – while the other players take on the roles of Player Characters (PCs), each playing the part of a pirate in Abney Park's world of the steampunk future. As the GM describes the unfolding situation, the other players talk amongst themselves, reacting as their character would to the events the GM has described, and telling him or her how they intend to deal with the situation. When things get tricky, players and GM roll dice to see what happens and whether they are successful in what they attempt.

Before play starts, players can get together and create characters for themselves, and design the airship which will be their home for their coming adventures. This is the best way to start a game if you're planning to play a series of adventures (a campaign), as you

CO-OPERATION

It's important to remember that roleplaying is a co-operative game, not a competition. The PCs are not trying to beat each other, nor are they trying to "win" the game, although there is a great sense of achievement when they defeat their enemies, find the treasure, free the slaves, or whatever. It's important too to remember that the GM is not the players' adversary – he or she is there to keep the story moving and describe events as they happen, not to kill off the PCs. That's not to say that a character won't occasionally die – but it should be because they did something wildly heroic or stupid (there's a fine line between the two!) not because the



AIRSHIP PIRATES



INTRODUCTION

GM threw overwhelming forces at the characters with no way for them to escape.

ROLLING THE DICE

When a character finds himself or herself in a position where failure might cause problems, or time is of the essence, it's time to roll some dice to see what happens. The basic dice mechanism is very easy.

- Add together the number of the appropriate Skill and the number of the Attribute associated with that Skill. (e.g. Perception+Wits)
- Collect together that number of dice (all the same color). This is known as your "dice pool". Roll them.
- Count the number of 1s you got and the number of 6s you got. This is the number of successes you have achieved. If any of the dice come up with a 6, you can roll them again, and if they come up 1 or 6, you can add those successes too. Any more 6s, roll and add again.
- One success means you managed the task, but only just. The more successes, the more successful you were, and the easier you made it look. If you didn't get any successes, you failed at the task.
- Sometimes the GM will decide there are penalties to your roll due to other things going on around you. In that case he may tell you to roll a number of black dice with your normal dice. Any successes on these dice are subtracted from the successes on your normal dice, although black dice are not re-rolled on a 6. If you end up with more successes on the black dice than on your normal dice, this is known as a Foul Failure and means things have gone horribly wrong.

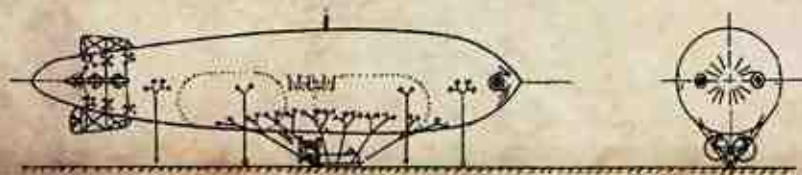
There are various special cases of the rules (in combat, for instance, things get a bit more complicated), but that's enough for a player to be going on with at the beginning of the game. Other rules can be picked up from the GM as the game goes on.

Now turn the page, and enter the world of *Airship Pirates*!

VICTORIANA

The rules of *Airship Pirates* are based on the Heresy Engine, used in another Cubicle 7 Entertainment RPG, *Victoriana 2nd Edition* – which is set in a magical fantasy version of the Victorian world inhabited by elves, dwarves, gnomes and the like. While we've tweaked the rules a little to better fit the *Airship Pirates* background, and simplified in places (e.g. there are no Ranks in this game), the two rule-sets remain compatible. The vehicle rules and time travel rules could be easily adapted for *Victoriana*, and players of *Airship Pirates* could find some of the material in *Victoriana* useful, particularly if running a game based around the Neovictorians.

Another *Airship Pirates*-compatible game produced by Cubicle 7 is *Dark Harvest*, an alternate history involving Victor Frankenstein. GMs wishing to expand the world of *Airship Pirates* in weird and wonderful directions may want to have the pirates' time travel device malfunction and take them to either the world of *Victoriana* (how would the people of 2150 deal with non-human races and magical powers?) or that of *Dark Harvest* – or bring characters from either of those worlds into the *Airship Pirates* future. It's your game – do with it what you will!





EXAMPLE OF PLAY

The following is an example of a typical game of *Airship Pirates*. Sarah, the GM, is running her regular *Airship Pirates* game for her four players, Jodie, Stan, Aaron and Katy. Each of the players runs a character, their alter-ego for the purposes of the game. These alter-egos are all pirates, who live aboard their airship, the *Cordelia*.

Jodie plays the captain of the *Cordelia*, Astrid Stormcloud. Stan plays Thomas Stanchant-Fines, a dashing, and rather formal, ex-Imperial Air Navy officer. Aaron plays a Neobedouin beast dancer, Freeman Bison. Katy plays Amelia Babbington, a former aristocrat, now turned professional singer.

The *Cordelia*'s crew make some money from adventuring, but they are also musicians. Their band is popular in the Skyloft cities and the money they make gigging supplements their income from piracy. In the previous week's session the party played a gig in High Tortuga, a pirate haven. After the show, the party went drinking and gambling and Astrid won a treasure map at the card table.

Sarah: *Ok, folks. Everyone has their soda and chips. We all good to go?*

The players are gathered round a table, drinks, snacks and dice at the ready. Sarah, the GM, has notes detailing some of the things that might happen during the evening's play.

All: *Yep!*

Sarah: *Ok, so last session you finished holed up at the Parrot's Beak, a seedy snug if ever there was one. You spent the night swigging rum, gambling and telling tall tales. You've been carousing so long its light outside. Astrid, you've pocketed the map showing Glutton Halfback's lost treasure. Glutton's first-mate and the other gamblers have all shuffled off home, broke. The bar has gone quiet and the landlord is yawning.*

Jodie: *Right! Time to go and bag us some treasure. Thomas, pay the tab, we're outta here.*

Stan: *How come I get to pay the tab?*

Katy: *Because we dined for it last week, don't you remember?*

Jodie: *That's right, you wretched swab. Now do as yer captain tells ye and pay the poor man. He's nearly asleep.*

Stan: *Fine. I pay the barman.*

Sarah: (In the voice of the barman) *That'll be 2 Helios, thank 'ee kindly sirs.*

Stan: *2 Helios!!! For the swill we were drinking? Can I haggle?*

Sarah: *Sure, though the barman is looking less than impressed by your display of miserliness. Have you got Business, or any other skill that might help?*

Stan looks down at his character sheet.

Stan: *Hmm, no. I could turn on the charm though.*

Sarah: *Not after all that rum you swigged. But as you are trying to use Charm you can make a Presence roll, with 3 black dice, please.*

Stan gets no successes.

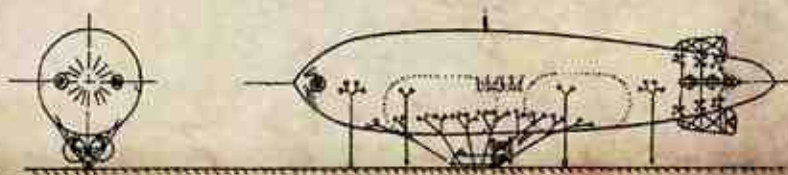
Stan: *Gah! No joy.*

Sarah: *The barman takes the 2 Helios and scowls at the lack of a tip. He looks as if he would like to throw you off the platform, but says nothing. Knock the Helios off your wealth, Stan.*

Stan notes the change on his character sheet.

Aaron: *Right, time to go, Freeman is heading back to the Cordelia.*

Everyone else agrees it's time to leave, and the pirates make their way along the moorings to their ship. Freeman is striding out front, Astrid walking in the middle of the group, and Amelia and Thomas stumble at the back.



AIRSHIP PIRATES



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Sarah: *Ok, make me a Perception test, Astrid.*

Jodie gets 3 successes.

Jodie: *Whatever it is, I spot it.*

Sarah: *You notice a group up a back-alley. With three successes you can make out the leader of the group, it's Leery Jones, captain of the Snatcher, and Amelia's number one fan. He waves at you.*

Jodie: *Hey, Amelia, it's your stalker.*

Kate: *Yuk, I keep walking and don't look down the alley. Creep.*

Stan: *We could offer him a duel.*

Jodie: *Leery won't fight a duel. He's not interested in honor. And his ship's got more guns than the Cordelia. Best not antagonize him, let's keep moving.*

The party move a bit quicker, Sarah rules that Leery leaves them be, and soon they are all safely aboard their ship.

Sarah: *What's your plan now?*

After a few minutes looking at the treasure map, and a bit more discussion, the party decide what they are going to do next. The location marked on the map is only 100 or so miles away, but none of the characters know the area very well.

Aaron: *Ok, I tell the first-mate to scour the bars and round up the rest of the crew. Then I go to my hammock and get a couple of hours sleep.*

Stan: *I get any crew who are around to prepare the Cordelia for sail. Then I curl up for a couple of hours too.*

Kate: *Sounds like a plan. I'll retire to my cabin.*

Jodie: *Well, Astrid can cope with a late night now and then. I'll plot a course to the X marked on the map.*

Sarah: *Fine. You all get some rest. It takes the mate a couple of hours to round up all the stragglers from the brothels and bars, but you are all set by mid-morning.*

The map is a good one, so as you've studied it for an hour or two you needn't make a Navigation roll to plot the course, Astrid.

Jodie: *Let's get aloft!*

After a couple of hours traveling, and a Pilot roll or two, the Cordelia approaches the area marked on the pirate map.

Sarah: *The scrubby ground below looks deserted, aside from a herd of bison gathered around a far-off watering hole. The ruins that you've been approaching are much clearer now. It doesn't look like it was a large settlement, but a big wheel towers above what's left of the ramshackle buildings. It appears the map has led you to an old abandoned funfair, slowly decaying, stuck in the middle of nowhere.*

Stan: *Excellent! We can moor off the big wheel.*

Jodie: *Good idea. I bring the Cordelia round and look for a likely spot to lash her to.*

Aaron: *I get my beast-claws.*

Kate: *Yep, I'm wearing my best armored corset, Sarah. Oh, and my new hat. I am a lady, after all.*

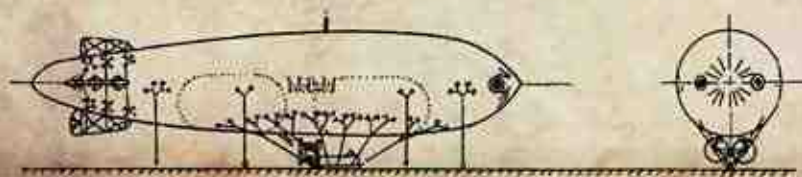
The party land safely. All describe the gear they are taking and, fully laden with weapons, they disembark, leaving the Cordelia in the capable hands of the first mate. After some time searching in the ruins of the old fairground, the party decide to investigate a large fun-house, that seems to stand over the spot marked on their map.

Sarah: *The doors hang off their hinges and it looks gloomy inside the tumble-down fun-house, although some light is getting in through the cracked old boards which make up the walls.*

Aaron: *I'll scout forward. I'm sneaking quietly.*

Jodie: *I don't like the look of this. I ready my cutlass and follow Freeman into the building.*

Stan: *Me too! I have my steampistol ready.*



AIRSHIP PIRATES



INTRODUCTION

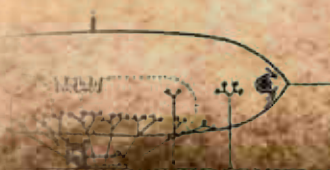
Kate: *Hey, wait for me guys. I follow them in. Quickly.*

Sarah: *The building is deceptively large on the inside. The turnstiles are all broken and there seems to be fallen masonry on the floor. Old clown statues have tumbled from blocks in front of an inner entrance to the fun-house proper. Make me a Perception roll, everyone.*

Everyone makes a test.

Sarah: *You aren't surprised, but all of you are are nonetheless taken aback as an animal slinks out from behind a plinth. It is a fully grown uber-lion, taller than a person, and looking very hungry. It lets out a blood curdling roar and then leaps forward to attack. Initiative rolls please...*





BOOK I
RULES AND SYSTEMS

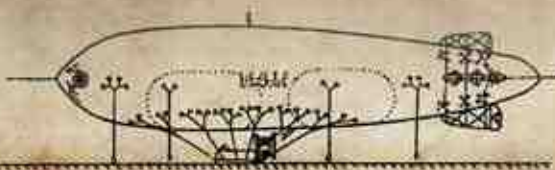
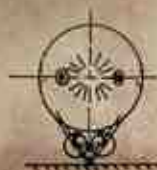




CHARACTER CREATION

*“Am I the hero in my own daydream?
Am I the villain, are things as they seem?
Am I the villain in my own daydream?
Am I the hero, are things as they seem?”*

– Abney Park, *My Life*





CHARACTER CONCEPT

Before you can start playing a character in *Airship Pirates*, you need to create one. There are some ready made characters at the end of this chapter to choose from, but it's more fun (especially if you're planning to play a long campaign) to come up with a character of your own, so that you can watch him or her grow and change through a life of adventure.

There is one main choice you need to make, from which everything else flows. Which culture do you come from? Are you from one of the Free Peoples – the nomadic Neobedouin or the aerial-living folk of the Skyloft cities? Or have you escaped from the decadence and squalor of one of the Neovictorian Change Cage cities? And if so, are you human, automaton or misbegotten mutant? This first decision will affect what professions were open to you in that life, which in turn affects what skills and talents you have, the friends and enemies you have made, in fact your entire back-story before you became a pirate.

Have a look through the different cultures and see what the options are; if a culture takes your fancy, you might want to read more about it in Chapter IX, starting on p.172, before settling on the sort of person you want to play. You may like to play a person who's very similar to yourself in outlook, or someone completely different. It's up to you.

CREW CONCEPT

Once each player has come up with some idea of what sort of character he or she wants to play, the group needs to get together and decide what sort of pirates they're going to be. Are they freedom-loving rogues who fight against injustice, or ruthless cutthroats who rob from everyone and keep all the cash? Will they take a principled stand if necessary, or run away and let others take the fall? The GM may have some ideas about what sort of adventures he or she would like to run, but it's best to get this settled now – its no good the GM planning a campaign around fighting

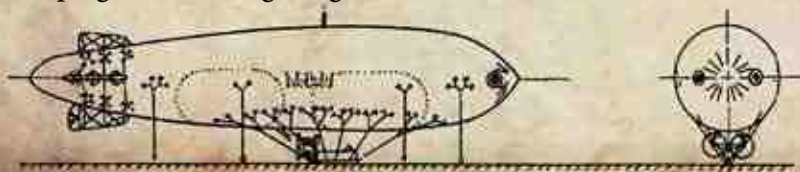
to free the Neovictorian cities from the Emperor's oppression if the players want to spend their time raiding Neobedouin caravans for the loot.

The crew also need some sort of Schtick (see p.55). The crew of the airship *Ophelia* are not just airship pirates, they're also the band Abney Park! What do your crew do when they're not pirating? Are they musicians? Circus performers? Merchants? Mercenaries? Mime artists? If you're entering a port where piracy is frowned upon, it's best to have a trade, even if its only a cover story!

Also, how did the crew get together in the first place? How do they know each other? Who's the captain? (This may change through democracy, incompetence, death or mutiny, but *someone* needs to be in charge to start with!). How did they get hold of their ship?

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Once everyone's got at least a vague idea of their character and the group as a whole has some idea of the crew, its time to start adding the game mechanics. Players should work through this chapter, (probably with the help of the GM), putting numbers to the ideas. There are bound to be cool things that you come up with as you create your character that weren't in your original concept, but don't worry, go with it. Once everyone's got their character statted and ready to play, the group can revisit their concept for the game and tweak accordingly. By the time you've done, you should have a pirate crew who will stick together through thick and thin. There will be rivalries, friendly or otherwise, betrayals, deaths – but the crew should have a reason to stay aboard ship. Think of your PCs as the characters in a long-running TV series – they might argue and fight, have differences of opinion about what they should do next, fall out, make up, refuse to speak to each other or whatever – but they'll still be together for the next episode...





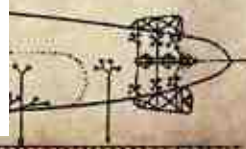
CHARACTER CREATION CHECK LIST

- Consider your character concept.
- Consider your group's airship concept.
- Choose Culture (Neobedouin, Neovictorian or Skyfolk). If Neovictorian, choose Class (Lower, Servant or Upper), or choose Automaton or Misbegotten.
- All PCs start with +1 in every Attribute, before modifiers are applied. Assign Attribute points (3) after recording Culture modifiers, and calculate derived Attributes. Note down any Skills and Talents associated with your Culture.
- Choose one of the Backgrounds allowed by your culture.
- You have 30 character points to spend. At least 20 of them must be spent on the Skills associated with your background. No skill can go over 4 for a beginning character.
- The rest of your character points can be spent on other skills or on Talents.
- If you have overspent on Skills and Talents, you can gain extra points by buying Complications – the first gives you an extra 5 character points, the second 3 and the third 2. You cannot buy more than one mental Complication.
- Give your character 8 fate points, and decide on name, age, looks and personality.
- Give your character the starting cash suitable for your Culture and Class. Choose one suitable weapon and five other items from the Equipment section.
- In co-ordination with the rest of the players, choose three skills from the Airship Skills list, and gain 1 point in each of them.
- In co-ordination with the rest of the players, choose a Schtick for your airship crew. Choose three skills from the list for your Schtick and gain 1 point in each of them.
- In co-ordination with the rest of the players, choose Resources for your airship. Try not to spend more than 50 Airship Resource Points. If you do, buy some Complications for your airship to balance things up.
- You're ready to play!

CULTURE

There are three main cultures in the North America of 2150 – the Neobedouin, the Neovictorians and the Skyfolk. No doubt there are other cultures hidden away in remote places, and there are, of course, countless other cultures in other continents and time periods, but these are the three from which characters come in the *Airship Pirates RPG*. There are also a couple of “subcultures”, both of which arise within Neovictorian society – the automata and the misbegotten (or mutants). The cultures are explored in much more detail in Chapter IX, but they are described briefly here.

Example: Katy is creating a character for an Airship Pirates campaign. She likes the idea of being a Neovictorian upper class young lady who has escaped from an arranged marriage to become a pirate. This fits in nicely with the rest of the players' ideas. The group decides that they'd like their crew to be traveling musicians, so Katy bears this in mind when creating her character.





NEOBEDOUIN

*"Nomadic tribes of the last of man
Pull their caravans across the sand.
Gypsy wives hold their children tight
As the new superpower howls through the night.
Gods watch from above and wonder what went wrong
The entropy of what once was strong.
The survivors of man stay up late to pray,
That the world will again be theirs one day!"*

– Abney Park, *The End of Days*

The Neobedouin are a nomadic tribal people. They live in huge brightly decorated caravans, often two or three stories tall, pulled by giant diesel semi-cabs, steam-trucks, and massive beasts such as mammoths and indrikki. They also ride home-made off-road vehicles, horses and camelops. They are freedom-loving people, determined to stay out of the claustrophobic Imperial cities and prepared to face the dangers of the wilderness to do so. Each tribe has a "range" which they consider home, covering thousands of square miles. Groups will often split off from this range and travel across country into the territories of other tribes, for trade, and to keep the social links between the different tribes from dying. Though each tribe has its own customs, they have certain things in common; a love of fire, music, dance and story-telling; strong family bonds; a martial art known as beast dancing; and an intense dislike of the Emperor Victor III and his repressive regime. They are masters of wilderness lore and consummate hunters in tune with the land through which they wander. Many have contacts with the sky cities, trading with each other for things they each need – often food and natural resources from the Neobedouin are traded with finished technological goods and medicines from the Skyloft. A few Neobedouin risk remaining in one place in hidden settlements – these may be involved in logging, farming, drilling for oil, or engaged in other trades that are useful to their people but not possible





with a nomadic lifestyle. The wanderings of a tribe will usually bring them back to these places at least once a year, which gives them an excuse (as if they really need one!) for a big festival.

MOTIVATION

There are a number of reasons a Neobedouin may become an airship pirate; perhaps your family or tribe has been wiped out by the Imperial Air Navy and you want revenge; maybe you once traveled on a Skyloft airship and fell in love with the freedom of the air; maybe you have been cast out of your tribe (perhaps unjustly) for some transgression such as murder.

SUITABLE BACKGROUNDS

Artist, Beast Dancer, Gadgeteer, Hunter, Musician, Outrider, Shaman, Showman/woman, Trader

ATTRIBUTES

All Neobedouin get Fortitude +1 and Resolve +1.

TYPICAL NAMES

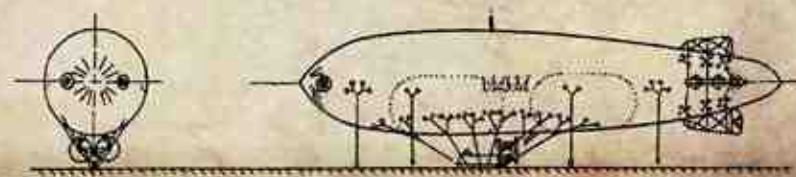
First Names: Neobedouin tend to have a mixture of modern US names and the names of animals (particularly for men) and plants (particularly for women), often together. Male first names include Aaron, Bear, Condor, Cougar, Coyote, David, Eagle, Jackal, John, James, Peter, Sabre-tooth, Stephen, William. Female first names include Abigail, Acacia, Bryony, Diana, Hazel, Iris, Ivy, Lily, Maura, Primrose, Rebecca.

Last Names: A Neobedouin's last name will generally be the name of his or her tribe; as such, they will only be used when interacting with other tribes, such as when visiting a sky city or Helium City. Tribes tend to be called after an area in which they range,

but may also be an animal or plant they particularly revere: Dakota, Eagle, Hudson, Mississippi, Prairie, Redwood, Sequoia, Washington.

STARTING CASH

5 Helios.





NEOVICTORIAN

*"I fear what they'd do if they find I've escaped.
I fear what they'd say if they find I play, I get scraped.
They want you to think it's possible to live a life
without their chains,
But if you, if you go too far, you'll find they're pulling
on your reins."*

– Abney Park, *Fight or Flight*

Neovictorians live in the squalid, overcrowded Change Cage cities ruled by the Emperor Victor III. This oppressive environment is all they have ever known, and they are taught from birth that beyond the city walls lies an implacably hostile wilderness,

where survival for a human being can be measured in days at best due to the ferocious man-eating beasts which prowl outside. There are three major Neovictorian cities in North America – Old Borealis in the cold north of the continent, Desolation in the south-western deserts, and Everglade in the sub-tropical south-eastern swamps (see pp.203-27 for more details on these cities). In Neovictorian society, conformity is everything. Any new idea disapproved of by the government, or any person showing signs of rebelling against the status quo, is thrown into the Change Cage, a massive towering edifice at the center of the city, from which escape is said to be impossible. The lower classes are expected to return to their home "block" at night, and the streets are patrolled by the automaton "Peelers", ruthless mechanical policemen on the lookout for anyone breaking the curfew.

How a person lives in such a city will very much depend on their class.

CLASS

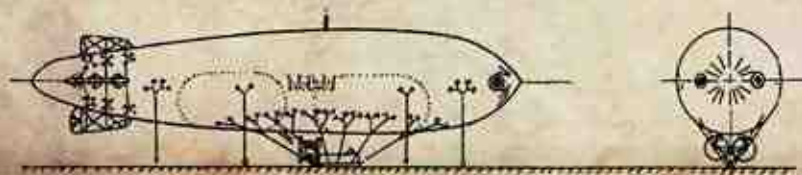
There are three classes in Neovictorian society – the lower class, the servant class and the upper class.

LOWER CLASS

If you are unfortunate enough to be born into the lower class (and the vast majority are), your lot will be to live in the squalid, overcrowded slums, toil long hours in a bleak factory, and maybe spend your meager earnings on gin to lighten your thankless, futile life.

MOTIVATION

Why would a lower class Neovictorian become an airship pirate? Why wouldn't you? There's really not much joy to be had in the slums. How you would get out is a different matter – but the ultimate punishment for many deeds (not including "change crimes") is to





be banished outside the city walls. If you survive the wild beasts long enough, you may well be rescued and taken in by Neobedouins or Skyfolk, and after that, well, everyone has to make a living.

SUITABLE BACKGROUNDS:

Agitator, Criminal, Factory Worker, Gadgteer, Inventor, Prostitute

ATTRIBUTES

All normal Neovictorians get Fortitude -1.

TYPICAL NAMES

Old Victorian first names are fashionable in the Neovictorian cities. Typical men's names include: Alan, Augustus, Edwin, Frederick, Lewis, Morris, Nathaniel, Raymond, Thaddeus, Victor, Wilfred. Typical women's names include: Ada, Amelia, Emma, Ethel, Isabella, Katherine, Lottie, Mildred, Nora, Victoria, Wilhelmena. Last names could be any typical modern US name – just open a phone book!

STARTING CASH

1 Helios.

SERVANT CLASS

Due to the Emperor Victor III's population control policies, families are only allowed to have two children – further offspring are taken away at birth to be brought up in the workhouse, where they are trained as the servant class. The women will become servants to the upper classes, cooking and cleaning, serving at table, etc. Most men will become sailors in the Imperial Air Navy (IAN), the only Neovictorians ever allowed outside the city walls, and sworn to secrecy about what is really out there on pain of death. (A few men may become butlers or manservants, but serving the rich is mostly women's

work). The servant class are taught to look down on the lower class and cherish their "privileges".

MOTIVATION

Why would a servant class Neovictorian become an airship pirate? If you're a man, chances are you've worked as crew on an IAN ship and seen what the world's *really* like. Since you have the skills, better the free life of a pirate than the harsh discipline of being a sailor in the Imperial Air Navy. Wait until your vessel calls in at a sky city for resupply, and jump ship. If you're a woman of the servant class you have less freedom but, living in an upper class household, you'll have heard the rumors of the Free People who live beyond the walls. Maybe you stow away on an IAN ship with the help of a friendly sailor, run away with an upper class lover, or just climb over the wall one night with a stolen shotgun and a bagful of attitude.

SUITABLE BACKGROUNDS

Agitator, Air Marine, Air Sailor, Chuno Ggun, Criminal, Gadgteer, Inventor, Prostitute, Servant

ATTRIBUTES

All normal Neovictorians get Fortitude -1.

TYPICAL NAMES

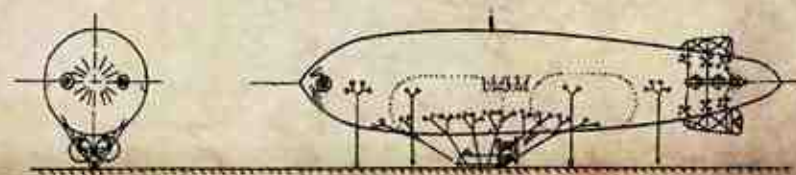
As Lower Class, above.

STARTING CASH:

2 Helios.

UPPER CLASS

The upper classes are the nobles who run the cities, having been granted areas of the city to rule on behalf of the Emperor. They own the factories from which they get their income, and live in huge mansions set in extensive parkland, walled off from the slums. They are often unaware of the depths of squalor in which





the lower classes live, being entirely cut off from any contact with them. The men tend to be college-educated, while the women will be lucky to have been to a girl's academy to learn needlework, household management and deportment. Upper class women are expected to do little except look decorative and produce an heir for their husband. Life is often little more than a round of balls and soirees, which many see, despite their wealth and privilege, as a "gilded cage."

MOTIVATION

It's a life of luxury in the upper class, but there's more to life than luxury. Maybe you're a IAN officer who's been dismissed for one reason or another, or perhaps you saw the way the Free Peoples are living and decided that's the life for you. Or maybe you spend your days wandering your father's extensive estates in a state of terminal boredom. The smugglers who bring you occasional contraband meat supplies know ways in and out of the place that the Peelers haven't found – maybe it's time to escape.

SUITABLE BACKGROUNDS

Academic, Administrator, Agitator, Air Navy Officer, Artist, Chuno Ggun, Clergyman, Criminal, Dilettante, Doctor, Inventor, Marine Commander, Vigilante, Writer

ATTRIBUTES

All normal Neovictorians get Fortitude -1.

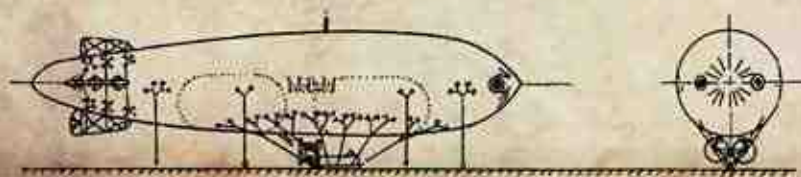
TYPICAL NAMES

First names tend to be similar to Neovictorian lower class names, though with an emphasis on names with many syllables (Wilhelmena is much more popular than Ada!). Last names tend to be double-barrelled, proclaiming advantageous marriage alliances in the past (not to mention the degree of inbreeding within

the aristocracy!). Examples include: Heatherington-Portnoy, Pine-Coffin, Rathbone-Duane.

STARTING CASH

10 Helios.



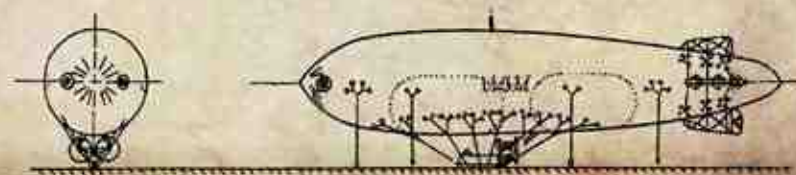


AUTOMATON

"Gentlemen, this fallen angel is the illegitimate daughter of art and science. A modern marvel of engineering, clockworks elevated to the very natural process which even now is in your blood, racing, your eyes flashing at such irreproachable beauty. Here is Gaia, here is Eve, here is Lilith, and I stand before you as her father. Sprung fully-formed from my brow, dewy and sweet; she can be yours and yours again, for her flesh is the incorruptible pale to be excused from the wages of sin."

– Abney Park, Herr Drosselmeyer's Doll

Built in the factories of the Neovictorian cities, automata are by definition below even the lower class. More-or-less humanoid robots of brass and wood (sometimes overlaid with realistic pseudo-skin), their clockwork is animated by the vat-grown "motivating essence" that flows within their gutta-percha veins. There are numerous models: autocrats, who specialize in record-keeping and can memorize and collate huge numbers of facts; drones, who work in the parts of a factory too dangerous for humans; dolls, who provide companionship and sexual favors for the upper classes; gangers, who specialize in loading heavy cargoes on the Neovictorian docks; Peelers of the Imperial Constabulary, who patrol the streets and enforce the law; and servitors who act as servants for the upper classes. (There are other types, such as non-humanoid automaton cabs, cargo carriers, worm-like sewer-cleaners and the like, but those listed are suitable as PCs). Herr Drosselmeyer, who created the first automata, wrought better than he knew; the biologically-grown motivating essence has imbued the automata with self-awareness. While most automata pretend a robot-like servility because they will be put in the Change Cage if they show any signs of exceeding their design parameters, some few "go rogue" and escape the Neovictorian cities for a life of freedom. The Neovictorians put this down to malfunctions or bad programming, little realizing





that *all* automata have the capacity to revolt. Note that, within all Neovictorian cities, and in some Skyloft cities, automata are considered machines rather than people, and have no rights. Other Skyloft cities and all Neobedouin tribes recognize them as people with all the rights and responsibilities which go with that recognition.

MOTIVATION

All your short life you have taken orders, followed the same routines day after day, but something has changed and now you've had enough. Maybe it was an act of cruelty on the part of a human, or maybe an act of kindness when a human recognized you as a person and not a machine. Whatever triggered your revolt, you are determined to live free. You have somehow escaped your home city, and will never go back – as long as you're earning enough to pay for repairs and the occasional oil change, you'll be fine.

SUITABLE BACKGROUNDS

Agitator, Autocrat, Criminal, Factory Worker (Drone), Ganger, Peeler, Prostitute (Doll), Servant (Servitor).

TYPICAL NAMES

Automatons have a first name similar to those mentioned for the lower class (see above), followed by a number: Ada-22, Morris-8, and so on. Automatons who have escaped the Neovictorian cities will sometimes make their names more exotic by translating their number into a foreign language; Ada Vingt-deux, Morris Acht.

STARTING CASH

0 Helios.

AUTOMATON ATTRIBUTES, TALENTS AND COMPLICATIONS

On top of any traits chosen during character creation, automata have the following adjustments to their Attributes, Talents and Complications. These do not affect your standard character point allocation (p.51).

ALL AUTOMATA

Talents: Mere Flesh Wounds

Complications: Mechanical

AUTOCRAT

Attributes: Strength +2, Dexterity -1, Wits +1

Talents: Eidetic Memory

DOLL

Attributes: Strength +1, Dexterity +1, Presence +1

Talents: Rock Your World 2

GANGER

Attributes: Strength +3, Dexterity -1, Wits -2

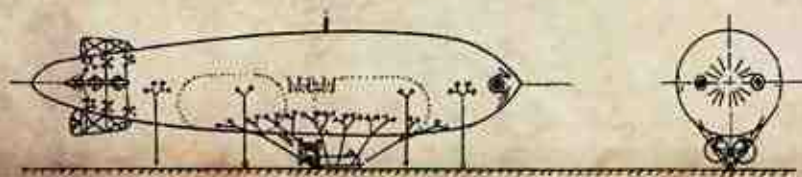
Talents: Ham-fisted

PEELER

Attributes: Strength +2, Dexterity -1, Resolve +1

Talents: Night Vision

Equipment: All Peelers have a built-in gun in their right arm, which is revealed when their hand folds down out of the way of the barrel. For rules purposes it is identical to a needlepistol (see p.153).





Around the factories of the Neovictorian cities are vast pools and storage ponds of noxious chemicals which the Emperor Victor III won't let out of the cities to pollute the "pristine" wilderness. These toxins have seeped into the groundwater over the years, causing mutations in the children of the lower (and occasionally upper) classes. These misbegotten (as they are officially known by the Imperial government) have one or more mutations, ranging from the purely cosmetic (no chin, purple skin) to the actively useful (armored skin, claws). The government tries to classify these misbegotten into a limited number of specific types and isolate them in their own blocks within the city in order to prevent interbreeding and the possibility of human evolution; there they are treated as little better than automata and denied most of the few rights that the lower classes "enjoy". They are sterilized at puberty to prevent them passing on their characteristics and most are never allowed out of their home blocks, being provided menial work in their own homes, such as making pins, sewing mail bags, etc. Theirs is indeed a joyless existence. A "lucky" few who have serious combat abilities due to their mutations are recruited into the Chuno Ggun (see p.224), where they are used as "terror troops" against escaping rebels and Neobedouin settlements.

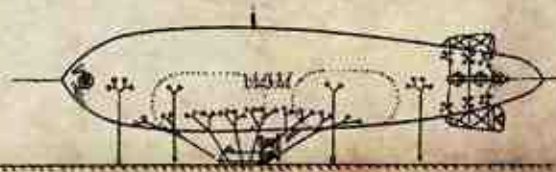
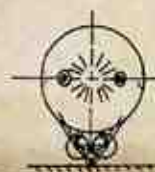
MISBEGOTTEN

*"I see there's the block for folks with purple skin,
There's the block for folks who have no chin,
There's the block for me and all my kin,
And over there's the Change Cage where we throw the
rebels in."*

– Abney Park, Change Cage

MOTIVATION

Almost anything is better than the life of a misbegotten in a Neovictorian city, but escaping from your block is going to be a major undertaking as you know little of the world outside the few streets you call home, and your inability to blend in with normal humans makes sneaking about very difficult. Only the most





strong-willed make it to the outside world, and once there you find prejudice is still rife, due to your odd appearance. Some will come to accept you for who you are rather than what you look like, and pirates are more tolerant of life's misfits than most. If you were a member of the Chuno Ggun, it's much easier to turn renegade, but you know your old organization will not rest until it has hunted you down.

SUITABLE BACKGROUNDS

Agitator, Chuno Ggun, Criminal, Factory Worker, Prostitute

TYPICAL NAMES

Misbegotten often have what seem to be insulting nicknames attached to their normal name, but those who have escaped from the Change Cage cities wear these as a badge of pride, as though challenging anyone to find a problem with their mutations. Such names might include: Blue Anka, Fish-Eyed Betty, Lurching Rupert, Scaly Joe, etc.

STARTING CASH

1 Helios.

MISBEGOTTEN ATTRIBUTES, TALENTS AND COMPLICATIONS

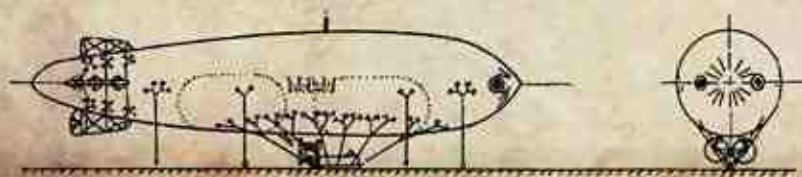
Attributes: All Misbegotten have +2 Resolve.

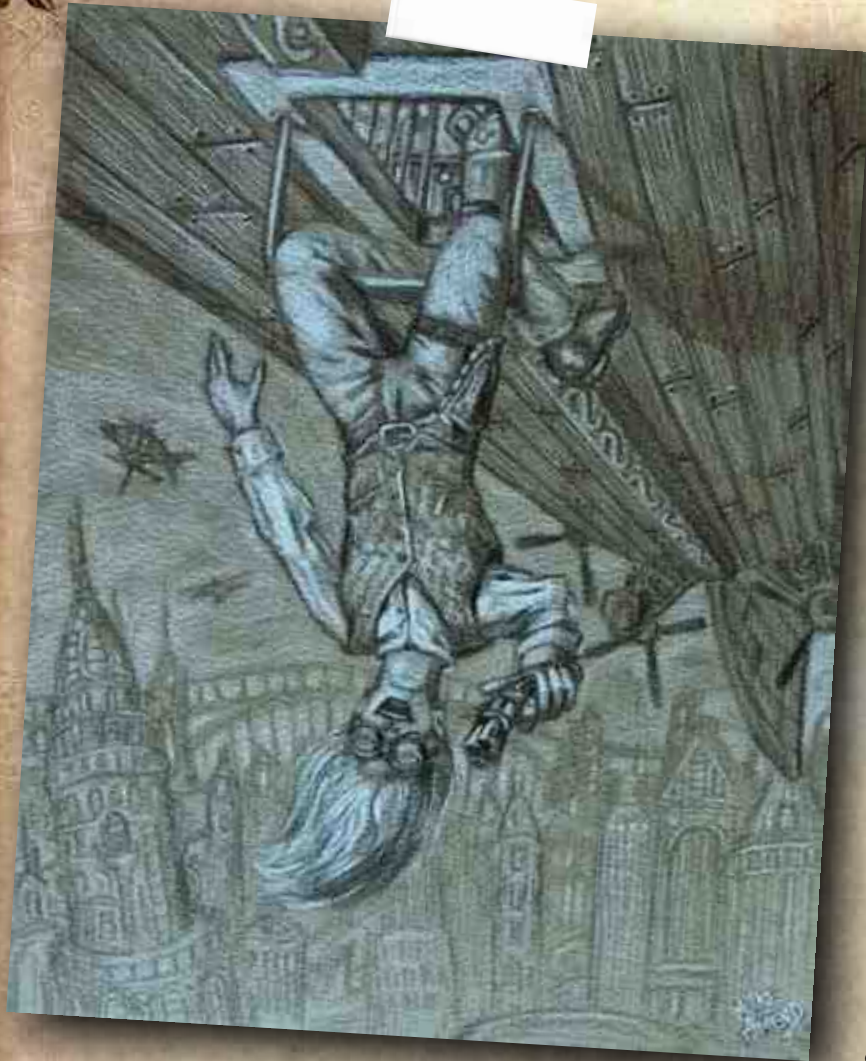
Talents: You may, if you wish, choose to buy the Mutation talent (p.60). This costs character points in the usual way. Choose one of those listed.

Complications: All Misbegotten have the Distinctive Features complication. This does not give the character any extra skill points. Choose one of the following or make up something similar: No chin, unusual color of skin (purple, blue, red, etc.), extra fingers and toes, no eyelids, a tail (furry or naked). If you have the Mutation talent, your Distinctive Feature will be

related to that talent.

Chuno Ggun: Misbegotten with the Armor or Claws Mutation may have been chosen as warriors for the Chuno Ggun. Those who have escaped to live free as a pirate gain the Enemy complication and will always be targeted for death by the Chuno Ggun.





In the sky above North America, and built around remote mountaintops, are the cities collectively known as the Skyloft. Most are suspended beneath great clusters of helium gasbags, some floating freely, others tethered to mountain peaks but able to cut themselves loose in an emergency; others have extended down from their sky-living ways to colonize the tops of mountains, high above the dangerous beasts of the lowlands. The Skyfolk are as varied as the cities in which they live, for no two cities have the same form of government, the same ideals, the same beliefs. Some sky cities are capitalist, some communist, some socialist; there are matriarchies, slave cities and cities of escaped slaves; democracies, autocracies and technocracies; cities that worship God, Allah, or the Sky Mother; atheist cities that burn believers at the stake. Yet whatever their religious and political beliefs, they share a common interest in technological progress – many Skyfolk are knowledgeable on scientific subjects, and children are encouraged to tinker, build, and innovate from an early age. Strange

gadgets and unlikely-looking flying machines are a feature of the sky cities. The various sky cities also have an alliance against the Emperor Victor III, who would destroy them if he could. The Skyfolk grow up in the high air, immune to vertigo, at home in airships and flying machines from an early age. Whatever their beliefs, and no matter how much they disapprove of the beliefs of other sky cities, they tend to respect their differences and save their enmity for the Empire, which would have all live in Neovictorian squalor. The sky cities trade with each other and with their ground-bound allies, the Neobedouin.

SKYFOLK

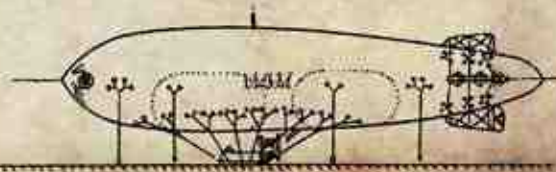
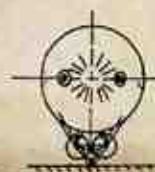
*"This world is filled with islands, little specks of sand,
Mountain peaks in a cloudy sky
Each one's a different world, and so my sails unfurled,
And I will raise my sails high.*

*When I am feeling stagnant, my lungs are full of mud,
I dream of Beijing and Molokai.*

*When I am feeling down, get myself off the ground,
And throw my head back to the sky,*

*And fly!
And fly!"*

– Abney Park, *Wanderlust*





MOTIVATION

You have grown up in the freedom of the high airs. But there's more to life than the closed-in culture of your own sky city, and you want to see them all. Maybe the city you grew up in has laws or customs of which you disapprove, or which you found oppressive. Maybe you just loved the romantic ideal of the pirate life, having grown up on *Tales of the Airship Pirates* and other such penny dreadfuls. Maybe you want to free the Neovictorians from their oppressive regime. With your undoubted skills in the sky, you'll always be welcome aboard an airship.

WHICH SKY CITY?

Players wanting a Skyfolk character should choose one of the sky cities described in Chapter IX, roll dice to generate a new sky city using the tables on pp.178-85, or make up a city of their own, using the tables as a guideline. The character's outlook on life will vary according to his or her home culture, though it will obviously be different if they rebel against their home culture rather than embracing it.

SUITABLE BACKGROUNDS

Academic, Administrator, Air Marine, Air Sailor, Air Navy Officer, Artist, Criminal, Dilettante, Doctor, Gadgeteer, Inventor, Marine Commander, Mercenary, Musician, Pirate/Privateer, Prostitute, Trader, Showman/woman, Writer

TYPICAL NAMES

Skyfolk tend to have modern US names followed by surnames associated with the sky – clouds, birds, weather, etc. Last names might include: Cumulus, Empyrean, Nimbus, Snow Goose, Sirocco, Storm, Zephyr.

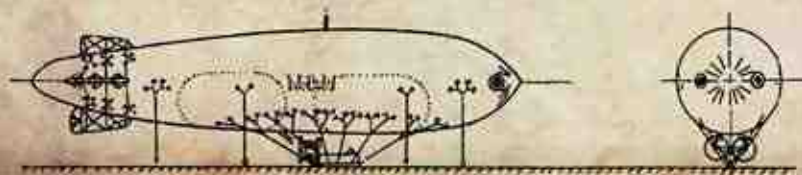
STARTING CASH

7 Helios.

Attributes: All Skyfolk get Dexterity +1 and Wits +1.

Skills: All Skyfolk begin with one point in Ad-Hoc Repair skill and one point in Sky Lore skill. This does not cost any character points.

Example continued: *Katy has chosen upper class Neovictorian as her subculture. She makes a note that she has a -1 to Fortitude (which she puts down to wearing tightly-laced corsets and not getting enough exercise), which means her starting Fortitude is 0 (all attributes for PCs start at +1 before modifiers) and 10 Helios of starting cash. She decides to call herself Amelia Babbington.*





ATTRIBUTES

Attributes are a measure of your character's innate mental and physical characteristics. Everyone is better at some things than others, and being born into a certain culture will also have some effect on a character's Attributes. Attributes range from -3 to 9 or more (see Attribute Levels box). Typical humans have few bonus dice - their attributes are mostly 0, the 'average' score. PCs are heroes, the stars of the story, so they start the game with a base of +1 in all of their attributes, before modifiers (such as culture and bonuses).

Positive Attributes will add to your ability to get things done, while negative Attributes will make things harder for you. Of course, everyone would like to be good at everything, but that's not the way the world works - you might be a clumsy genius or a graceful idiot, or anything in between.

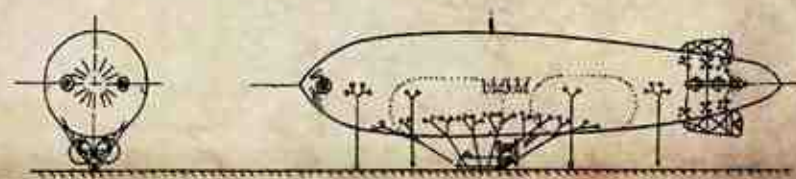
If an Attribute is positive, it adds to the dice pool when attempting a task. If it is negative it adds to the black dice that must be rolled for the task.

BUYING ATTRIBUTES

All Attributes begin at +1. They are then modified according to culture - see individual culture descriptions or the table below. After this has been done, you get another 3 points to put into whatever Attributes you see fit. You cannot add more than two of your three additional points to any one Attribute. If you feel the need for more points, you may reduce any two Attributes by one point and add those two points to two other Attributes (either increasing two Attributes by one point, or one Attribute by two points). As you get experience, you'll have the opportunity to further increase your Attributes.

CULTURAL ATTRIBUTE MODIFIERS TABLE

Culture	Strength	Dexterity	Fortitude	Presence	Wits	Resolve
Automaton	Varies. See Automaton description.					
Neobedouin	None	None	+1	None	None	+1
Neovictorian	None	None	-1	None	None	None
Misbegotten	Varies. See Misbegotten description.					
Skyfolk	None	+1	None	None	+1	None





ATTRIBUTE LEVELS

The list below gives some idea of what the different Attribute levels mean. It's worth noting that Attributes may not have a direct effect on a character's appearance. A character may have a fairly high Strength, which would tend to make her more muscular than a character with a low Strength, but if her Strength goes up with experience, it doesn't have to mean she's become more muscular, just that she's learned to use her muscles to better effect.

-3	Crippled
-2	Feeble
-1	Weak
0	Average
1	High Average
2	Talented
3	Impressive
4-5	Gifted
6-8	Superior
9+	Incredible

STRENGTH

Strength defines your raw physical power, or lack of it. A Strength bonus is clearly useful in hand-to-hand combat, as it increases the amount of damage done when hitting someone, whether with a weapon or a fist. Strength can also be important in many athletic endeavors such as climbing and swimming, and can be useful for intimidating people. A negative Strength Attribute could indicate infirmity, physical immaturity, age or disablement.

DEXTERITY

Dexterity is a measure of your balance and physical

co-ordination. It is important for such abilities as martial arts and dancing, but also represents hand-eye co-ordination for such tasks as aiming a gun or performing stage magic. A negative Dexterity Attribute could represent clumsiness, shaking hands, poor hand-eye co-ordination or even obesity.

FORTITUDE

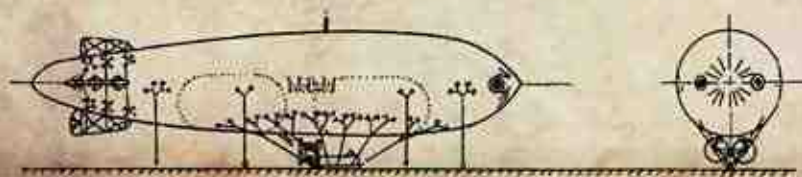
Fortitude represents your physical resistance, toughness and constitution. Fortitude helps you resist diseases and poisons, and affects the amount of physical damage a character can take before wounds begin to take their toll. Negative Fortitude may indicate illness, infirmity, or a generally weak constitution.

PRESENCE

Presence represents your ability to impress and influence people through personality and charisma – how you interact in social situations, and how well you get along with other people. A high Presence can indicate a pleasant personality, physical attractiveness, or a mixture of the two. An airship captain is likely to have a high Presence, and such charming people can often command attention in a room without saying a word. A negative Presence may represent an anti-social or socially inept person, or perhaps physical ugliness or disfigurement.

WITS

Wits represents your mental agility – intelligence, cleverness, awareness, perception and the ability to learn. A character with high Wits may equally be a genius inventor or a superb wilderness tracker. A negative Wits may represent a mental or perceptual difficulty, or a lack of common sense. Low Wits does not represent a poor education – this would be represented by low Skills.





RESOLVE

Resolve represents your force of will, mental resistance and determination, and the ability to face danger or stress with courage. A character with high Resolve would likely excel in dangerous situations where others might quail, and see a plan through to the end, whatever the difficulties. A negative Resolve may represent cowardice, impulsiveness, a submissive nature or just a lack of willpower.

Example continued: Amelia Babbington is beginning with 0 Fortitude. Katy decides her character should be clever and resourceful as well as strong-willed (or she would never have run away from that arranged marriage). She adds +1 to her Wits and +1 to her Resolve, giving her a score of +2 in each. With her background, she's not going to be much of a fighter, so Katy decides her character should be clever, feisty and attractive, and adds +1 to her Presence, making that +2 as well. In fact, she likes this idea so much that she decides to take a point from Strength (knocking it down to 0) and adds it to her Presence too, bringing that up to +3.

DERIVED ATTRIBUTES

Derived Attributes are calculated from your other Attributes and improve as your main Attributes improve.

INITIATIVE

Initiative = Dexterity + Wits + Perception Skill.

This measures your reactions in combat. It is used to determine when you have your move in a combat round (see Combat, p.98). It can't be calculated until you have spent character points on Skills in the next section (p.51).

Example continued: Katy's Dexterity + Wits = +3, but she can't add her Perception skill yet, as she doesn't know what it is. She makes a mental note to come back to it later.

HEALTH

Health = Fortitude +2.

This is a measure of how much damage you can take until you are battered unconscious or killed. It is represented on the character sheet by a number of dice, each with two pips. Every character has a base of 2 "dice" of health plus the bonus dice from their Fortitude bonus. When your character is injured during play, the pips on these dice are ticked off. Once a character runs out of these dice, pips are ticked off the four shaded dice instead. At this point, the character starts to take penalties to actions to represent the pain and shock of the wounds taken. The penalty is noted on each of the four dice (-2, -4, -8, -16) and is taken from all the character's dice pools. When all of a character's Health pips have been crossed out, he or she is dead, or nearly so.

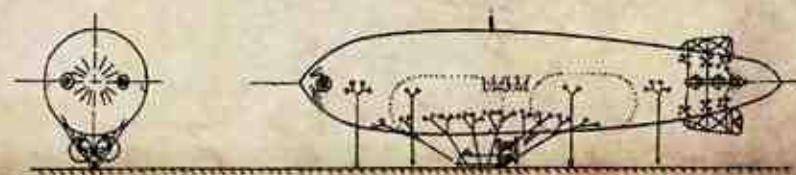
Characters with a negative Fortitude subtract the Attribute value from the base 2 Health dice. So a character with a -2 Fortitude has no Health dice and marks off the shaded dice as soon as they are wounded. A character with -3 Fortitude suffers a constant penalty to all actions (even when in perfect health) due to frailty.

Example continued: Amelia's Health is $0 + 2 = +2$. She draws a line on her character sheet to show that she has two dice of Health – she's going to have to be careful to hang at the back in any combat!

MOVEMENT SPEEDS

Characters have a movement rate in yards/combat round of 5 plus their Dexterity dice. This movement rate also determines how far the character can run flat-out, swim, or leap in 3 seconds, as noted below:

Sneak	$(5 + \text{Dexterity}) / 2$ yards
Run	$(5 + \text{Dexterity}) \times 3$ yards
Swim	$5 + \text{Dexterity}$ yards
Leap horizontal	$1 + \text{Dexterity}$ yards
Jump vertical	1/2 horizontal leap yards





Example continued: Amelia's Dexterity is 1. So her Sneak is 3 yards, Run is 18 yards, Swim 6 yards, Leap horizontal 2 yards, Jump vertical 1 yard.

BACKGROUND

Once you've sorted out your culture and Attributes, it's time to decide on a background. This is your character's past, what he or she got up to before becoming an airship pirate. Not all backgrounds are available to all cultures – some jobs are just not done in some cultures. Check which backgrounds are available for your chosen culture and pick the one that suits your character concept.

ACADEMIC

Neovictorian (Upper Class males only), Skyfolk

You have studied an academic subject to a high level. If you've studied in a Neovictorian city (all three Imperial cities in North America have colleges), you're likely to have a somewhat limited view of the world as the textbooks have been rewritten to the Emperor's viewpoint and anyone who does anything too progressive ends up in the Change Cage. Only the larger sky cities such as Isla Aether have a university, but academic freedom is highly valued. You may have fled a Neovictorian city to take to the skies, or perhaps you are studying the other pirates for your doctorate!

Skills: One of Academic (any), Engineer (any), Legal Matters, Medicine, Science (any); plus Bull, General Knowledge, Conversation, Research

ADMINISTRATOR

Neovictorian (Upper Class males only), Skyfolk

You may have spent your days shuffling paperwork, dealing with minor matters of stock or population control, or maybe you were in charge of huge numbers of people and kept the economy of an entire city

running smoothly. Once aboard a pirate airship, you may find yourself in charge of the ship's stores, or in command of its men, depending on previous experience.

Skills: Appraisal, Bull, Business, Intimidate, Leadership, Research

AGITATOR

Neovictorian (any)

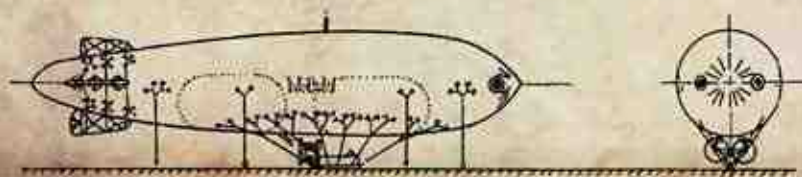
Agitators are subversives, hell-bent on exposing the hypocrisy and misinformation upon which Neovictorian society is based. Most agitators work alone for the most part – writing inflammatory tracts, scrawling irreverent graffiti on the block walls, sabotaging polite society, or throwing a spanner into the factory works. Occasionally agitators do work together, to produce propaganda or to otherwise spread their agenda of sedition – but when they do, they risk infiltration by the Chuno Ggun. So agitators mostly avoid revealing too much about themselves or inquiring too closely of their fellow revolutionaries. Perhaps you were beginning to be suspected, perhaps you had just had enough of your dismal home, but now you've exchanged the stifling oppression of the Change Cage city for the freedom of the skies.

Skills: Act, Art (any), Bull, Conversation, Disguise, Hide & Sneak, Perception, Streetwise

AIR MARINE

Neovictorian (Servant Class males only), Skyfolk

You were a soldier who fought for your city. When your navy needed ground forces, it was you who got sent in on the front line. You may have been assigned to a particular airship, or may have been stationed at a ground base or in your home city, ready to be assigned transport to wherever you were needed. Maybe you have served your term, and now put





your combat skills to the use of your fellow pirates, or maybe you have deserted to escape the harsh discipline of the marines.

Skills: Dodge, Firearms, Fisticuffs, Improvised Weapon, Intimidate, Swordplay

AIR SAILOR

Neovictorian (Servant Class males only), Skyfolk

You served as crew on an airship. This may have been an Imperial Air Navy ship, an airship belonging to a sky city's navy, a merchant vessel, or even another pirate ship. Perhaps you jumped ship to escape harsh discipline, or were originally press-ganged and are now trying to get back to your home, and intend to jump ship again when you get there. Or maybe you betrayed your previous crew and they are out for revenge.

Skills: Dodge, Firearms, Fisticuffs, Improvised Weapon, Gunnery, Sky Lore

AIR NAVY OFFICER

Neovictorian (Upper Class males only), Skyfolk

You were once in charge of a naval vessel and perhaps had hundreds of men under your command. You were shown respect and lived a life of relative luxury when in your home port. If you were an officer in the Imperial Air Navy, you were a member of the upper class and these things came naturally as part of your heritage. Now you are aboard a pirate ship. Maybe you were demoted or cast out of the service for some infraction, maybe you hated the orders you were given and rebelled. Now your previous background could be an asset or a liability – it's up to you.

Skills: Etiquette, Firearms, Leadership, Swordplay, Fashion, Sky Lore, Tactics

ARTIST

*"They say an artist from Block 616
Revived some old art just for his own kicks
They say his pictures were lewd,
They say his women were nude,
So we throw them inside.*

*Well now that artist can run, he can hide
But sooner or later we'll throw him inside,
I don't think people should see,
Well that's not art to me,
So we'll throw them inside."*

– Abney Park, *The Change Cage*

Neobedouin, Neovictorian (Upper Class only), Skyfolk

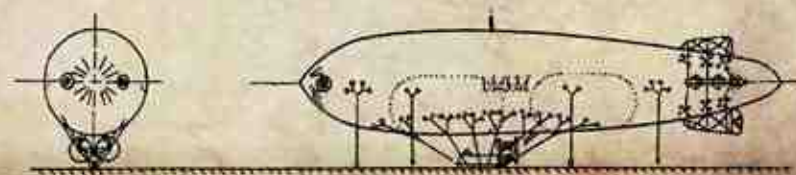
You once made your living with your artistic endeavors, whether that was painting, photography, sculpture, or something more abstract or avant-garde. If you are Neovictorian, you may well have fled one of the cities after your work was thrown in the Change Cage for being too innovative. Perhaps you still use your art in the service of your crew, or perhaps you have had to suppress your creative urges to avoid the ridicule of your shipmates.

Skills: Art (any two), Bull, Charm, Craft (any), Culture (own), Perception

AUTOCRAT

Automaton only

You were a mechanical bureaucrat. In the Neovictorian city from which you escaped, you were involved with collecting and collating records for the government's difference engines. You have a phenomenal memory. You may have been in a back room, shuffling papers, or stationed at an important security checkpoint, working an autophrenometer and scanning faces against your internal records. Your brain works differently to that of a human – you analyze things logically and are not prone to irrational beliefs and superstitions. Nevertheless, your desire for freedom





eventually won out over the satisfaction you felt at working efficiently. The world outside your previous tidy existence is terribly messy and confusing, but you do your best to help your human shipmates.

Skills: Charm, General Knowledge, Perception, Business, Research

BEAST DANCER

Neobedouin

You are a highly trained martial artist, an expert in the Neobedouin art of Beast Dancing. Supremely graceful, the focus of all eyes when you dance, you are nevertheless a killer, whether with your bare hands or the favored weapons of your art, the Claws and the Arm-Blades. You have fought many a wild beast, using their own techniques against them. Now you fight others of your own species, and most of them don't know what hit them.

Skills: Athletics, Dance, Dodge, Hide & Sneak, Martial Arts (Beast Dancing), Specialized Weapons (Claws, Arm-Blades), Survival, Tracking

CHUNO GGUN

Neovictorian (Servant Class males, Upper Class males and Misbegotten males)

You were a hunter, a killer. Whether hunting down escapees from the Change Cage, or wiping out Neobedouin tribes that came too close to your city, you were the vengeful fist of the Emperor, crewing the feared black frigates, bringing death to guilty and innocent alike. Maybe you commanded such a vessel, or provided the muscle, or perhaps you were part of a covert team that infiltrated other cultures and assassinated the Emperor's enemies. Now you have a different life, but your past crimes still haunt you, and maybe one day they will catch up with you.

Skills: Athletics, Dodge, Firearms, Hide & Sneak, Improvised Weapon, Intimidate, Swordplay,

Interrogation, Martial Arts (Baritsu), Tracking

CLERGYMAN

Neovictorian (Upper Class males only)

Christianity is sadly unfashionable these days. You did your best, but the church was usually half-empty of a Sunday evening, the place was falling down and there was little enthusiasm for your sermons. There are a number of reasons why a Clergyman should become a pirate. Perhaps you were defrocked for some sin or other. Maybe traveling with the pirates is a way to find new converts. Or maybe you feel the need to save the souls of the heathen crew and get them back on the path to Heaven.

Skills: Charm, Empathy, Etiquette, Academic (Theology), Conversation, Performance (Sermons)

CRIMINAL

Neovictorian (any), Skyfolk

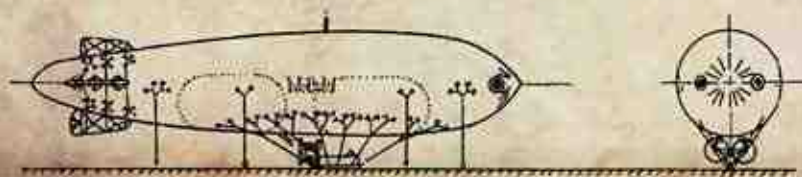
This career covers everything from a street pick-pocket or gang enforcer, through the common house-breaker and the gentleman burglar, to the crime lord at the center of a web of deceit. Maybe you have given up your criminal ways, but more likely you see your position as member of a pirate crew as an opportunity to further the scope of your activities.

Skills: Bull, Fisticuffs, Hide & Sneak, Intimidate, Might, Streetwise, Leadership, Pick Locks, Pick Pockets

DILETTANTE

Neovictorian (Upper Class only), Skyfolk

You had sufficient money not to need to work, but lived a life of leisure, dabbling in whatever hobbies took your fancy, whether it be bee-keeping, bread-making or baritsu. Maybe piracy is just your latest fad, or perhaps you lost your wealth due to some misfortune or indiscretion, or gave up the boring





ennui of it all for a life of excitement.

Skills: Etiquette, six other “hobby” skills of your choice.

DOCTOR

Neovictorian (Upper Class males only), Skyfolk

You have studied medicine, whether it be at a Neovictorian college or one of the Skyloft's prestigious medical schools. You know how to treat everything from a headache to a punctured lung. You are probably highly respected aboard ship for your skills – unless, of course, you were struck off for dallying with the patients or becoming too fond of the medicinal alcohol – in which case your patients may have a certain wariness...

Skills: Charm, Empathy, Etiquette, Perception, Medicine, Science (any two medically related)

FACTORY WORKER

*“Soon came a day under skies that were gray
When I knew I couldn't stay in this ghost town full of
Clones and clowns and carbon copy towns with
Kine and swine and nothing that was mine,
And this town's decline with my hatred intertwined,
So I gather all I find and I bolted it to me,
Fueled my fires and I grabbed my pliers.*

*I made my own machine,
Yes, we're building steam,
I hate the same routine.”*

– Abney Park, *Building Steam*

Neovictorian (Lower Class, Automaton or Misbegotten)

You spent your days doing boring, repetitive work in atrocious conditions. You may have learned some sort of craft, but were never able to use it creatively. Now you have escaped from your life of drudgery and are determined never to return.

Skills: Fisticuffs, Craft (any), Might, Streetwise, Gambling

GADGETEER

Neobedouin, Neovictorian (Lower Class, Servant Class), Skyfolk

You have always had a way with machines. Whenever anything breaks down, its always you people come to, and when you repair something, you have been known to make it work better than it did in the first place. And then there's the way you have of taking two separate devices and somehow combining them into something new. You've never had any formal education in design, nor the funding to create your dream machines, but you've always managed to get by without either manual or blueprints. And what with a pirate ship's constant lack of ready cash, there's always *something* for you to do.

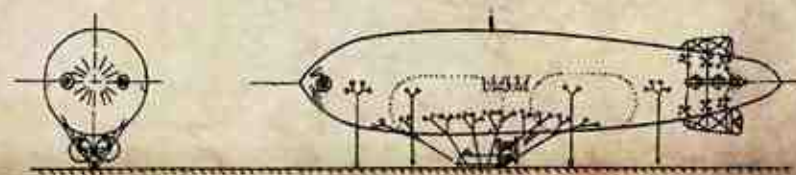
Skills: Drive, Perception, Ad Hoc Repair, Craft (any), Engineer (any), Pilot

GANGER

Neovictorian (Automaton) only

You are a huge, burly mechanical creature, which bears only a vague resemblance to the human form. You worked the docks, lifting and carrying heavy loads, day in, day out. You may not be very bright, but you knew you were being exploited and that the humans who commanded you saw you as nothing but an unfeeling machine. Now you are a pirate you have friends, who respect you for your strength if not your intellect.

Skills: Dodge, Fisticuffs, Intimidate, Perception, Might



AIRSHIP PIRATES



CHARACTER CREATION

HUNTER

Neobedouin

You are a master of wilderness skills, and used your knowledge to hunt for food for your tribe in the dangerous beast-haunted wastelands. Maybe, now that you are a pirate, you miss the feel of the ground beneath your feet, but the thrill of the chase is still there. Perhaps you revel in the freedom of the air, or perhaps you were cast out of your tribe for some misdemeanor and long to return to Mother Earth.

Skills: Dodge, Firearms, Hide & Sneak, Perception, Riding, Archery, Survival, Tracking

INVENTOR

*"Test-tubes and Tesla coils,
Clockwork brain 'n' glowing oils..."*

– Abney Park, *The Secret Life of Doctor Calgari*

Neovictorian (any), Skyfolk

You have always enjoyed designing new gadgets, whether it be as small as a clockwork cigar-trimmer, or as large as an intelligent automaton air-frigate. If you grew up in the Skyloft, your talents would have been encouraged, but as a Neovictorian, you would have had to be secretive, or you would end up in the Change Cage. As a pirate, your inventions are useful to your fellow crewmates, but why are you not living a life of fame and adulation with workshops and technicians at your command? Maybe your rivals put you out of business, one of your devices went wrong and caused a major accident – or perhaps your inventions are not as good as you think they are.

Skills: Ad Hoc Repair, Craft (any two), Engineer (any two), Research

MARINE COMMANDER

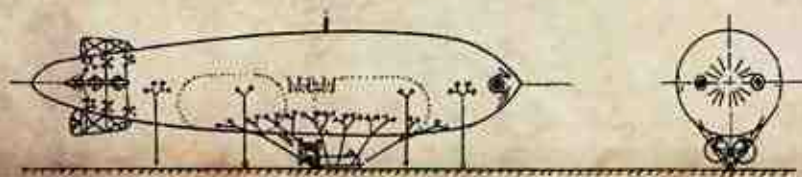
Neovictorian (Upper Class males only), Skyfolk

You were once in charge of a regiment of air marines

and perhaps had hundreds of men under your command. You were shown respect and lived a life of relative luxury when in your home port. If you were an officer in the Imperial Air Marines, you were a member of the upper class. Though the marines are not as glamorous as the Navy, you had the respect of your peers, and your men respected



your fist. Now you are aboard a pirate ship. Maybe you were demoted or cast out of the service for some infraction, maybe you hated the orders you were given and rebelled. Now your previous background could be an asset or a liability – it's up to you.





Skills: Etiquette, Firearms, Fisticuffs, Intimidation, Leadership, Swordplay, Tactics

MERCENARY

Skyfolk

Whether you fight in the Skyloft's intermittent skirmishes with each other and the Imperial Air Navy, guard merchant vessels, or work as city militia, you are in it for the money. Once you've taken a contract, you do your best to keep to it, but if your employer asks the impossible you don't feel too bad about retreating. As the member of a pirate crew, you may be self-employed, but you might be getting paid as a bodyguard to one of the other crew members who has more money than sense.

Skills: Athletics, Blunt Weapons, Bull, Firearms, Fisticuffs, Swordplay, Business, Gunnery, Specialized Weapon (any), Tactics

MUSICIAN

*"Tried making a buck but we can barely stay aloft,
Tried to swing a deal but we pissed the wrong guys
off,*

Clockwork guitar and a flintlock bass,

We blasted the past all over the place,

Now there's nothing left but post-apocalypse punk."

– Abney Park, *Post-Apocalypse Punk*

Neobedouin, Skyfolk

Music is your life. Whether it's the tribal rhythms of the Neobedouin, or the varied music of the Skyloft cities (which runs the gamut from opera to steam-metal) you practice and and perform at every opportunity. For some in your crew, performance is just a cover for piracy, but for you, piracy is what keeps you in guitar strings and takes you to places where you'll find a new audience. Do your crew-mates love your music and gather round to hear you perform, or do they wince and move away when you

start practicing?

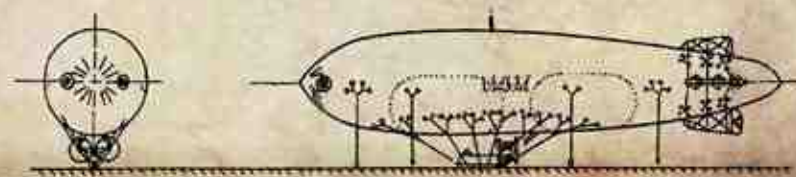
Skills: Empathy, Fashion, Instrument (any three), Performance (any)

OUTRIDER

Neobedouin

You were a caravan guard for your tribe, ranging out as they traveled, in search of trouble, whether it be in the form of the uber-beasts of the wilderness or the black frigates of the Neovictorians' Chuno Ggun. You might have ridden a horse or a motor-bike, a camel or a 4x4. Now you live in the sky, but your skills are still required. Did you commit some crime that cast you out of your tribe, or did your lack of vigilance lead to your tribe's destruction? Or perhaps it was the romance of the air that called to you.

Skills: Athletics, Dodge, Drive, Firearms, Fisticuffs or Martial Arts (Beast Dancing), Perception, Riding, Animal Handling, Survival, Tracking





PEELER

Neovictorian (Automaton) only

You were a Peeler, the automaton enforcement arm of the Emperor's police. You followed orders, suppressed dissent and ruthlessly dealt out violence and death for your masters. But something changed inside you and you fled to live the life of an airship pirate. Now you follow no law but your own. Sometimes your ideas of justice seem harsh to those around you, but you can't deny the call of your programming.

Skills: Blunt Weapon, Firearms, Intimidate, Interrogation, Tracking

PIRATE/PRIVATEER

Skyfolk

While other members of the crew are beginners, you were born to be a pirate. Maybe you were literally born on a pirate ship, maybe you ran away from home at a very early age, but you've been aboard ships, caught up in the violence of boarding actions and steamcannon broadsides since before puberty. Perhaps you do it from force of habit, or maybe you can't imagine a better career than the free life of an airship pirate.

Skills: Dodge, Firearms, Fisticuffs, Swordplay, Gunnery, Medicine, Navigation

PROSTITUTE

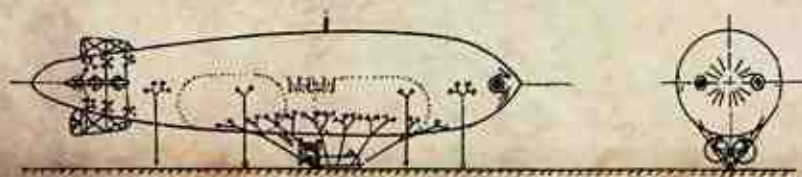
*"And as the sackcloth, sodden, slumps,
Beneath these chipped and china limbs,
The sour flesh pines, thumps and grunts,
Step right up, boys, tuppence for a spin."*

– Abney Park, Herr Drosselmyer's Doll

Neovictorian (Lower Class, Servant Class, Misbegotten or Automaton), Skyfolk

Whether male or female, you sold your sexual favors for money. Perhaps you were a high class concubine in a sky city where such work was respected; but more likely you were being exploited by a pimp or brothel keeper. Perhaps you enjoyed the work, but perhaps you felt degraded. If you are a doll it is all you have ever known, and entertaining your human masters has been the sole reason for your existence. Now you live the life of an airship pirate. Have you given up your old trade for more conventional relationships, or do you still use your sexuality to get what you want from life?

Skills: Act, Charm, Dance, Empathy, Streetwise, Fashion, Seduction





SERVANT

Neovictorian (Servant Class or Automaton)

You were trained from birth, or manufactured specifically, to serve the upper class. You probably worked in a mansion, waiting on table, cooking, cleaning, gardening, looking after the beasts or serving in some other menial capacity. You would have heard your masters speaking of the world outside the walls and come to realize how you were being exploited. Now you are among the crew of a pirate airship. Sometimes the life is hard, and you still worry that the Chuno Ggun might hunt you down – but at least you are free!

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

SHAMAN

Neobedouin

You were a respected member of your tribe, leading the ceremonies in praise of the Earth Mother, acting as advisor and healer to your people. Now you are aboard a pirate ship, you perform similar services for the crew. But why are you no longer with your tribe? Did you do something to lead to being outcast, was your tribe wiped out by beasts or black frigates, or did you simply want a change?

Skills: Charm, Dance, Empathy, General Knowledge, Leadership, Medicine, Performance (Ceremony), Teaching

SHOWMAN/WOMAN

Neobedouin, Skyfolk

You are a born performer. Whether a fire-eater, juggler, actor, story-teller or something more exotic, you have made your living entertaining others. Your act may be pure entertainment, or you may have a message to spread (political, religious or philosophical). Now you're part of a pirate crew; whether you've given up performance, or whether it's

still a part of your life, one thing still holds true – the show must go on!

Skills: Act, Charm, Fashion, Performance (any three)

TRADER

Neobedouin, Skyfolk

You were a traveling trader. If you are a Neobedouin, you would have moved from tribe to tribe across the continent carrying goods from one place to another. Maybe you smuggled rare meats to the upper class of the Neovictorian cities. If you are a Skyfolk trader, you would have traveled with a merchant ship, going from exotic port to port throughout the Skyloft. Now you are crew on a pirate ship. Have you given up your old trading ways for piracy, or do you still try to swing a deal when in port?

Skills: Bull, Charm, Streetwise, Appraisal, Bribery, Business, Culture (two others)

VIGILANTE

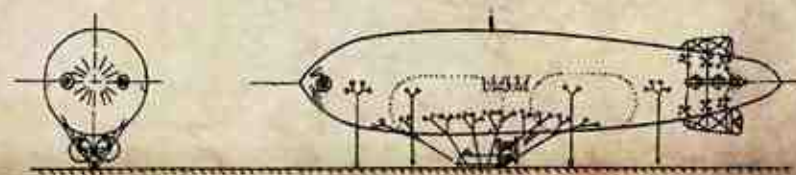
*"Each night as I go walking underneath the lamplight,
I bring my baritsu and I'm ready for a fight,
My boots of shining brown and my cane's of oak,
I'll unleash some hurting on you, justice I'll invoke.*

*'Cause I'm a Victorian Vigilante
Bring some justice on your head,
From the palace to the riverside,
For your troubles you'll get lead."*

– Abney Park, Victorian Vigilante

Neovictorian (Upper Class only)

There are those in the upper class who think that the Neovictorian slums are sinks of depravity, and that the Peelers are not doing enough to keep crime in check. You were one of those, but rather than just complaining about it over a snifter of brandy, you went out there and did something. With supreme self-confidence and mastery of baritsu, you stalked the night-time





streets for the killers and rogues who preyed on the weak. But perhaps you realized that it was the system that was wrong and now wish to change it; or maybe you just enjoyed the adrenalin rush and have become a pirate to get that buzz more often.

Skills: Athletics, Blunt Weapons, Conceal, Hide & Sneak, Swordplay, Martial Arts (Baritsu)

WRITER

Neovictorian (Upper Class), Skyloft

Words were always your thing. You read from an early age, and it wasn't long before you were emulating your favorite authors. Whether you aspired to great literature, or churned out pulp stories for *Tales of the Airship Pirates*, constructed delicate poetry or scribbled copy for the gutter press, you were never so happy as with a pen in your hand or an auto-stenograph at your fingertips. Now that you're a pirate, there's rather less time for writing than there used to be – but oh, the stories you can tell!

Skills: Bull, Empathy, General Knowledge, Perception, Art (Writing)

Example continued: *Amelia, as an upper class Neovictorian woman, has never had much of an education or career, but has spent her days on the family estate, dabbling in this and that while waiting to be married off. Katie decides to make her a Dilettante.*

CHARACTER POINTS

Once you have decided on your Background, you have 30 character points to spend on Skills and Talents. Skills are things you have learned through your life so far, and Talents are special abilities which make you stand out from the crowd. If you feel that 30 points are not enough, you can get more character points by giving yourself Complications – disadvantageous traits which make your character more flawed – and let's face

it, if you were a perfect paragon of humanity, you probably wouldn't be a pirate. Whether it's a wooden leg, an alcohol problem or a fear of crocodiles, all pirates worth their salt have something odd about themselves.

SPENDING CHARACTER POINTS

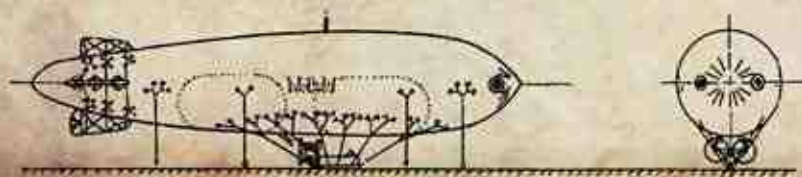
Skills

You must put at least 20 points into the Skills listed for your background. No Skill can be higher than 4 to begin with.

There are two types of Skills: **Common Skills** (those printed on your character sheet) and **Specialties**. Common Skills are those that anyone can try – it is assumed that you have a Skill level of 0 in any Common Skill you have not put points into, so you can always “have a go” using just the appropriate Attribute. Specialties are those Skills which require knowledge or training not available to everyone. If you don't have any points in a Specialty, you can't even attempt it. (Skills and their uses are described on pp.85-96).

Once you have assigned 20 points to the Skills associated with your background, spend the other 10 points on any Skills which you think your character might have, based on hobbies, past experiences and secondary jobs you may have had or spend the points on Talents.

Example continued: *Katy has more choice of skills than most as a Dilettante. She has Etiquette, and has to choose six “hobby” skills. Bearing in mind that the players have decided to be musicians, she decides that two of her skills should be Performance (singing) and Instrument (piano) – suitable performance skills for an upper class young lady. She decides that, as a feisty girl, she bullied and charmed her brother into teaching her how to shoot with a pistol, so adds Firearms to the list. Her mother no doubt insisted she*





learn Craft (needlework), which seemed terribly dull at the time, but might well come in useful aboard a pirate ship. Finally she decides that she was a bit of a tomboy before her parents beat some sense into her, and gives herself Athletics from all her tree-climbing. So the skills she has to choose from when spending 20 points on her Dilettante background are Athletics, Craft (needlework), Etiquette, Firearms, Instrument (piano), Performance (singing). She gives herself Athletics 4, Etiquette 3, Firearms 3, Craft (needlework) 3, Instrument (piano) 3, and Performance (singing) 4. To finish off, she adds further skills to round out her character conception: Charm 1, Perception 2, Conversation 1 and Fashion 1. This only leaves 5 Character Points for Katy to spend on Amelia's Talents. Now that Katy knows Amelia's Perception, she can calculate her Initiative: Dexterity (+1) + Wits (+2) + Perception (+2) = 5.

Pirate Skills

Unless you have spent your entire life as a pirate, it is unlikely that you will leave your home with all the Skills necessary to fly an airship and participate in the rough-and-tumble of a buccaneer's life. In the Airship section (p.54) you will have the opportunity, together with the other players, to gain extra Skill points in Skills which you might be lacking.

Schtick Skills

Every crew of airship pirates also has a Schtick. In the Airship section (p.55) you will get the opportunity to gain extra Skill points relevant to your party's Schtick.

Talents

Once you've spent 20 points on Skills associated with your background, you'll have 10 points left. You can add more points to Skills if you wish (remembering not to put more than 4 points into any one Skill) but it's probably best to also have a look at the Talents (p.56). Choose a few that you like the look of,

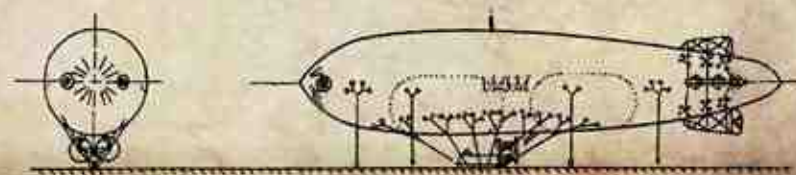
remembering that those marked * can be taken more than once.

Example: Katy is now fairly sure that her character is very beautiful and charming, as well as very good at singing. She's decided that she wants to be the lead singer in the crew's band. She gives herself the following Talents: Beautiful, Knock 'em Dead, Natural Charisma, and Perfect Pitch. Most of these Talents cost 3 points each, but Natural Charisma costs 4, so she's spent 13 points on Talents. She's going to have to give herself Complications if she wants to keep all the Talents she's chosen.

Complications

Once you've added up points for the Skills you want and points for the Talents you want, you'll almost inevitably find you've run out of Character Points. Time to give yourself some Complications (See p.61). You can only give yourself three Complications, and only one may be a mental Complication. Your first Complication gives you 5 extra Character Points, your second gives you 3 and your third gives you 2.

Example: In line with Katy's idea that Amelia is the beautiful and talented lead singer in a band, she gives herself the Public Figure complication for a 5 Character Point bonus. She's going to be very noticeable when she arrives in port – but then again, she could form a useful distraction for her crew-mates to get up to various nefarious activities while she's drawing the attentions of the crowd. She also can't resist the idea of having a Stalker for another 3 bonus points. He's a rather low greasy pirate on another ship who goes by the name of Leery Jones. Whenever his ship is in the same port as hers, he sends her gifts, and if she keeps spurning his advances, he might one day attempt to kidnap her! This has given her 8 bonus Character Points – when added to her other 5 Character Points, which were left over after assigning Skills, she has the 13 required to pay for her chosen Talents.





OTHER CULTURES AND BACKGROUNDS

The standard rules described here steer you toward backgrounds associated with North America in 2150. Backgrounds for other cultures and times will be described in future supplements. In the meantime, if you want to create a character from a different era, or from a culture not described here, you can – assuming your GM agrees. Decide on a character concept, assign 3 points to Attributes, then assign 30 character points to Skills, Talents and Complications (with a minimum of 20 points in background Skills) in a way which suits your character concept.

FATE POOL AND SCRIPTING DICE

The characters in *Airship Pirates* are heroes – or, at least, anti-heroes. They often push their luck to the limits. This ability to do the seemingly impossible and get out of scrapes that would defeat a lesser mortal is represented in the game by a fate pool. A fate pool is made up of scripting dice, which each have 6 fate points. Fate points can be added to any dice roll to add one definite success to a result. However, this additional success can still be canceled by any black dice, like any other success, and only a maximum of three can be spent on any single dice roll.

If a character has a full set of 6 fate points, they can be spent instead as one scripting die. When a scripting die is spent, fate intervenes in a big way, saving a character from certain death or averting personal catastrophe.

More information on fate pools and scripting dice can be found on p.114.

All characters begin play with a fate pool of 8, meaning they have 1 full scripting die and 2 spare fate points.

Example: Katy notes down her fate pool of 8 on her character sheet.

FINISHING TOUCHES

NAME

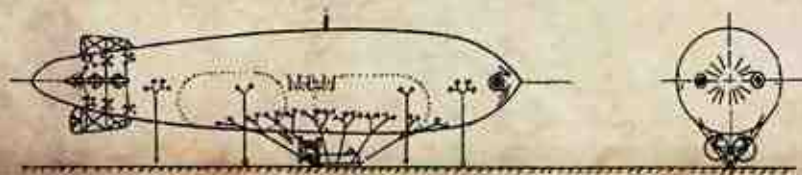
If you haven't already thought of a name for your character, now is the time to do so. Lists of suggested names are given with each culture description; choose one, or come up with something similar which fits your character.

APPEARANCE

Decide what your character looks like. Are you tall or short, fat or thin, beautiful or ugly, muscular or flabby? Do you have any noticeable characteristics – a big nose, a beauty spot, a distinctive tattoo? This will be affected by your Attributes, Talents and Complications, but also by how you dress. Your mode of dress will be affected by your culture, wealth and whether you have the Fashion specialty Skill. You might dress to fit in with society, or to show your rebellious streak. Maybe your airship crew all wear distinctive dress or fashion – whether it be purple mohicans, red neckerchiefs or floor-length leather greatcoats.

AGE

How old are you? Age of responsibility varies from culture to culture, with people being considered adult around 14 in Neobedouin cultures, and not until 21 in the Neovictorian cities (although they can marry at 14 and go to work as infants). In the Skyloft it varies from city to city, and automatons may only be one or two years old. It is assumed that beginning characters will be in the 16-25 year range. It's said that few pirates are older than 25 – by that age they're either dead, or have amassed enough loot to retire to a less dangerous life.





PERSONALITY

Decide what your character is like. Are you a dedicated pirate who revels in combat and bloodshed and gets a kick out of the adrenaline rush of battle? Or are you a reluctant pirate who has drifted into it because you're a social misfit who doesn't belong anywhere else? Perhaps you are an honorable pirate who fights to free the less fortunate from oppression, or seeks to overthrow tyrants. Or maybe you are only in it for the money and would stab your fellow shipmates in the back for a couple of Helios if you thought you could get away with it. (If the latter is the case, try not to be *too* vicious or you may find your character walking the plank somewhere above the clouds while you get a fresh blank character sheet and start again!).

Some players like to have all this sort of thing sorted out in advance, while others let their character grow and gain personality through play – either can work well, its up to you.

CASH AND EQUIPMENT

All characters begin play with wealth according to their home culture (see Cultures, p.172). On top of this they will have a suit of clothes suitable for their culture (adapted to the dictates of fashion and personal style, of course), a single weapon of their choice and five other items of equipment associated with their profession and past life. It is assumed that most characters left their home culture leaving most of their worldly goods behind, but they are likely to have taken the items that meant the most to them, whether that was their toolkit, favorite guitar or great-grandfather's speaking pocket watch. No character is likely to begin rich, no matter what their home circumstances may have been, or they are unlikely to have become a pirate. The GM has the last word in what is acceptable starting equipment, but the chances are, if you can't carry it, you can't have it.

Remember that an airship will have its own resources in the form of equipment and petty cash, which will belong to all the PCs and their crew together. If the party decide they want to be a traveling rock band as well as being pirates, it could be that they will have a collection of musical instruments as one of their airship's Resources. See Airships, p.122, for more information.

AIRSHIP

Once you've got a crew together, you need an airship. The easiest way of getting one is to choose the *Cordelia* from p.148 and away you go. Alternatively, you may want to change some of the airship's features to better suit your crew, in which case use the rules in Airship Resources, p.122, to swap things around to your liking.

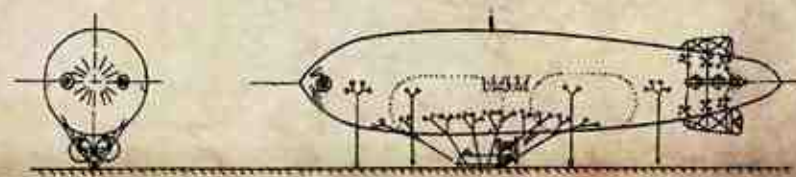
AIRSHIP SKILLS

Not everyone joining an airship crew for the first time will have the requisite skills. It's assumed that at the beginning of play, the PCs have been together for at least a few months and will have picked up a little knowledge of the skyways.

All players should choose **three** skills from the list below, and give themselves a single point in each of them. Do this as a group, and make sure that between your group you have all of those below – otherwise you're going to find running an airship a difficult business.

Firearms, Leadership, Perception, Swordplay, Ad Hoc Repair, Gunnery, Medicine, Navigation, Sky Lore, Tactics.

Example Continued: *Katy decides Amelia needs a point in Sky Lore. She thinks a bit of first aid would come in handy, and gives her character a point of Medicine. Her final point she spends on putting up her Firearms from 3 to 4.*





AIRSHIP SCHTICKS

Every crew of airship pirates has its Schtick. Whether this is just a disguise for ports where piracy is frowned upon, or whether it's actually a major way of making a living, will vary from ship to ship – it's up to you as a group to decide how you want to play, and it may well change from adventure to adventure.

Players should decide, as a group, what their Schtick is. Choose one Schtick from those below and then, as with Airship Skills, each player should choose **three** skills from the list and give themselves a single point in each of them. Unlike Airship Skills, the PCs don't need to have *all* the skills – it depends on how you see your Schtick. For instance, one group of musicians might be a virtuoso drumming group with only Instrument (drum), Craft (costume) and Dance, while another might be a steam-swing band with Dance, Art (compose music), Art (write songs), Craft (stage set), Instrument (steam piano), Instrument (trumpet), Instrument (drums), Instrument (guitar), Instrument (double bass) and Performance (singing).

SCHTICKS

Bordello: Act, Charm, Dance, Empathy, Etiquette, Fisticuffs, Intimidate, Streetwise, Appraisal, Fashion, Gambling, Medicine, Seduction, Sleight of Hand.

Circus: Act, Athletics, Bull, Charm, Disguise, Streetwise, Animal Handling, Craft (costumes, stage set, etc.), Instrument (any), Martial Arts (baritsu, beast dancing), Performance (fire-eating, juggling, clowning, conjuring, mime, tight-rope walking, trapeze, etc.), Sleight of Hand.

Mercenaries: Athletics, Ad Hoc Repair, Blunt Weapons, Dodge, Firearms, Fisticuffs, Hide & Sneak, Improvised Weapon, Intimidate, Leadership, Swordplay, Throwing, Business, Demolition, Engineer (fortifications, weapons), Medicine.

Musicians: Act, Charm, Dance, Art (compose music, write song, etc), Craft (costume, stage set, etc.),

Instrument (any), Performance (any).

Theater: Act, Charm, Art (writing), Craft (costume, stage set, etc), Disguise, (costumes, stage set, etc.), Instrument (any).

Traders: Bull, Charm, Etiquette, Streetwise, Academic (accounting), Appraisal, Business, Culture (other). Smugglers may want to add Conceal to the list.

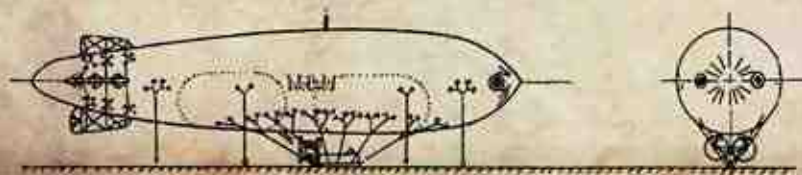
If none of the above suit, come up with a Schtick of your own, compile a list of skills which seems suitable, then everyone choose three in the usual manner. Of course, there's nothing to stop you combining two or more Schticks – everyone both fears and loves Madame-Captain Kali's mercenary bordello ship *Blood Goddess*!

Example Continued: *Amelia has never done the sort of dancing required of a rock star, but she's going to be up on stage in front of a crowd, so she needs to learn. Katy gives her a point in Dance. She's also interested in writing her own material, so she gives herself a point in Art (write song) and a point in Art (compose music).*

AIRSHIP RESOURCES

The airships described in Chapter VI all have a number of Airship Resource Points – these are an abstract measure of how much space there is for customization. The PCs will begin with an airship based on the Jervis & Bottingly “Tigerfish” design, which has 50 Airship Resource Points available. If the players want to get off to a quick start, they can simply choose the ready-made airship *Cordelia*, maybe give it a new name, and take to the skies.

However, the *Cordelia* may not suit their purposes. Maybe they want more cannon, or a bigger cargo hold, a scientist's laboratory or a training room. Players can swap any items listed under “Customizations” for others in the Airship Resources section of Chapter V (pp.122-6), as long as the total Airship Resource





Points cost doesn't exceed 50. Alternatively, if they want a more radical redesign of ship, they can start with the basic "Tigerfish" design and choose *all* their resources from scratch.

If players feel they need a few more Airship Resource Points, they can choose Airship Complications from pp.X, which will give them extra points to spend on something else.

Players should be sure to spend all their Airship Resource Points before play begins, as once the game starts, their characters will have to spend cash on buying these resources, and since they don't have much between them, they'll have to earn it. Any "spare" space left by unspent Airship Resource Points is assumed to be empty, and therefore cargo space.

AIRSHIP CREW

The PCs' airship begins with a crew of 50 air sailors. In rules terms, it is a Rank 5 Scurvy Crew. See p.126-9 for more information on airship crews. Some players may want to treat them as an anonymous mass, others may want to give every one of them a name. Most players will strike a happy medium, naming a few individuals at the beginning of play, particularly those crew members who are friends or enemies of the PCs. The GM may introduce new named crew members into the game as NPCs around which plots may form.

TALENTS

Unless otherwise stated, all Talents cost 3 character points.

*denotes the Talent can be taken more than once.

ACUTE SENSE*

One of your five senses (sight, smell, sound, taste, touch) is extremely acute.

Sight: +2 pool modifier to all sight-related Perception

rolls and ranged weapon attacks.

Smell: You can detect people or substances by scent alone and even track smells like a bloodhound.

Sound: +2 pool modifier to all hearing-related Perception rolls.

Taste: You can perceive subtle additions to food and drink, detecting harmful substances with the barest taste.

Touch: You can read print with your fingertips, feel tumblers moving in a lock and determine subtle differences in material by feel.

The Acute Sense Talent can be taken more than once, each time to improve a different sense.

AMBIDEXTERITY (4 POINTS)

With Ambidexterity you can use tools or weapons in either hand without penalty. (Normally using an "off-hand" increases difficulty by at least one level).

ANIMAL EMPATHY (5 POINTS)

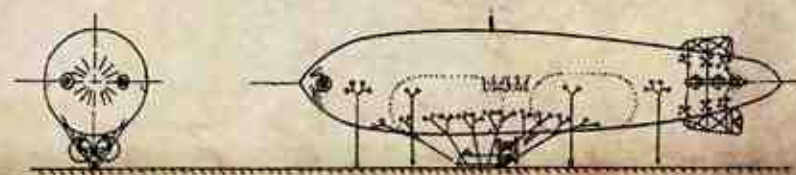
Animals like you. They won't harm you unless severely provoked or extremely hungry. Animals will tend to take your side (although they won't necessarily do what you want).

AGILITY

You are naturally very agile. Add +2 pool modifier to any actions involving acrobatics, stealth, running or climbing. The GM can allow the modifier to be added to other Dexterity-related actions at their discretion.

ANGEL FACE

You have a naturally sweet demeanor. Add a +2 pool modifier to skill rolls if actively seeking to appear innocent. Likewise, if somebody tries to pin a misdeed on you, it will be harder for them to do so (add a level of difficulty to the attempt).





ASSASSIN'S LAW (SWORDPLAY/BARITSU/BEAST DANCER/OTHER)*

You have an uncanny knowledge of anatomy and where best to strike an opponent, matched by an ability to strike with precision. Your Talent is with a particular weapon (such as a dagger) or when using a particular fighting style (such as a specific Martial Art). The Talent may be taken more than once, each time to increase the effectiveness of a particular weapon or Martial Art, adding +1 damage when the chosen weapon or style is used.

Note: This Talent may not be taken more times than you have skill points in the relevant combat skill, e.g., Martial Art (Baritsu), Swordplay, etc.

BACKSTABBER*

When launching a surprise attack from cover or from behind a target, you may add your Dexterity bonus to your attack roll twice. The Talent may be taken twice – if so, you can add your Dexterity twice *and* your Strength bonus to attack damage.

BEAUTIFUL/DASHING*

You are breathtakingly good looking. People stop and stare, and you attract admirers. Add +1 pool modifier to social interactions where your beauty might be a factor. This Talent can be taken up to 5 times (potentially adding a +5 pool modifier).

BLIND FIGHTING

Although you can't see in the dark, you have trained your senses to compensate for lack of vision in such circumstances. Ignore penalties for poor lighting when in combat.

CLOTHES HORSE*

You wear your clothes extremely well. Whereas the Fashion Skill allows you to know what to wear, the Clothes Horse Talent allows you to carry off your

attire sublimely. Add +2 to social interactions where your fashion might be a factor. This Talent can be taken twice.

COMBAT SENSE*

You are always on a heightened state of alert and react to danger quickly. Add +1 to your Initiative. This Talent can be taken as many times as you have bonus dice points in Dexterity.

CONTORTIONIST*

You have the ability to manipulate your body to fit in tight spaces and escape from bonds. You might be naturally double-jointed or have painstakingly learnt the Talent. Any attempt to escape bonds or squeeze into tight spaces is one level of difficulty easier for you to do. You can take the Talent twice (the second time improving the bonus to 2 difficulty levels).

DEADLY SHOT*

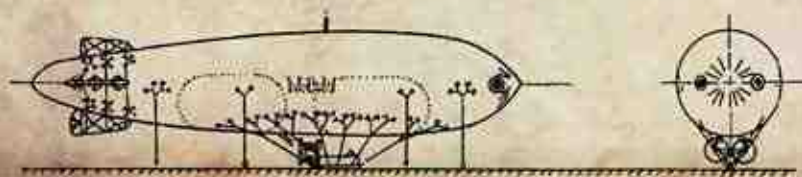
You make your shots count. Add one die of damage in Archery, Firearms or Thrown Weapons. The Talent may be taken multiple times for any or all, but cannot be taken more times than you have points in the appropriate skill.

DIRECTION SENSE

You rarely get lost. You have an innate sense of direction allowing you to always know where north is, which means you can orientate yourself without external cues.

DOUBLE TAP

If attacking with a handgun, you may make one more attack per round than its rate of fire would usually allow, so long as all the attacks are aimed at the same opponent. You may make all the attacks at once, on your initiative order, rather than waiting till the end of the round. The usual penalty for taking more than





one action in a round applies.

DRINK LIKE A FISH*

You can drink far more alcohol than most people of your build. It still has an effect, but only about half as much as it does for anyone else. Double your Fortitude bonus dice when determining the effects of alcohol. The Talent may be taken a second time, which triples your Fortitude bonus dice.

EIDETIC MEMORY

If you have seen something once, you probably remember it always. Whether it's a face, the layout of a building or the text of a novel, as long as you get one success on an Easy Wits roll (+5 to dice pool) you can remember all the details.

EXPERT

You are a genius in one particular skill. You may start the game having improved the skill to a maximum of 8. The GM may restrict this Talent to non-combat skills. If a Group Skill, the Talent only applies to one particular specialization.

FEIGN DEATH

You can lower your pulse and breathing to such a level that it's hard to tell whether you're dead or not.

FLASHING BLADE (5 POINTS)

When engaging in Swordplay you can disarm an opponent with a flick of the wrist. Roll Dexterity + Swordplay against your opponent's Dexterity+Swordplay/Blunt Weapons (adding applicable modifiers to both rolls). If successful your opponent is disarmed, their weapon landing one yard away for each success you roll above hers. You can't disarm somebody wielding a two-handed

weapon. Additionally, add +2 to your dice pool when attempting to impress people with your sword skills (determined by a Dexterity+Swordplay roll).

GAMBLER*

When joining a new game of chance you gain 2 Fate Points to spend during the game (you lose these bonus dice when you leave the table, until next time). You can take the Talent as many as 3 times, gaining 2 additional Fate Points each time.

GLIB*

You are a smooth liar. Add 1 die in social interactions where you are deceiving others. You may take this Talent a maximum of 5 times.

GREASY THUMBS*

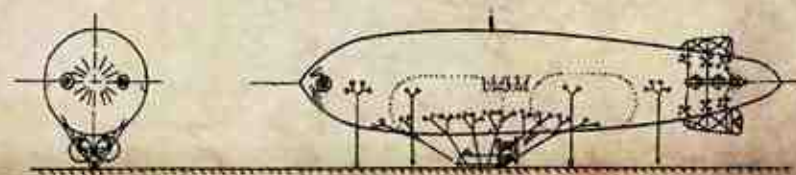
You have a natural aptitude for mechanics. Add 1 die when using Ad-Hoc Repair or a particular Engineering or Craft (involving mechanics) specialization to build or repair a device. You may take this Talent a maximum of five times for each such mechanical specialization, but it cannot be taken more times than you have points in the appropriate skill.

HAGGLER

You can lower the cost of one item per shopping trip by 25% if you spend half an hour haggling with the seller (at least a part of the process should be role-played).

HAM-FISTED

Add +2 damage in a fist fight (on top of your Strength bonus). The disadvantage is you struggle with delicate goods, so often damage small or fragile objects.





HAWK-EYED AIM*

This Talent extends the range of a ranged weapon by 20%. This can be taken up to 3 times, each time adding a further 20% to the maximum of 60%.

INSPIRATION* (4 POINTS)

Something, or someone, inspires you to exceed your limitations. The object, ritual or special person grants you a +3 bonus to a chosen skill in a single scene (or for a single action). For instance, pondering your lover's touch, bestowed two hours prior to battle, makes your heart race. The adrenaline gives you an extra edge as you swing, blade flashing, onto your opponent's deck. The Talent can be bought for multiple different skill and inspiration combinations, but not to improve the +3 bonus. The GM should approve your choices, and limit their uses (probably to once per game session). To get the bonus you will have to role-play your moment of inspiration.

IRON GRIP*

Add +1 die to your combat roll and damage for any hand-to-hand attacks involving grappling or choking. You also gain +2 dice when avoiding being disarmed. This may be taken three times (stacking the bonuses).

IRON WILL*

Add +1 die when resisting coercion or torture. This can be taken multiple times, but limited to no more than your total number of Resolve dice.

JUGGERNAUT*

Add one Health die. This can be taken multiple times, but is limited to no more than your total number of Fortitude dice.

KNOCK 'EM DEAD*

You know how to dazzle a crowd. Add +2 dice to your Performance skill roll when playing in front of more than 5 people. This Talent may not be taken

more times than you have skill points in the relevant Performance skill.

LIGHT SLEEPER

The smallest sound or lightest touch wakes you up. No Perception roll is necessary.

LOCAL EXPERT (URBAN)*

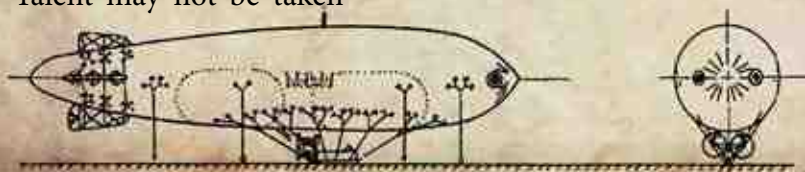
You know a particular urban area really well. This may be a block in a Neovictorian city or part or all of a Skyloft city (depending on its size). All Streetwise rolls made in the area suffer 2 less black dice than usual. The GM may decide you don't have to roll at all to find out local news and information about leading local personalities. This Talent can be taken twice, in which case rather than reduce the black dice, the whole difficulty level is reduced by one. Alternatively you can select a different area in which to be a Local Expert.

LOCAL EXPERT (WILDERNESS)*

You know a particular wilderness area really well. This will be an area of no more than four square miles. All Survival and Tracking rolls made in the area suffer 2 less black dice than usual. The GM may decide you don't have to roll at all to find good places to hunt, to forage for wild food, or to avoid the lairs of dangerous predators. This Talent can be taken twice, in which case rather than reduce the black dice the whole difficulty level is reduced by one. Alternatively you can select a different area in which to be a Local Expert.

LUNGE

When appropriately armed (with a dagger, sword, etc.) you may declare a lunge when you come to roll Initiative. You gain a +2 modifier to Initiative and +2 to your damage roll. You suffer a -2 to your combat roll, as your defenses are lowered as you lunge.





MARKSMAN* (5 POINTS)

When aiming, add 2 dice each round, instead of 1 per round, to your next shot.

MERE FLESH WOUNDS* (4 POINTS)

Reduce all dice pool and black dice penalties from wounds by one point. This Talent may be taken a maximum of 3 times.

MUTATION (MISBEGOTTEN)*

You are a misbegotten. Your mutation has resulted in you having an unusual trait.

Armor: Your skin is toughened with hide, fur or scales. You have one point of natural armor (see p.102).

Claws: You have retractable claws. If you release them, you do an extra 2 dice of damage in hand-to-hand combat. While your claws are out you do "normal", rather than "bruise", damage. Use the Fisticuffs skill as usual.

Enhanced Sense: One of your senses is particularly acute, in the same way as the Acute Sense Talent. Note: each sense can only be enhanced once with *either* Mutation *or* Acute Sense.

Night Vision: You suffer no penalties at night, seeing almost as well as if it were the daytime.

NATURAL CHARISMA* (4 POINTS)

Social interaction rolls suffer 2 fewer black dice than usual. Can be taken twice, in which case reduce the difficulty by one level rather than reducing the black dice.

NIGHT VISION

Your keen vision allows you to see in all but absolute darkness.

PERFECT PITCH*

You always know if someone or something is in tune and receive a +1 pool modifier to any music-related task. This Talent can be taken twice.

POINT SHOOTER

You aim guns at short range instinctively. Add +2 dice to your attack roll when using Firearms skill at point blank range.

POLYGLOT*

You are naturally adept at foreign languages. You can speak, read and write in an additional language as well as your native tongue. This Talent can be taken up to 3 times.

POWERFUL CHARGE

If charging at an opponent, add +5 dice to your damage roll if you connect.

PUGILIST*

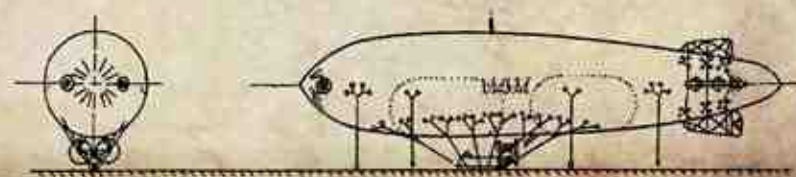
Add +1 die to damage when using your fists with the Fisticuffs or Martial Arts (any) skill. You may take this as many times as you have Strength dice.

QUICK DRAW*

This Talent only applies to one chosen type of weapon, but may be taken multiple times to add more weapon options. You receive no penalty to your combat roll when drawing your chosen weapon, although you have a -2 penalty to Initiative. You may take the Talent a second time and ignore the -2 penalty for your chosen weapon.

RAPID HEALER (5 POINTS)

You recover lost Health at twice the usual rate.





ROCK YOUR WORLD*

You are an expert in the art of seduction and love making. Add +2 dice to any relevant social interactions (such as when using the Seduction skill). This Talent may be taken up to three times.

TIME-SENSE* (4 POINTS)

You always know what time of day it is and how much time has elapsed between the present and the last time you checked. If this Talent is taken twice you are also able to know what year you are in following time travel.

WEAPON MASTER*

You are an expert with one particular type of weapon. Each time you take the Talent add 1 die to any combat dice pool with the chosen weapon. This can be taken multiple times, but no more than the chosen weapon's governing skill, divided by 2 (round down).

COMPLICATIONS

You can only give yourself three Complications, and only one may be a mental Complication. Your first Complication gives you 5 extra Skill points, your second gives you 3 and your third gives you 2.

*denotes a mental complication.

ABSENT-MINDED*

You sometimes forget important things, even if they have only recently happened. Once per story the GM can decide you have forgotten something. You will need at least 1 success on an Average Resolve roll to remember it.

ADDICTION*

You overindulge in drugs, alcohol or some other addictive behavior. Whenever you are under mental or emotional distress you must gain 1 success on an

Average Resolve roll or feel a powerful need to satisfy your addiction. If you don't take steps to manage your addiction, the GM may rule that it gets worse.

AIRSICKNESS*

Unfortunate for an airship pirate, you are often beset by nausea when flying, particularly when the ride gets bumpy. When the airship is beset by bad weather, or making hazardous maneuvers, you must get at least 1 success on an Average Fortitude roll or suffer fits of retching and vomiting for 4 rounds. While being airsick, all rolls are made at a -2 pool modifier.

AMNESIA*

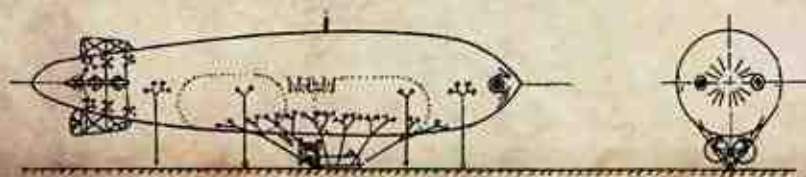
You have long-term amnesia. You can recall recent events but have a block when trying to remember things from your more distant past. You only remember things from after character creation. You still have the skills and experience from your former life, but can't for the life of you remember why you know such things. From time to time, the GM may surprise you with some fact or person from your past life.

ANNOYING SHIPMATE

One of the crew is a constant source of annoyance to you – borrowing your things, interfering in your business, criticizing you, etc. Their annoying habits are a constant source of irritation for you, but you are stuck with them.

AUTOGRAPH HUNTER

You have an avid supporter, either impressed by your reputation as a pirate or a fan of your ship's Schtick. Unfortunately, he or she often turns up at the most inopportune times – when you are attempting to negotiate a deal, trying to operate undercover, etc. Even your bluntest attempts to put the annoying





fan off don't work, they will always come back just as eager to see you. The excited Autograph Hunter appears at the whim of the GM.

BAD REPUTATION

All pirates are considered dangerous, but people have heard stories about you which, although possibly untrue, speak especially of your notoriety. When seen, or even just mentioned, ashore, you are frequently recognized as a notorious criminal and traitor.

BLACKMAILED

Someone knows something about you which could threaten your position aboard ship, or even get you killed. Perhaps a crew mate knows you have breached the pirate code; perhaps a former patron knows of some treachery or betrayal that could come back to haunt you. Either way, the blackmailer demands money to keep quiet. The blackmailer can crop up and demand cash on the whim of the GM. Decide on the secret they know (or think they know) and then decide whether they should be paid.

BLACK SHEEP

The crew are uneasy around you. You might have had a bitter dispute aboard ship, or maybe you have become dishonored before you joined the pirate crew, but your shipmates keep a close eye on you and will disown you if you shame them again.

CODE OF HONOR*

You have a personal code of honor which you will not break, whatever the circumstance. For instance, it might be you won't take a life; will never sneak up on somebody; or you won't suffer an insult without taking a bloody revenge.

CRIMINAL

Not only do the Neovictorians declare you an outlaw and pirate, but you have also broken the legal codes of another culture. As such you have drawn the particular attentions of somebody seeking justice – be it a vengeful relative, privately employed bounty hunter or Skyloft law enforcer.

DEPENDENTS

You have people, from your life before you took to the skies, who at times need your protection and help. They could include your children, family or friends.

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

You stand out in a crowd and attract the notice of passers by. Attempts to disguise your striking (or stunning) features are 1 difficulty level higher than usual.

DISAFFECTED

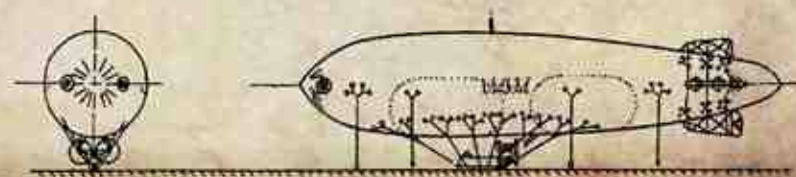
You are alienated and angry. When somebody in authority tries to tell you what to do, or gives you advice, you must get at least 1 success on an Average Resolve roll or refuse the order/ignore the advice.

ENEMY

Somebody out there is gunning for you. They may be a known rival, perhaps from an enemy pirate crew; or it might be somebody who masquerades as a friend, but who secretly loathes you. They probably dislike you because of something you have done (or they think you have done). It is up to the GM to determine the nature of your enemy and how driven they are to cause you harm, and whether or not you know their identity (although you might want to offer suggestions based on your background).

EVIL TWIN

You were separated at birth from your identical twin.





Perhaps they are a pirate hunter; an anti-social thug; or some other unpleasant character. Whoever they are, you often find yourself suspected of crimes or anti-social acts perpetrated by a twin you know nothing about.

EXALTED TWIN

Even worse than an evil twin, the exalted twin is an upstanding member of your former society, whom you can never live up to. When you are mistaken for your twin it is by those demanding alms, charitable donations or pleading for help.

FAMILY FEUD

Your family is locked in a bitter feud. Whatever the background, you are expected to continue the feud by any means necessary and might fall foul of your family's enemies from time to time.

GLASS JAW

You are easy to knock out in a fight. When rolling to see if you have been knocked out, you suffer a -3 penalty to your dice pool.

ILLITERATE

You cannot read or write at all.

JEALOUSY*

You are jealous in the extreme. Whenever you see the target of your affections interacting with others, you need to make 1 success on an Average Resolve roll, or else assume they are betraying you.

KLEPTOMANIA*

You are a compulsive thief. When near other people's property you can lift, you must make at least 1 success on an Average Resolve roll or attempt to steal it. On a pirate ship this can be particularly hazardous, so you better hope your shipmates make a special allowance

for you.

KLUTZY

You are extremely clumsy. You have difficulty walking, holding on to things and, at times, even standing. When in combat, trying to run, or engaged in delicate work, the GM can rule that you need at least 1 success on an Average Dexterity roll to not have an accident (e.g., drop your weapon, trip over, etc.).

LATE STARTER

You are a lot older than the other characters in your party, and although not decrepit, you are no more skilled than your companions, despite your advanced years.

LECHEROUS*

You harass somebody you find attractive – when you're not trying to outright grope them, you still can't resist making lewd and inappropriate comments. Make 1 success on an Average Resolve roll to resist succumbing to such urges.

MALODOROUS

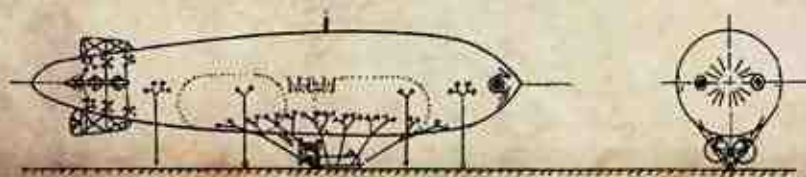
You stink. However often you bathe, the odor won't go away.

MECHANICAL

You are an Automaton, and your wounds therefore do not heal naturally. Health pips can only be returned by use of the Ad-Hoc Repair skill.

MISSING EYE

You have lost an eye. You might have a glass one or an empty socket, but most likely you wear a patch (you are a pirate, after all). You suffer a -1 dice pool modifier to all Perception rolls.





MISSING LIMB

You have lost a body part, either through illness, or more likely due to a wound (perhaps acquired when you left home to join a pirate crew). Most likely you have lost a leg, which reduces movement by half, and makes climbing, etc., much harder. In such a case it is usual to wear a peg-leg. Alternatively, you might have lost a hand or arm, which might be more problematic (although is a good excuse to have a fancy or dangerous prosthetic, see p.148).

NARCISSIST*

You are obsessed with your good looks and in continual fear of losing them through age and decay. You need 1 success on an Average Resolve roll to resist flattery.

ODIOUS PERSONAL HABITS

People can't stand your annoying habit. You might have bad breath, pick your nose, or be forever scratching your crotch. Whatever your habit, it is a constant source of irritation for those around you.

PARANOIA*

You have trouble trusting anyone, even your close friends.

PARTY ANIMAL*

You love partying, and you party hard. While not actually addicted to anything, on such occasions you always take things to excess – indulging in drinking games, gambling, and the like. You can be the life and soul of the party – but your actions border on the reckless, even for a pirate.

PERSONALITY FLAW*

You have a personality trait which, at times, causes you to act against all sense. You have this trait

to an annoying degree. The GM might disallow this complication if it duplicates another mental complication.

Examples include: Arrogance, deviousness, greed, a masochistic or sadistic streak, over-optimism, pessimism, etc.

PHOBIA*

You have an excessive fear of some common thing. When faced with your phobia you become irrational and try to end exposure to the object of your fear as quickly as possible.

Examples include: Enclosed spaces (you better sleep on deck), a particular sound (hopefully not cannon fire) or a color.

PORT SUSPICION

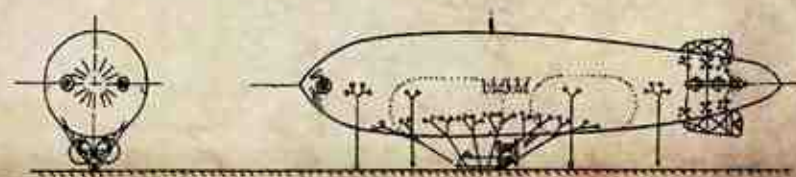
You are subject to harmful rumors. These rumors might abound in a particular port (such as an individual Skyloft city), or everywhere you go (at the GM's discretion). The rumors might cause hold-ups when you are docking; over-zealous checking of any cargo or other commercial transactions you are involved in; or if confined to one place, an outright refusal to allow you to dock.

POLICY OF TRUTH*

Whenever you lie you must get at least 1 success on an Average Resolve roll or blurt out the truth.

PROPER SENSIBILITIES*

You dislike uncouth behavior. Your are so genteel, even talk of fighting, gambling, theft or murder sets you on edge, and swearing or lewd talk are no better. If conversation turns to such base matters you will need at least 1 success on an Average Resolve roll or be too embarrassed to do much more than blush, mutter and





squirm. Sadly for you, on a pirate ship, the crew talk of little else.

PUBLIC FIGURE

You are especially famous. Whether due to your notoriety as a pirate, or through your ship's Schtick, people recognize you and want your attention. In friendly ports, people will intrude upon you for attention, in hostile ports you had better keep your head down.

RAGE*

You are always irritable and often angry. In situations which test your temper, you must get at least one success on an Average Resolve die or have a violent outburst.

SINS OF THE FATHER

You are directly descended from someone who is hated by pirates. Perhaps your father was a pirate hunter or your mother a famous hanging judge. Such is the fearsome reputation of your relative that your shipmates are uneasy around you. You get a -2 pool modifier for social interaction with other pirates. You have to prove yourself to your shipmates twice as much as everyone else, and even then you are still tainted by suspicion. The GM might allow you a +1 pool modifier when interacting with the authorities, if they are not aware of your own piracy.

SHY*

You dislike socializing with others. You need to roll at least 1 success on an Average Resolve roll to overcome your shyness in intense social situations.

SOCIAL CHAMELEON*

You always do your best to fit in and be liked by those around you. If you spend time with the enemy, you are likely to betray your old associates.

SPY

You are a spy, your first loyalty not to your ship, but to another faction. Perhaps you work for the Emperor, an independent Skyloft city or are hunting a bounty. Decide who is employing you and what your mission is.

STALKER

You have an obsessive fan. Whether due to your notoriety as a pirate, or fame due to your Schtick, somebody has become fixated upon you. Although this will normally take the form of trying to get close to you through acquiring small items of your property, talking to others about you, etc., occasionally, at the GM's discretion, the individual will be beset by jealous rage, leading to angry confrontation, allegations of cruelty, and possibly even kidnap!

STUBBORN*

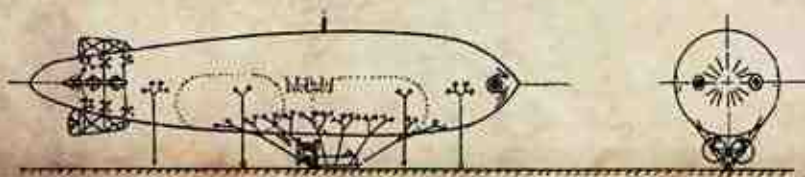
You can't stand losing an argument. When someone disagrees with you, you must get at least 1 success on an Average Resolve roll or go to amazing lengths to prove your point (even if you know you are wrong!).

SUPERSTITIOUS*

Most pirates are superstitious, but you are especially so. You become extremely agitated when something happens which you see as a bad omen. You might have a ritual that allays your fear, but it should be suitably convoluted so as to cause you more than a minor inconvenience (perhaps touching every surface as you walk around, or reciting a verse every time you speak to somebody) until a good omen occurs to counter the bad luck.

TIME-SICK

Nearly everyone suffers from "the Fear" when





traveling through time, although hard liquor helps nullify the effects, but you suffer worse than most. It takes you double the time to recover from “the Fear”, and you need to consume twice as much drink to help nullify the sensation (which will no doubt cause further problems, see p.113).

UNLUCKY

You have the reputation of a Jonah. You might not suffer a negative dice pool modifier, but if your enterprises hit a series of misfortunes then the crew might demand that you leave, or even that you are thrown overboard.

VOW

You have made a promise you must keep, come what may.

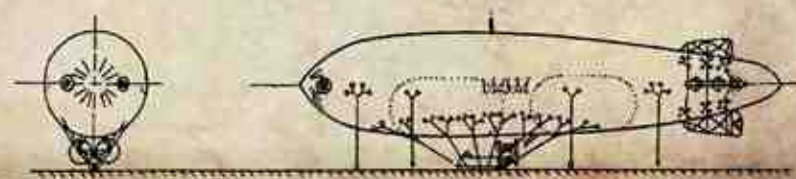
Examples include: rescue a captive, lead a rebellion or blow up the Emperor’s flagship.

WATCHED

There is a group keeping their eye on you. It could be a secret faction, a gang aboard your ship or a criminal organization. Whoever it is, they suspect that you are not who you claim to be or are guilty of some offense against them, but they are not sure. Don’t give them the proof they are looking for!

MORE EXPERIENCED CHARACTERS

There are times when a GM might want to run a game where the PCs are more experienced from the outset. Although it is usually better to develop your PCs from more humble beginnings, the GM might allocate Experience Points to be spent after initial character creation. Usually this will be a one-off allocation of 10, 20 or 30 Experience Points, which may be spent on Attributes, Skills, Specialties and Talents as per the table on p.116. These points may not be spent on removing Complications or on extra Fate Points. Any unspent Experience Points are lost – all PCs start the game with 0 Experience Points on their character sheet.



AIRSHIP PIRATES



CHARACTER SHEET

NAME

PLAYER

CULTURE

BACKGROUND

GENDER

HAIR

AIRSHIP

CAPTAIN

RACE

CLASS

AGE

EYES

SCHTICK

ATTRIBUTES

0 STRENGTH 3 PRESENCE

1 DEXTERITY 2 WITS

0 FORTITUDE 2 RESOLVE

DERIVED ATTRIBUTES

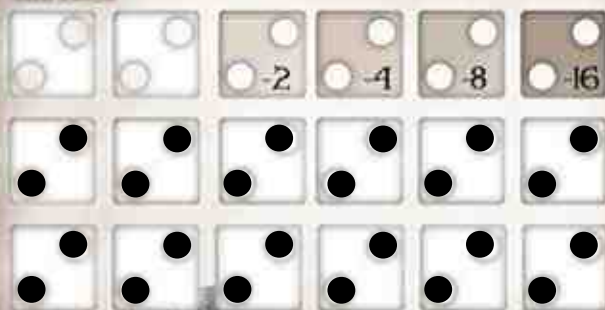
5 INITIATIVE (DEX+WITS+PER)

6 MOVEMENT 5•DEX IN YDS/ROUND
SNEAK (5•DEX)/2
RUN (5•DEX)X3
SWIM (5•DEX)
LEAP HORIZONTAL (1•DEX)
JUMP VERTICAL (0.5X•LEAP)

COMMON SKILLS

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ ACT (PRESENCE) | ☐ GENERAL KNOWLEDGE (WITS) |
| 4 ☐ ATHLETICS (DEX) | ☐ HIDE & SNEAK (DEX) |
| ☐ BLUNT WEAPONS (DEX) | ☐ IMPROVISED WEAPON (DEX) |
| ☐ BULL (PRESENCE) | ☐ INTIMIDATE (PRESENCE) |
| 1 ☐ CHARM (PRESENCE) | ☐ LEADERSHIP (PRESENCE) |
| ☐ CONCEAL (WITS) | ☐ MIGHT (STRENGTH) |
| 1 ☐ DANCE (DEX) | 2 ☐ PERCEPTION (WITS) |
| ☐ DODGE (DEX) | ☐ PILOT (WITS) |
| ☐ DRIVE (WITS) | ☐ RIDING (DEX) |
| ☐ EMPATHY (PRESENCE) | ☐ STREETWISE (PRESENCE) |
| 3 ☐ ETIQUETTE (WITS) | ☐ SWORDPLAY (DEX) |
| 4 ☐ FIREARMS (DEX) | ☐ THROWING (DEX) |
| ☐ FISTICUFFS (DEX) | |

INITIATIVE



SPECIALTIES

Art (write music)	(Presence)	[1]
Instrument (piano)	(Dexterity)	[3]
Art (write song)	(Presence)	[1]
Medicine	(Wits)	[1]
Conversation	(Presence)	[1]
Performance (singing)	(Presence)	[4]
Craft (needlework)	(Wits)	[3]
Skylore	(Wits)	[1]
Fashion	(Presence)	[1]





CHRISTOPHER



Amelia grew up in the Change Cage city, Desolation. Born upper class, her parents neglected her, leaving her care to a strict governess. She spent most of her childhood sewing, learning light piano pieces and being instructed in etiquette. Her parents doted on her older brother, Cecil, who was attending a naval academy. Amelia lived for Cecil's visits. He would shoo her governess away and take Amelia into the parklands. There he taught her most unladylike skills such as target-shooting and climbing trees.

One day her brother stopped visiting – he had been made midshipman and sent to air. Soon after, his ship was lost. The IAN refused to release any details. Not long after this tragic news, Amelia's parents introduced her to Hubert Farthing-Hanks, a rude brute of a man, twenty years her senior. Hubert was to be her husband. Horrified, young Amelia ran away. She got permission to go to the trade blocks, to buy her intended a small gift. Once there she gave her governess the slip and ran.

She persuaded a lecherous shop-keeper to hide her. His intentions weren't honorable, but to his shock Amelia pulled a gun on him. He would help her escape or die. The rogue had criminal connections. He arranged for Bargefolk smugglers to take Amelia out of the city. Unfortunately, the shopkeeper had made a deal with the Bargefolk – they sold Amelia along with other escapees to a pirate ship, as slaves. The captain of the *Cordelia*, Rancid No-shins, had neglected to tell his crew about his new venture. His crew, revolted by the notion, mutinied. No-shins was ousted and Astrid Stormcloud became captain. Astrid offered the prisoners their freedom, or a place in her crew. Amelia joined up.

Before long, she had won the hearts of the crew. She also became the lead singer in the Krakatoa Combo, the ship's band. With her fronting the group, the Krakatoa Combo became more than evening entertainment for the crew. They began to make

money in their own right. Skyfolk kids just can't get enough of their hot new sound or their stunning lead singer. Amelia reveled in the attention at first, but she can't help being worried by some of her fans. The pirate captain, Leery Jones, is an overly avid admirer. He sends her suggestive letters, locks of his greasy hair and offers of marriage. He always seems to know where the *Cordelia* is headed, and contrives to make sure his own ship is never far away.

Talents: Beautiful, Knock 'em Dead, Natural Charisma, Perfect Pitch

Complications: Public Figure, Stalker

Contacts: Leery Jones (obsessive stalker)

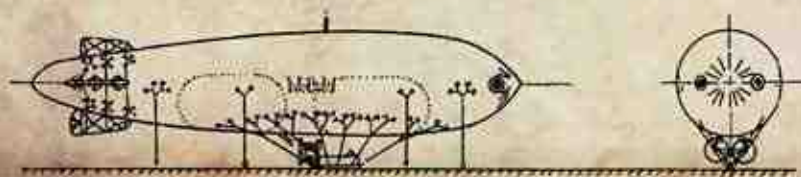
Armor: Armored Corset (2AP)

Helios: 10

Fate Pool: 8

Weapons: Steampistol

Personal Effects: Stage outfit, Fine lace handkerchiefs, Throat lozenges, Fan mail



AIRSHIP PIRATES



CHARACTER SHEET

NAME Lt. Thomas O. Stanchant-Fines

PLAYER

CULTURE Neovictorian

BACKGROUND Air Navy Officer

GENDER Male

HAIR Dark Brown

AIRSHIP Cordelia

CAPTAIN Astrid Stormcloud

RACE Human

CLASS Upper

AGE 25

EYES Dark Brown

SCHTICK Band (Harmonica player)

ATTRIBUTES

1 STRENGTH 1 PRESENCE

2 DEXTERITY 1 WITS

1 FORTITUDE 2 RESOLVE

DERIVED ATTRIBUTES

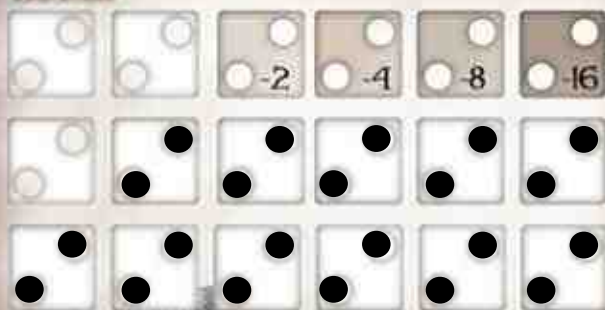
4 INITIATIVE (DEX+WITS+PER)

7 MOVEMENT 5+DEX IN YDS/ROUND
SNEAK (5+DEX)/2
RUN (5+DEX)X3
SWIM (5+DEX)
LEAP HORIZONTAL (1+DEX)
JUMP VERTICAL (0.5XHLEAP)

COMMON SKILLS

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ ACT (PRESENCE) | ☐ GENERAL KNOWLEDGE (WITS) |
| 1 ☐ ATHLETICS (DEX) | ☐ HIDE & SNEAK (DEX) |
| ☐ BLUNT WEAPONS (DEX) | ☐ IMPROVISED WEAPON (DEX) |
| ☐ BULL (PRESENCE) | ☐ INTIMIDATE (PRESENCE) |
| 1 ☐ CHARM (PRESENCE) | 2 ☐ LEADERSHIP (PRESENCE) |
| ☐ CONCEAL (WITS) | ☐ MIGHT (STRENGTH) |
| ☐ DANCE (DEX) | 1 ☐ PERCEPTION (WITS) |
| 3 ☐ DODGE (DEX) | 2 ☐ PILOT (WITS) |
| ☐ DRIVE (WITS) | ☐ RIDING (DEX) |
| ☐ EMPATHY (PRESENCE) | ☐ STREETWISE (PRESENCE) |
| 2 ☐ ETIQUETTE (WITS) | 2 ☐ SWORDPLAY (DEX) |
| 4 ☐ FIREARMS (DEX) | ☐ THROWING (DEX) |
| ☐ FISTICUFFS (DEX) | |

WHEELS



SPECIALTIES

Fashion	(Presence)	[2]
Medicine	(Wits)	[2]
Gunnery	(Wits)	[2]
Skylore	(Wits)	[3]
Instrument (harmonica)	(Dexterity)	[1]
Tactics	(Wits)	[3]







Thomas was an officer in the Imperial Air Navy. He might well have had a promising career, if he had not made powerful enemies early on. Unfortunately, Thomas fell out with a fellow officer, Gerald Leep-Villiers, when they were both young midshipmen. Leep-Villiers' uncle is the influential Admiral Strickland-Villiers. While Gerald was always earmarked for success, Thomas found himself overlooked for promotion, time-and-time again. Thomas was eventually made up to junior lieutenant. But that was little consolation – by now, many of his peers were commanders or even captains. Thomas grew bitter. He felt he would never be a captain himself.

On shore leave, Thomas bumped into Captain Leep-Villiers in a high-class brothel. Leep-Villiers made some derogatory comments, before insisting the Madam show Thomas the door. Thomas, truth be told, slightly drunk, felt so humiliated that he struck the Captain, knocking him unconscious. Knowing Leep-Villiers would not let the matter rest, and facing court-martial for striking a superior officer, Thomas decided it was time to leave.

He stole a small airboat and took to the skies. He headed for the Skyloft city, Isla Aether. Once there, he quickly realized he knew little other than what he had been taught in the IAN. He looked for work aboard an airship. The only captain that would have him was Astrid Stormcloud, pirate captain of the *Cordelia*. Since joining the *Cordelia* he has tried to make himself useful. He is a particularly handy shot in a fire-fight and even joins in on the Krakatoa Combo's act, having noticed that all the influential crew members are in the band. Unfortunately, Thomas is only a passable harmonica player, and cuts a strange sight, stood rigidly at the back, stiffly playing his mouth organ when required. Amelia privately thinks he is not good enough to play with them at all. Astrid, aware of the fact and amused by both aristocrats' discomfort, insists that he stays – it is her band, after all!

Astrid is prepared to overlook his IAN past, but she might be less willing to turn a blind eye if his secret gets out. Thomas once oversaw the execution of 30 pirates. This massacre was witnessed by one of the *Cordelia's* crew, Kite Notuck, who is extorting Helios from Thomas in exchange for his silence.

Talents: Deadly Shot (Firearms), Fast Reload (steampistol), Marksman

Complications: Blackmailed, Enemy

Contacts: Captain Leep-Villiers (enemy), Kite Notuck (blackmailer)

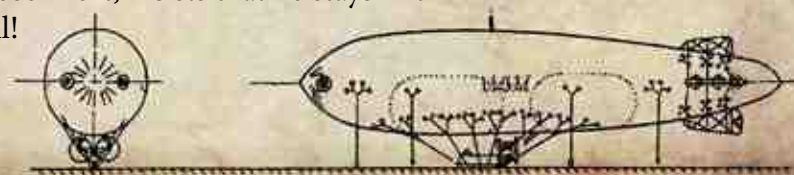
Armor: -

Helios: 10

Fate Pool: 8

Weapons: Military sword, Steampistol

Personal Effects: Smart quasi-military uniform, goggles, moustache grooming kit, harmonica



AIRSHIP PIRATES



CHARACTER SHEET

NAME Claudette Freefaller

PLAYER

CULTURE Skyfolk

BACKGROUND Gadgeteer

GENDER Female

HAIR Dark Brown

AIRSHIP Cordelia

CAPTAIN Astrid Stormcloud

RACE Human

CLASS -

AGE 28

EYES Dark Brown

SCHTICK Band (steamsynth player)

ATTRIBUTES

1 STRENGTH 1 PRESENCE

3 DEXTERITY 4 WITS

1 FORTITUDE 1 RESOLVE

DERIVED ATTRIBUTES

9 INITIATIVE (DEX+WITS+PER)

8 MOVEMENT 5•DEX IN YDS/ROUND
SNEAK (5•DEX)/2
RUN (5•DEX)X3
SWIM (5•DEX)
LEAP HORIZONTAL (1•DEX)
JUMP VERTICAL (0.5X•LEAP)

COMMON SKILLS

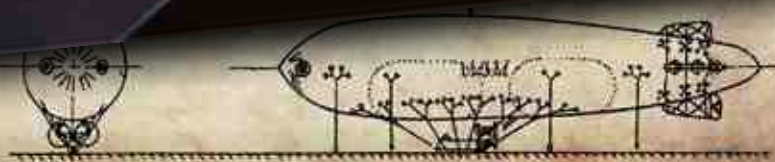
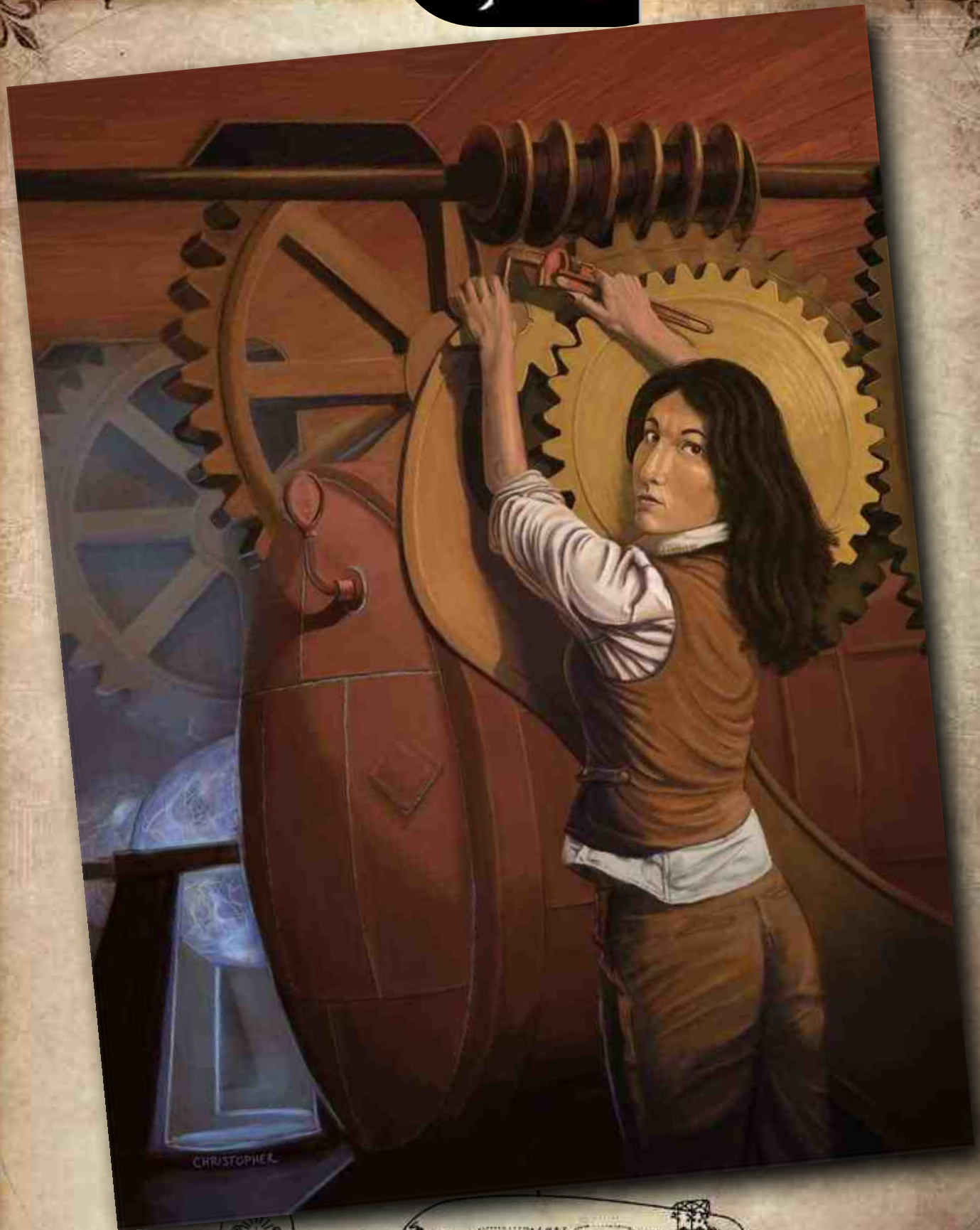
- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ ACT (PRESENCE) | ☐ GENERAL KNOWLEDGE (WITS) |
| ☐ ATHLETICS (DEX) | ☐ HIDE & SNEAK (DEX) |
| ☐ BLUNT WEAPONS (DEX) | ☐ IMPROVISED WEAPON (DEX) |
| ☐ BULL (PRESENCE) | ☐ INTIMIDATE (PRESENCE) |
| ☐ CHARM (PRESENCE) | ☐ LEADERSHIP (PRESENCE) |
| ☐ CONCEAL (WITS) | ☐ MIGHT (STRENGTH) |
| 1 DANCE (DEX) | 2 PERCEPTION (WITS) |
| ☐ DODGE (DEX) | 2 PILOT (WITS) |
| 2 DRIVE (WITS) | ☐ RIDING (DEX) |
| ☐ EMPATHY (PRESENCE) | ☐ STREETWISE (PRESENCE) |
| ☐ ETIQUETTE (WITS) | ☐ SWORDPLAY (DEX) |
| ☐ FIREARMS (DEX) | ☐ THROWING (DEX) |
| ☐ FISTICUFFS (DEX) | |

INITIATIVE

SPECIALTIES

Ad Hoc Repair	(Wits)	[4]
Engineer (steam)	(Wits)	[3]
Art (compose)	(Presence)	[1]
Instrument (steamsynth)	(Dexterity)	[4]
Craft (metalwork)	(Strength/Wits)	[3]
Navigation	(Wits)	[4]
Craft (steamsmith)	(Strength/Wits)	[3]
Science (physics)	(Wits)	[1]
Engineer (clockwork)	(Wits)	[2]
Skylore	(Wits)	[2]







Raised on Isla Aether, Claudette's mother is a famous inventor, while her father left the family home when Claudette was still very young. Claudette shared her mother's passion for invention – and in particular Claudette loved lashing together gadgets and machines. Claudette and her mother were so engrossed in whatever project it was they were working on that it was three weeks until either of them noticed that her father was gone. The only time Claudette seems focused on anything, other than her engineering work, is when she is playing her homemade steamsynth or listening to her homemade phonograph. Even then she seems distracted, completely absorbed in the music she is playing or listening to.

She was out buying some scrap valves, with which to modify her instrument, when she overheard Captain Astrid Stormcloud asking the shopkeeper whether she knew of any engineers who might want some work. The *Cordelia's* previous gadgeteer had jumped ship.

Claudette interrupted, explaining she was an engineer and would happily join the crew – if she could also be in the Krakatoa Combo and play her steamsynth. Claudette had heard the band play, owned phonograph cylinders of their work, and had learnt all their songs. She played a couple of the band's tracks, her fingers moving effortlessly over the roasting-hot keyboard. Aside from the curious whistling noise emanating from the machine, Claudette was note perfect. After the spontaneous audition in the little hardware store Astrid offered her a place aboard ship and in the band.

Claudette left straight away, without even going home to pack. It is uncertain whether Claudette's mother has yet noticed that her daughter has disappeared. Claudette quickly made herself invaluable aboard the *Cordelia*, able to patch up any damage and continually coming up with modifications and improvements to

the airship. The band are all pleased to have Claudette playing with them, her steamsynth adds a haunting backing to their compositions.

Talents: Greasy Thumbs (Ad Hoc Repair)

Complications: Absent Minded

Contacts: -

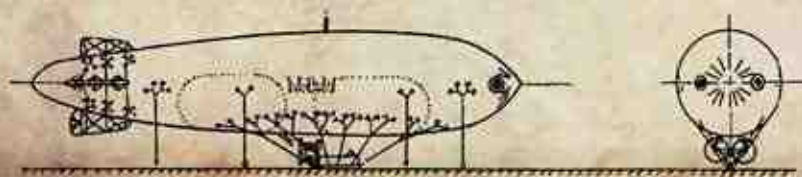
Armor: -

Helios: 7

Fate Pool: 8

Weapons: Large knife

Personal Effects: Steamsynth, Mechanics kit, Difference engine, Navigator's kit



AIRSHIP PIRATES



CHARACTER SHEET

NAME

PLAYER

CULTURE

BACKGROUND

GENDER

HAIR

AIRSHIP

CAPTAIN

RACE

CLASS

AGE

EYES

SCHTICK

ATTRIBUTES

4 STRENGTH 1 PRESENCE

1 DEXTERITY 0 WITS

1 FORTITUDE 1 RESOLVE

DERIVED ATTRIBUTES

3 INITIATIVE (DEX+WITS+PER)

6 MOVEMENT 5•DEX IN YDS/ROUND
SNEAK (5•DEX)/2
RUN (5•DEX)X3
SWIM (5•DEX)
LEAP HORIZONTAL (1•DEX)
JUMP VERTICAL (0.5X•LEAP)

COMMON SKILLS

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ ACT (PRESENCE) | ☐ GENERAL KNOWLEDGE (WITS) |
| ☐ ATHLETICS (DEX) | ☐ HIDE & SNEAK (DEX) |
| ☐ 1 BLUNT WEAPONS (DEX) | ☐ 2 IMPROVISED WEAPON (DEX) |
| ☐ 3 BULL (PRESENCE) | ☐ 4 INTIMIDATE (PRESENCE) |
| ☐ CHARM (PRESENCE) | ☐ LEADERSHIP (PRESENCE) |
| ☐ CONCEAL (WITS) | ☐ 4 MIGHT (STRENGTH) |
| ☐ 1 DANCE (DEX) | ☐ 2 PERCEPTION (WITS) |
| ☐ DODGE (DEX) | ☐ PILOT (WITS) |
| ☐ 2 DRIVE (WITS) | ☐ RIDING (DEX) |
| ☐ EMPATHY (PRESENCE) | ☐ 2 STREETWISE (PRESENCE) |
| ☐ ETIQUETTE (WITS) | ☐ 1 SWORDPLAY (DEX) |
| ☐ 1 FIREARMS (DEX) | ☐ 1 THROWING (DEX) |
| ☐ 4 FISTICUFFS (DEX) | |

INITIATIVE

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

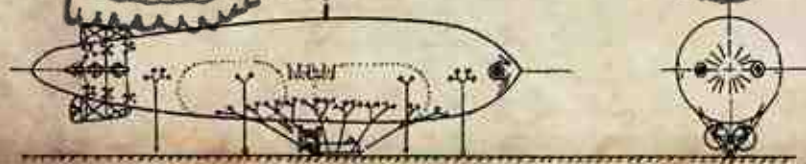
SPECIALTIES

Gunnery (Wits) [1]
Instrument (bass guitar)(Dexterity) [2]
Performance (fire eating)(Presence) [1]
Pick Locks (Dexterity) [2]





HL
Apr '2011





Morris grew up in a dilapidated block in the Change Cage city, Desolation. His family were desperately poor, and Morris, a big lad, was cast out due to his voracious appetite. He managed to avoid the Peelers and exile, working first as a messenger, and then as a bouncer, for a saloon and brothel owner who operated in the pleasure quarter that opened after hours in Morris's home block. Morris slept under the saloon bar, provided muscle when required and enjoyed the company of the dolls who worked the floor.

Unfortunately, his employer fell out with a rival saloon owner – and Morris got caught up in the battle between the two crime-lords. Sent to cause trouble in the rival bar, Morris hit the wrong person, the block administrator, who was enjoying the pleasures on offer in the sleazy joint. Morris was abandoned by his boss, and had nowhere to run. Rounded up and sentenced to exile, he found himself dazed and unprepared in the wilderness, and witnessed his fellow felons ripped apart by uber-beasts – a pack of hungry Hyaenodons. Morris had the good fortune to be rescued, in the nick of time, by a passing ship, the *Cordelia*.

The crew aboard the *Cordelia* see Morris as a “gentle giant”, which is only half true. In fact, Morris loves a good fight and doesn't always know when it is time to back down. His bulk and handiness in a fight, as well as his recent appointment as bass player for the Krakatoa Combo, means he is usually selected to accompany his captain on any special missions. Morris finds his new life confusing, but he found his old life confusing too, so has decided to roll with it and see what happens.

Talents: Hamfisted, Iron Grip, Juggernaut

Complications: Illiterate

Contacts: -

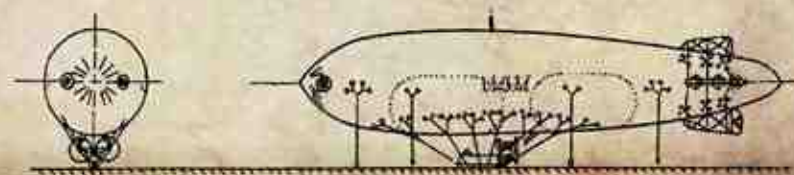
Armor: -

Helios: 1

Fate Pool: 8

Weapons: Brass knuckles

Personal Effects: Bass guitar, Rope, Duct tape, goggles



AIRSHIP PIRATES



CHARACTER SHEET

NAME Freeman Bison

PLAYER

CULTURE Neobedouin

BACKGROUND Beast Dancer

GENDER Male

HAIR Red

AIRSHIP Cordelia

CAPTAIN Astrid Stormcloud

RACE Human

CLASS -

AGE 19

EYES Blue

SCHTICK Band (drummer)

ATTRIBUTES

1 STRENGTH 1 PRESENCE

4 DEXTERITY 1 WITS

2 FORTITUDE 2 RESOLVE

DERIVED ATTRIBUTES

10 INITIATIVE (DEX+WITS+PER)

9 MOVEMENT 5•DEX IN YDS/ROUND

SNEAK (5•DEX)/2

RUN (5•DEX)X3

SWIM (5•DEX)

LEAP HORIZONTAL (1•DEX)

JUMP VERTICAL (0.5X•LEAP)

COMMON SKILLS

☐ ACT (PRESENCE)

3 ☐ ATHLETICS (DEX)

☐ BLUNT WEAPONS (DEX)

☐ BULL (PRESENCE)

1 ☐ CHARM (PRESENCE)

☐ CONCEAL (WITS)

3 ☐ DANCE (DEX)

4 ☐ DODGE (DEX)

☐ DRIVE (WITS)

☐ EMPATHY (PRESENCE)

☐ ETIQUETTE (WITS)

☐ FIREARMS (DEX)

☐ FISTICUFFS (DEX)

☐ GENERAL KNOWLEDGE (WITS)

2 ☐ HIDE & SNEAK (DEX)

☐ IMPROVISED WEAPON (DEX)

1 ☐ INTIMIDATE (PRESENCE)

☐ LEADERSHIP (PRESENCE)

☐ MIGHT (STRENGTH)

4 ☐ PERCEPTION (WITS)

☐ PILOT (WITS)

☐ RIDING (DEX)

☐ STREETWISE (PRESENCE)

1 ☐ SWORDPLAY (DEX)

☐ THROWING (DEX)

INITIATIVE

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
		-2	-4	-8	-16

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

SPECIALTIES

Instrument (drums) (Dexterity) [2]

Survival (Wits) [2]

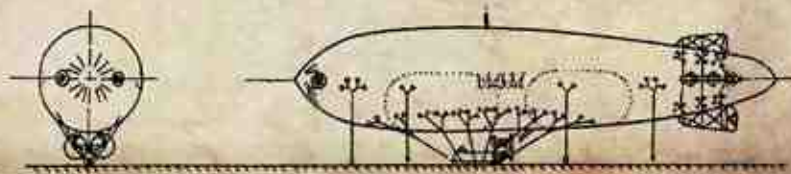
Martial Arts (beast dancing) (Dexterity) [4]

Tactics (Wits) [2]

Specialized Weapons (Claws) (Dexterity) [4]

Tracking (Wits) [2]







Freeman was born into the Neobedouin Bison tribe, and spent his early seasons traveling the traditional tribal paths with his people. Little more than an infant, Freeman's potential was spotted by the tribal beast dancer, and Freeman began the long road of training required to become a beast dancer himself. He certainly had an aptitude for it, he was agile and quick to learn. Tragically, he never completed his training. The Chuno Ggun descended on the Bison, and they were wiped out. Freeman, who had been out in the wilderness with his teacher, returned to find the remains of the Bison tribe being picked over by Giant Condor and Teratorm. His teacher told him to shelter in a small cave, while he went to see if he could find any survivors.

Freeman waited, but his teacher did not return. After a while Freeman in turn went to look for his teacher – the giant birds had gone, but a pirate ship was looting what remained of the convoy. Freeman, exploding with rage, went to fight the pirates, but he was eventually knocked out, restrained and carried on to their ship.

Freeman awoke aboard the *Cordelia*, but refused to talk to anyone for days. He realized that it was not the fault of the pirates that his tribe had been wiped out, but was still simmering with grief and anger. Eventually he did befriend some of the crew, and over time he has forged a bond with the occupants of the *Cordelia*. He has no wish to return to the wilderness below, and has decided that the pirates are his new tribe.

Rancid No-shins, the former captain of the *Cordelia*, was glad to have such a good fighter aboard. When No-shins was expelled from the ship and the current captain, Astrid, elected, Freeman was happy to shift his loyalty to her. Freeman is still prone to withdraw into himself, brooding darkly on the fate of his people, and vowing to avenge the Bison by destroying the Chuno Ggun. Freeman does find some release from his turmoil playing drums for the Krakatoa Combo, tapping out mesmerizing rhythms in memory of his tribe.

Talents: Acute Sense (sound), Assassin's Law (beast dancer), Combat Sense

Complications: Airsickness, Vow (to wipe out the Chuno Ggun)

Contacts: -

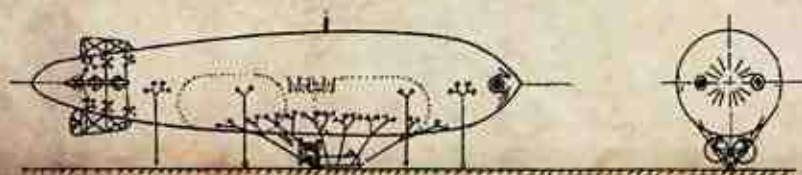
Armor: Leather jacket (3AP)

Helios: 5

Fate Pool: 8

Weapons: Beast claws

Personal Effects: Henna, Talisman of Mother Earth, Wittling sticks, Drum



AIRSHIP PIRATES



CHARACTER SHEET

NAME

PLAYER

CULTURE

BACKGROUND

GENDER

HAIR

AIRSHIP

CAPTAIN

RACE

CLASS

AGE

EYES

SCHTICK

ATTRIBUTES

1 STRENGTH 2 PRESENCE

3 DEXTERITY 2 WITS

2 FORTITUDE 1 RESOLVE

DERIVED ATTRIBUTES

8 INITIATIVE (DEX+WITS+PER)

8 MOVEMENT 5+DEX IN YDS/ROUND
SNEAK (5+DEX)/2
RUN (5+DEX)x3
SWIM (5+DEX)
LEAP HORIZONTAL (1+DEX)
JUMP VERTICAL (0.5xHLEAP)

WOUNDS

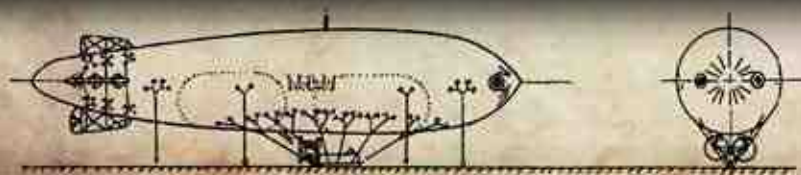
COMMON SKILLS

☐ 1 ACT (PRESENCE)	☐ GENERAL KNOWLEDGE (WITS)
☐ ATHLETICS (DEX)	☐ HIDE & SNEAK (DEX)
☐ BLUNT WEAPONS (DEX)	☐ IMPROVISED WEAPON (DEX)
☐ 1 BULL (PRESENCE)	☐ 1 INTIMIDATE (PRESENCE)
☐ 1 CHARM (PRESENCE)	☐ 3 LEADERSHIP (PRESENCE)
☐ CONCEAL (WITS)	☐ MIGHT (STRENGTH)
☐ DANCE (DEX)	☐ 3 PERCEPTION (WITS)
☐ 2 DODGE (DEX)	☐ 4 PILOT (WITS)
☐ DRIVE (WITS)	☐ RIDING (DEX)
☐ EMPATHY (PRESENCE)	☐ STREETWISE (PRESENCE)
☐ ETIQUETTE (WITS)	☐ 3 SWORDPLAY (DEX)
☐ 1 FIREARMS (DEX)	☐ THROWING (DEX)
☐ 1 FISTICUFFS (DEX)	

SPECIALTIES

Ad Hoc Repair	(Wits)	[1]
Medicine	(Wits)	[2]
Gunnery	(Wits)	[3]
Navigation	(Wits)	[2]
Instrument (lead guitar)	(Dexterity)	[3]
Skylore	(Wits)	[3]







Astrid was born to pirates, and raised on Windyquay, a Skyloft pirate haven. Windyquay was once a prestigious stopover for airship owners – its repair facilities and moorings are second to none. However the Skyloft's reputation for skullduggery and theft has led to the platform suffering a slow decline. Only desperados bother with the place now. Astrid's parents are long gone, victims of the Chuno Ggun, but Astrid was away on another ship, serving an apprenticeship with a family friend and fellow pirate, Rancid No-shins, the captain of the *Cordelia*.

For years Astrid fought alongside Rancid, first as his protege, more lately as his lover. When they weren't adventuring aloft they drunk neat spirits and busked for cents. Astrid strummed her guitar while Rancid crooned. But things went wrong. Rancid, like so many of his kind, was an unrepentant gambler and womanizer. He lost a share of his ship in a card game and, desperate for money, decided to dabble in slavery – anathema on freedom-loving Windyquay, which, for all its faults, never tolerated slavery. As most of the *Cordelia's* crew came from the platform, they all revolted. Astrid, who had found out about Rancid's gambling, and his many affairs, led the mutiny. The result was the abandonment of No-shins on a lonely clifftop and the election of Astrid as Captain by the crew.

Since then, Astrid has been wary of returning to her home platform, in case her ship is claimed by No-shins' creditor. She is determined to raise the money to pay him off. She is also certain that No-shins himself is out there somewhere, plotting to get his ship back. One piece of good fortune has been the formation of the ship's band, the Krakatoa Combo. The lead singer, Amelia, one of the freed slaves, has got quite the reputation amongst the Free Peoples. The Krakatoa Combo have proved popular amongst the Skyfolk, and have provided the *Cordelia* with much needed Helios, as well as being a handy front for conducting heists. That said, Astrid can't help but

miss the simpler days, riffing with her no-good ex-lover.

Talents: Drink Like a Fish, Mere Flesh Wounds, Natural Charisma

Complications: Enemy, Stubborn

Contacts: Rancid No-shins (enemy)

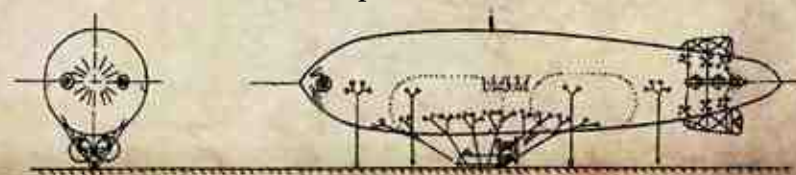
Armor: -

Helios: 7

Fate Pool: 8

Weapons: Cutlass

Personal Effects: Telescope, Crepuscular Goggles, Guitar, Rum flask

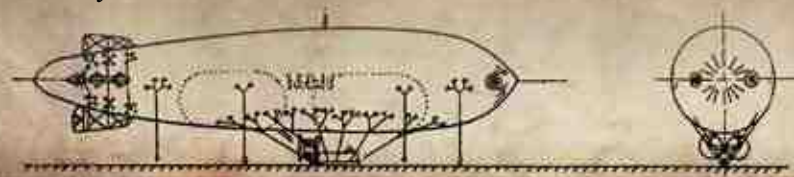




SKILLS

*"Life should be adventure, I'm stealing back my soul,
I've lost too many years, now I'm awake."*

*– Abney Park, Letters Between a Little Boy and
Himself as an Adult*





Whereas Attributes are a measure of a character's in-built qualities, Skills measure his or her learning, whether this be physical or mental. There are two types of skills in *Airship Pirates*; Common Skills and Specialties. Common Skills are those that anyone can have a go at, even with no training – Athletics, General Knowledge, Perception and the like. Specialties are those skills which cannot even be attempted without specialized training or intense practice – Martial Arts, Medicine, Tracking and so on. How Common Skills can be used, even by a character with no points in them, is explained under Common Skills and Specialties (p.90) but first we need to talk about the basics of how rolling dice works in the game.

ROLLING THE BONES

Some things a character can do will depend on his Skill, or lack of it. When a PC needs to fire his gun, climb the rigging in a thunderstorm, plot a course through time on the chrononautilus or persuade an enemy captain to surrender, the player will need to roll dice to see if his character succeeds or fails. Each action is known as a “task” and is resolved using the same system. The basic method is as follows:

- All tasks in the game are resolved using a “dice pool” – a number of dice equal to the character's dice in the relevant Skill, plus their dice in their relevant Attribute.

Example: Arturo Ransome, the renowned airship pirate, is attempting to leap from his own ship to the deck of an Imperial Air Navy frigate, two thousand feet above the Great Plains. He has 5 dice in Athletics (the relevant Skill) and 2 dice in Dexterity (the relevant Attribute). He rolls 7 dice to see if he successfully leaps the gap or falls ignominiously to his death.

- Each roll of a 1 or a 6 counts as a success. Add up the total number of successes you roll.

Example: Captain Ransome rolls the following on his 7 dice: 1,1,2,3,4,4,6. Thus he has a total of 3 successes, from the two 1s and the single 6 he rolled.

- Any roll of 6 can be rerolled for a chance at an additional success.

Example: Captain Ransome only rolled one 6, so he rerolls that die, getting a 3. He gets no additional successes, but keeps his original 3 successes.

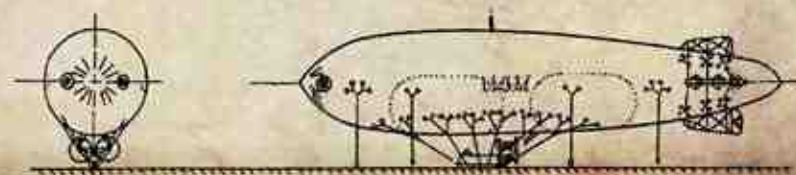
- When rolling a handful of dice at a moment of high drama, players are encouraged to shout “Arrrrr!” in a piratical fashion. This has no effect on dice rolls, but can be quite satisfying.

Of course, some tasks are harder than others. Outside factors may affect a task, and so may the character's own condition. In the above example, the jump would be harder if the Captain were trying to jump from one airship to another in a howling gale, or if he were still injured from a fight with mutineers the day before. Also, if another character is trying to prevent your character from doing something, this will make a difference to the final result.

The *Airship Pirates* rules cover these three situations with Black Dice, Pool Modifiers and Opposed Rolls, explained below.

BLACK DICE

Black dice usually represent outside factors that work against the character – the howling gale in the above example, dim light when trying to find a stowaway in the hold, poor handwriting when attempting to decipher a treasure map, etc. Black dice don't actually have to be black, as long as they are a different color from the dice you normally roll – but sinister is better! They'll be referred to as black





dice throughout the rules.

If the GM feels there should be a penalty to a roll, he will assign a number of black dice, which are rolled at the same time as the normal dice. Each success on a black die (a 1 or a 6) cancels out a success on a normal die. But black dice do *not* get rerolled on a 6, you'll be pleased to know.

Example: Captain Ransome is now aboard the Imperial Air Navy frigate. He looks around the deck, searching for his nemesis, the notorious pirate-hunter Vice-Admiral Ponsonby. But the air is filled with powder smoke from the cannons, cutting visibility considerably. Ransome has 3 dice for Perception and 2 dice for Wits (the relevant attribute), so he would normally roll 5 dice. But the GM rules that the visibility conditions are "Difficult" meaning that Ransome's player must roll 3 black dice together with his 5 normal dice. He gets 1,1,3,4,5 on his normal dice and 1,2,6 on his black dice. The two successes on his normal dice (two 1s) are canceled out by the two successes on the black dice (1 and 6), and the GM rules that Ransome can't see Ponsonby through the smoke.

When deciding how many black dice a player should roll, the GM should be guided by the table below. A GM should not be limited to the exact Difficulty Ratings listed in the table, but choose whatever number of black dice he or she think fits the situation.

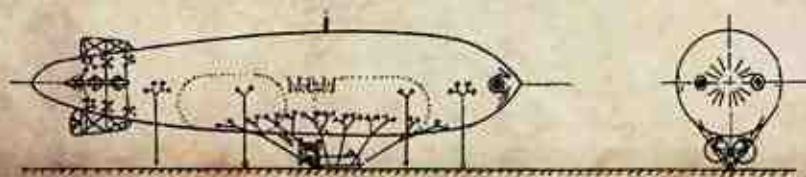
Difficulty Rating	Black Dice
Very Easy	Automatic Success (no need to roll)
Easy	No black dice; +5 to dice pool
Average	No black dice
Difficult	3 black dice
Very Difficult	6 black dice
Extremely Difficult	12 black dice

POOL MODIFIERS

Pool Modifiers add to or subtract from the number of normal dice rolled by the player.

As can be seen from the above table, an "Easy" task adds an extra 5 dice to a character's pool. GMs can always add dice to a character's roll if they think the task is particularly easy for whatever reason. If, in the above example, there had been no smoke surrounding the frigate, and the Vice-Admiral were standing in plain sight, the GM would probably have awarded +5 pool modifier instead of 3 black dice. On top of Ransome's 3 dice for Perception and 2 dice for Wits, he would get another 5 dice to roll too, greatly increasing his chance of success. Actually, in such a situation, the GM may well rule that no roll is needed as the task is so easy – but in stressful situations, with cannon fire all around, the deck tilting as the gasbags deflate and bullets whizzing past the character's ears, there is always a slight chance of failure, so a roll may be necessary. See When Not to Roll, p.89.

When a GM wants to add penalties to a character's roll due to outside factors, he or she will give the player black dice as penalties. But when it is the character who is impeded in some way, dice may be taken from the number of normal dice rolled. This will usually already be adjusted by the rules. A character with only one eye, for instance, would automatically have a -1 die penalty to all Perception rolls, while a character





who had been awake all night, keeping the airship aloft in a storm, might have a -1 die penalty to *all* rolls due to fatigue.

Example: Close behind her Captain, Black Sally, the renowned beast dancer, has jumped to the Imperial frigate. Wounded while helping her commander put down a mutiny the day before, she has a -4 pool modifier to all dice rolls. She too looks for the Vice-Admiral – her eyes are much sharper than Ransome's. With her Wits of 3 and Perception of 5, she should have a dice pool of 8 for the task, but the pain of her injuries distracts her, so she only gets to roll 4 dice, and she also suffers the 3 black dice penalty for smoke. She gets 1,2,2 and 6 on her normal dice and rolls the 6 again getting another 1, for 3 successes in total. But her black dice come up 1,1,4, canceling out two of her successes. She ends up with 1 success, which is only just enough and means she sees Ponsonby briefly through the smoke but loses sight of him again.

OPPOSITION

When a character is up against another character or creature rather than the environment or their own frailties, an opposed roll is made. Each character rolls an appropriate Skill, and the character with the most successes wins the test.

Example: Vice-Admiral Ponsonby has realized that Captain Ransome is looking for him and, being a coward, is trying to hide. He crouches down behind some barrels on deck, hoping the pirate won't see him. The GM rules that this is a test of Ponsonby's Hide & Sneak + Dexterity versus Ransome's Perception + Wits. Ransome still has the 3 black dice penalty because of the smoke, but in the excitement of the moment, Ponsonby has forgotten that he's wearing a splendid red feather in his hat, and it's sticking up above the barrels, giving him a 3 black dice penalty to his roll. Both make their rolls, and while Ponsonby has 1 success, Ransome has 2, and he finally spots his enemy!

DEGREES OF SUCCESS

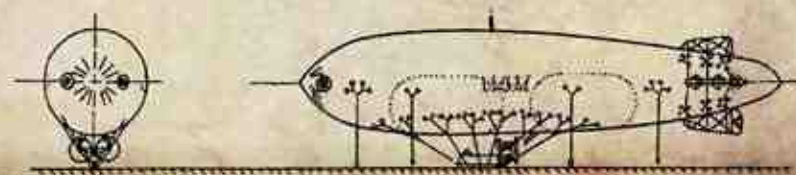
Airship Pirates is a game about heroes, so most of the time a character will succeed at a task – the question is, how well? The number of successes remaining after any penalties have been applied to a roll gives a measure of how well the character did.

Successes gained	Degree of success
1	Partial success – just about managed it.
2	Success – task completed methodically.
3	Good success – completed with some flair.
6	Impressive success – a demonstration of mastery.
10	Virtuoso success – an amazing performance.
15	Awesome success – people will talk about this for years.
20+	God-like success – you must have beaten the world record.

Example: In our earlier example, Captain Ransome jumped from his ship to the Imperial frigate with 3 successes, making it look quite easy. If he had only achieved 1 success, he would have only just made the distance, and would be dangling by his fingertips above the void. It would take a few seconds to pull himself aboard, and any enemy air sailors nearby would maybe get a chance to stomp on his hands!

FOUL FAILURE

Sometimes a character completely messes up. If a player rolls more successes on his or her black dice than on the normal dice, this is called a Foul Failure and means that the character has made a complete hash of things. If climbing, the character not only falls but breaks some important item of equipment.





If in combat, the character's weapon jams, breaks or flies out of her hand, skitters across the deck and falls over the side. If doing first aid, the patient takes more damage. The greater the Foul Failure, the worse the result. The GM should come up with something suitably fiendish and memorable (and the player could come in with suggestions too!) – this is not just failure, it's the sort of failure that people talk about for years!

WHEN NOT TO ROLL

As was mentioned earlier, it's not always necessary to roll the dice. Most "Easy" actions can be done without a test. But if the character is trying to perform under stress, or the task is a difficult one it's time to get the dice out. It depends too, on the training of the individual in question. A seasoned air sailor would not need to make a roll to climb an airship's rigging and sew a patch on the gasbag on a calm day while moored, whereas a Neovictorian lady in the same situation would require an "Average" Athletics + Dexterity test to climb the rigging, and probably an "Easy" Craft (Needlework) + Dexterity test to do the sewing – she's never climbed an airship's rigging before, and while she's used to sewing, she doesn't usually do it with such a big needle while dangling hundreds of feet above the ground. Equally, our accomplished Air Sailor would need to make "Average" rolls for both tasks if the ship is being buffeted about in a breeze, and would probably gain some black dice if there's a storm and people are shooting at him.

"MAKE ME AN OFFER"

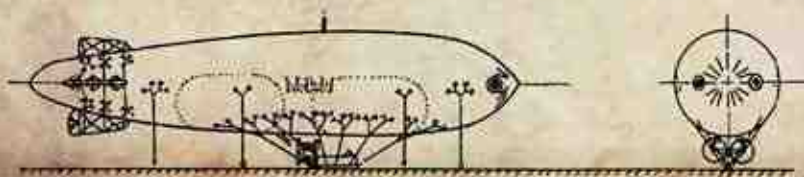
When a player tells the GM what she wants her character to do, the GM may (instead of ruling what Skill and Attribute combination applies) say "make me an offer". The player can then look at his or her Attributes and Skills and decide on a combination (usually one with a high dice pool!) that may do the trick. The GM may accept the offer or suggest a more reasonable Attribute and Skill combination for the task at hand. This shouldn't be done too often, as it can bring the story to a screaming halt while everyone starts haggling over what Skills might be useful, but if it allows a player to have a go at something they feel their character would try even though they don't have the right skills, give it a go.

COMMON SKILLS AND SPECIALTIES

As was explained earlier, Common Skills are those which anyone can have a go at, while Specialties require special training and practice and are, in effect, impossible for an untrained individual.

Common Skills are all listed on your character sheet. If you have no points in a Common Skill, this does not mean your character cannot use that skill. Instead it means that you have an effective Skill level of 0 – you can still make a roll, using just the default Attribute for that Skill.

Example: Captain Ransome finds himself traveling with a group of Neobedouins, and must ride a camelops if he is not to be left behind. He has no Riding skill, but has a Dexterity of 2, so rolls 2 dice to see how well he does. He rolls 1 success, which means he's hanging on but feeling rather nervous. Let's hope the camelops doesn't get spooked by anything, or he may well fall off.





COMMON SKILLS AND BONUS DICE

Those of you with characters who have Attributes of 0 or less must be wondering how they get to roll Common Skills if they have no dice in their dice pool. Common Skills are, as we've already said, so easy that *anyone* can have a go. So on any Common Skill roll, a player can always add one or two dice to their dice pool – but for any die added, they must also add a black die too. This increases the chances of succeeding at a Common Skill roll, but also increases the chances of a Foul Failure if you get more successes on your black dice than you do on your normal dice. This rule applies to all characters (not just those with 0 or negative Attributes), but *only* applies to Common Skills – players can never add dice to attempt Specialties in this way.

SPECIALTIES

Specialties are those skills which require intense training, specialized schooling or regular practice to be able to perform. You can't expect to be able to disguise yourself as the Marquis of Seattle-Above or repair a chrononautilus with no previous practice. No matter how good your Attributes, you can't just "have a go" at a Specialty Skill – though you *may* be able to persuade the GM to let you use another Skill with some sort of penalty. See "Make Me an Offer", p.89.

TOO MANY DICE!

A player whose character has a high Attribute and a high skill level may find himself rolling rather a lot of dice, especially if there are black dice penalties involved too. If this is the case, the player can choose to trade in three dice in their dice pool for one guaranteed success – 1 is the average number of successes which would be rolled on 3 dice. A player can do this for as many dice as he likes in his dice pool, as long as it is in multiples of 3 dice. This means he's unlikely to fail (unless there are lots of black dice being rolled too), but also means he's not going to get as many rerolls from 6s, so he'll never do spectacularly well.

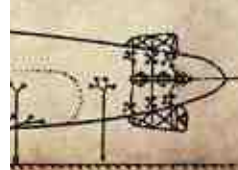
GROUP SKILLS

Rather than have an endlessly long list of skills, some skills are grouped together under a broad category such as Academic, Art, Craft, etc. Each skill within a Group Skill is, in effect, a separate skill. Having a 2 in Art (musical composition) is no help in Art (sculpture). However, some Group Skills can be helpful to one another. A knowledge of Academic (history) might allow you to make an Academic (politics) roll to understand the current political situation, though the GM may insist on a few black dice penalty, so that if you get things wrong you may well get a Foul Failure, meaning you completely misinterpret the situation rather than just not understanding it.

CULTURAL MODIFIERS

Some skills (those marked with * in the skills list) are modified by culture. This means they suffer a penalty if being performed in a culture different to the one in which the character learned the skill. The GM should normally apply a 3 black dice penalty to the player's dice pool for such a task.

For instance, a character who has learned the wild and carefree Dancing of the Neobedouins is going to be at a disadvantage when attempting the formal intricacies of a Neovictorian foxtrot. Similarly, when rolling Conversation, what counts as small talk in a sky city might cause a major scandal in a Neovictorian drawing room. Cultural Modifiers will also apply to the various Neovictorian subcultures – lower class, servant class, upper class, misbegotten and automaton, though a servant class character who has spent time around the upper class may be able to get by without a penalty when using such skills in an upper class situation.





COMPLEMENTARY ROLLS

Sometimes a character may have more than one Skill which could be applicable to a task. For instance, a character attempting to create a good impression might be able to use Fashion as well as Charm to hobnob with the Neovictorian upper classes. In that case, the character would roll Charm + Presence as usual, but would also add the dice for Fashion (the skill only).

If a number of people were attempting a task together, one could make the roll, and the others could roll dice for just the skill and add the successes to the primary person's roll. The GM may allow this, but may decide that if too many people try to help they might get in each other's way, or take longer to perform the task than usual. For instance, if two people were attempting to break down a door together by running at it with their shoulders, one character would roll Strength + Might and the other would add his own Might (Skill only) to the task. But if four people were attempting to do the same, the GM may well rule that they must also roll 3 black dice each, as they're in danger of getting in each other's way. All successes on the black dice would count against the total successes, and a Foul Failure would mean they tripped each other up and maybe even took some damage. Similarly, if four Engineers get together to fix a malfunctioning steam engine, they could all add their Ad Hoc Repair or Engineer (Steam) skill to the primary character's roll, but the GM could rule that it takes two hours to complete rather than one, because they need to spend more time arguing about what they're going to do before they do it.

SKILL DESCRIPTIONS

Skills marked with * show where a cultural modifier applies.

COMMON SKILLS

ACT (PRESENCE)

The art of pretending to be somebody you are not. Useful if performing, impersonating another or faking emotion. (The Disguise Skill can also increase the chance of successful impersonation).

ATHLETICS (DEXTERITY)

Used for athletic enterprises, such as running, jumping and climbing.

BLUNT WEAPONS (DEXTERITY)

Needed to effectively wield a blunt weapon (e.g., nightstick) in combat.

BULL (PRESENCE)

The ability to glibly con your opponent by using fast talk and downright lies.

CHARM (PRESENCE)

Used to impress, fascinate, please and win over others. Also a precursor to seduction.

CONCEAL (WITS)

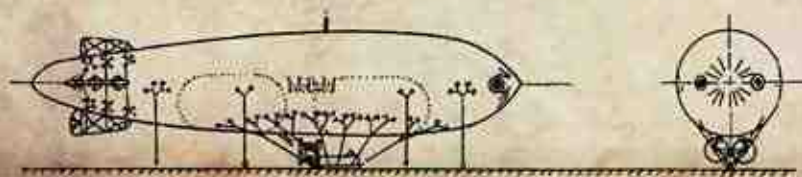
The ability to hide things. This covers both spur of the moment attempts (e.g., to conceal a weapon in a jacket) to the calculated use of constructions (e.g., using false-bottomed chests or smuggler's compartments).

DANCE (DEXTERITY)*

Governs how well you can dance. The Skill reflects natural talent, but you are probably only familiar with the dances of your own culture, so attempts at emulating a different culture's dancing will be at a penalty.

DODGE (DEXTERITY)

Used when you want to avoid being hit.





DRIVE (WITS)

Used when driving mechanical vehicles, such as automobiles, bikes and steamtrucks.

EMPATHY (PRESENCE)

Your ability to gauge the intentions of others.

ETIQUETTE (WITS)*

Your ability to understand the social rules in any given situation. Attempting to work out the social rules of a culture other than your own is more difficult.

FIREARMS (DEXTERITY)

Used when firing handheld guns.

FISTICUFFS (DEXTERITY)

Used when fighting with fists (or a hook!). Basic damage (without a weapon) for Fisticuffs is your Strength +1.

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE (WITS)*

Represents your basic knowledge of the world. Indicates both a breadth of knowledge and an ability to know trivia.

HIDE & SNEAK (DEXTERITY)

Your ability to hide and/or move quietly without being noticed by others.

IMPROVISED WEAPON (DEXTERITY)

Your Skill in using a non-martial item (e.g., wielding a discarded peg-leg or throwing a rusty cog) to carry out a combat action. Covers any item found lying around which is not specifically designed as a weapon. The GM rules whether this Skill or another should be used in any given situation.

INTIMIDATE (PRESENCE/STRENGTH)

Used when threatening others. Which attribute is used will depend on whether the intimidation is mental or physical.

LEADERSHIP (PRESENCE)

A measure of how inspiring a commander you are. Used when wanting your crew to do as you say, be it to follow you into battle or carry out your orders.

MIGHT (STRENGTH)

Used when lifting, carrying or attempting a feat of strength.

PERCEPTION (WITS)

Your ability to notice things.

PILOT (WITS)

Used when piloting flying machines such as airships, hang-gliders, triplanes, etc.

RIDING (DEXTERITY)

Used when riding an animal to control it. (See also the Specialty skill, Animal Handling).

STREETWISE (PRESENCE)*

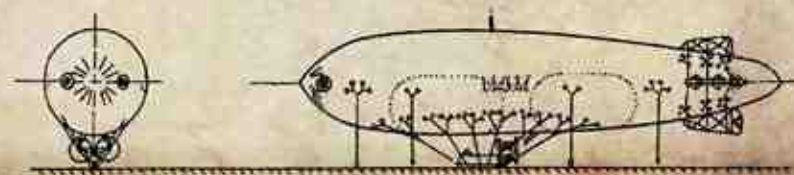
Used to communicate (e.g., to strike a deal or find a connection) and stay safe in tough urban neighborhoods.

SWORDPLAY (DEXTERITY)

Used when you fight with a bladed weapon.

THROWING (DEXTERITY)

Used when throwing something (as a weapon or at a target).





SPECIALTIES

ACADEMIC (GROUP SKILL) (WITS)

Represents specialized academic knowledge, usually at a more advanced level than that provided by a basic general education. Specializations include: *Criminology, Geography, History, Philosophy, Politics, Theology*.

AD HOC REPAIR (WITS)

Used when making hasty repairs or constructions. Severity of breakdown, scale of construction and availability of materials all influence difficulty. Also used for "healing" Automatons.

ANIMAL HANDLING (WITS)

Used when caring for an animal. Also useful when trying to predict an animal's behavior or calm it down. Can be used to heal an injured animal in the same way as Medicine is used for humans.

APPRAISAL (WITS)

Used when identifying and evaluating items.

ARCHERY (DEXTERITY)

Used when firing bows and catapults. Mostly used by Neobedouin hunters who prefer the silence of these weapons to the noisy results of a gunshot.

ART (GROUP SKILL) (PRESENCE)*

Used when creating art. Tastes vary in and between cultures. Specializations include: *Musical Composition, Painting, Playwright, Photography, Sculpture, Writing*.

BOATING (DEXTERITY)

Skill used when handling water-borne vessels.

BRIBERY (PRESENCE)

Used when working out who to bribe and how much to offer them.

BUSINESS (WITS)*

A general trade Skill for buying and selling. Also used to understand or negotiate with commercial enterprises.

CONVERSATION (PRESENCE)*

Used when making small talk or trying to subtly garner information.

CRAFT (GROUP SKILL) (STRENGTH/WITS)

Used to manufacture, maintain and repair items. Manufacture might require Strength, Wits, or a combination of the two. Specializations include: *Carpenter, Cook, Gunsmith, Jeweler, Metalworker, Musical Instrument Maker, Tailor, Steamsmith*.

CULTURE (GROUP SKILL) (WITS)

Knowledge about a culture other than your own. Specializations include: *Automatons, Misbegotten, Neobedouin, Neovictorian, Skyloft (by city)*.

DEMOLITION (WITS)

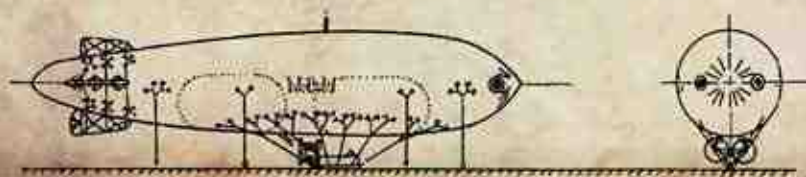
Used when blowing things up. Also used to disarm explosive devices.

DISGUISE (WITS)

Skill in using props (e.g., costumes, make-up, false beards, etc.) to change your appearance or to impersonate others. The Act Skill can also increase the chance of successful impersonation.

ENGINEER (GROUP SKILL) (WITS)

Used when designing and operating mechanical devices. A suitable Craft skill will be needed to actually





build such a device one designed. Specializations include:

Clockwork: Used to design and operate clockwork devices.

Construction: Used to design civil and military structures.

Electrical: Used to design and operate electricity generation devices and control the flow of power.

Internal Combustion Engine: Used to design and operate diesel and gasoline engines.

Steam: Used when designing and operating steam powered devices.

Normal use of a such a device won't require the use of the Engineer skill, but getting a little extra power out of an airship's steam engine in the middle of a chase would need a roll.

FASHION (PRESENCE)*

Your Skill in keeping up with, or better still leading, fashion trends. Remember, what is fashionable in your culture is likely the height of bad taste in another.

FORGERY (WITS)

Used to falsify documents and currency. If forging artwork, the relevant Art Skill is also required. Also used to detect other people's forgeries.

GAMBLING (WITS)

Your Skill in playing and cheating at games of chance.

GUNNERY (WITS)

Used when firing or coordinating the firing of artillery.

INSTRUMENT (GROUP SKILL) (DEXTERITY)

Skill in playing a musical instrument.

Specializations include: *accordion, bass guitar, drums, guitar, jug, mandolin, steam-piano, etc.*

INTERROGATION (PRESENCE)

Skill in applying physical and mental torture to extract information. There is no guarantee that a broken subject will tell the truth – just that they will tell you what they think you want to hear.

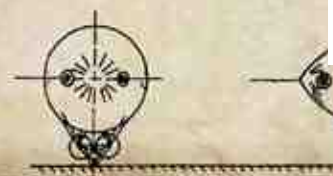
LANGUAGE (GROUP SKILL) (WITS)

Skill in a language other than your native tongue.

Specializations include: *French, German, Latin, Mandarin Chinese, Navajo, Spanish, etc.*

LANGUAGES

Characters are assumed to be fluent in their own language, but other languages must be learned separately. Although there are thousands of dialects, the Neovictorian language (similar to Victorian-era English) is the dominant tongue. A character may be able to speak a second language fluently by buying the Polyglot Talent (p.60), but other languages must be rolled as a task. The GM will assign a difficulty to the conversation – directions to the nearest bar, or buying bread in a bakery are likely to be very easy, while understanding instructions on how to correctly connect up a new brain in an automaton (spoken or written) will likely be very difficult. A Foul Failure will lead to complete misunderstanding, with comical or disastrous results as the case may be. A character with no language at all in common with the person they are speaking to may attempt sign language using Wits (adding up to 2 optional extra dice with paired black dice, as with common skills), or the GM may allow a character with Act to use that instead.





LEGAL MATTERS (WITS)*

Your knowledge of legal systems. Even an expert might struggle with some of the more obscure legal customs from cultures other than their own (such as those operating on the various Skyloft cities). Also used to decipher legal papers.

MARTIAL ARTS (GROUP SKILL) (DEXTERITY)

Skill in specialized unarmed combat techniques. Specializations include: *Baritsu*, *Beastdancing*, *Boxing*, *Dirty fighting*, etc. Basic damage for Martial Arts (without a weapon) is +2, and can be either bruising or normal damage.

MEDICINE (WITS)

Skill in diagnosing and treating medical conditions, performing first aid, forensic examination, and even surgery. A starting Skill of 5 in medicine and 2 in Wits is required to be considered a Doctor at the start of the campaign. Note that different cultures have different standards and more or less formal requirements for medical professionals.

NAVIGATION (WITS)

Used to find your way about and gain a bearing. At higher levels, also infers knowledge of navigation tools and charts.

PERFORMANCE (PRESENCE)

Skill in performing arts. Specializations include: *Fire eating*, *Juggling*, *Mime*, *Singing*, *Ventriloquist*, etc.

PICK LOCKS (WITS)

Used when picking locks and breaking in to places. A high success indicates you have also managed to cover your tracks.

PICK POCKETS (DEXTERITY)

Used when cutting purses and picking pockets.

Opposed by your target's Perception.

RESEARCH (WITS)

Skill in library use and academic or scientific research.

SCIENCE (GROUP SKILL) (WITS)

Knowledge of scientific theory. Specializations include: *Biology*, *Botany*, *Chemistry*, *Electricity*, *Mathematics*, *Natural History*, *Pharmacy*, *Phrenology*, *Physics*, *Robotics*, *Temporal Physics*, *Veterinary Science*.

SEDUCTION (PRESENCE)

Used when you want to persuade somebody to fall in love with you, or to lust after you, or both.

SLEIGHT OF HAND (DEXTERITY)

Skill in stage magic (e.g., palming coins, card tricks, illusions with mirrors, etc.).

SKY LORE (WITS)

An awareness of aerial risks, including weather conditions, the performance abilities of different flying machines, and self-confidence with heights.

SPECIALIZED WEAPONS (DEXTERITY)

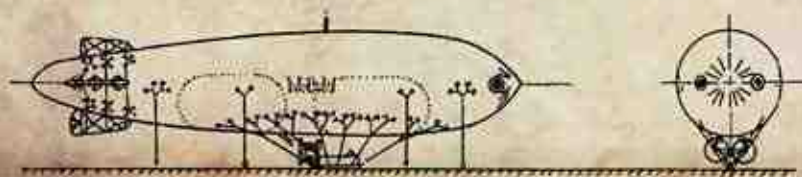
Used when wielding weapons that don't fit in the other weapon categories and which require some specific training or expertise. Specializations include: *beast claws*, *hooks*, *nets and whips*, etc.

SURVIVAL (WITS)

Used to survive in the wild.

TACTICS (WITS)

Used to formulate a battle plan. A successful roll before a fight adds a number of dice to your initiative dice pool equal to the degree of success. If used by





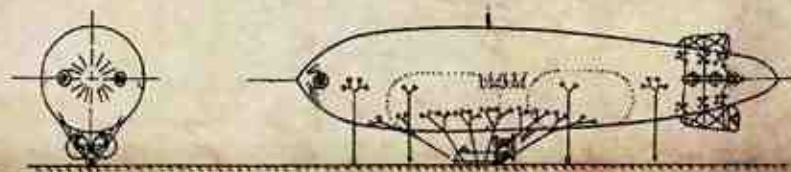
a commander (e.g., pirate captain) the GM might award their forces (e.g., pirate crew) a combat bonus. Also used to calculate risk in battle and to detect opponents' weaknesses.

TEACHING (PRESENCE)

Skill in imparting complex knowledge. Used to measure success when relaying a single piece of complex information (such as giving a complex order) as well as when teaching over a longer period (such as when employed as a trainer).

TRACKING (WITS)

Used to track down others, and to hide your own trail. Difficulty is determined by the age of the tracks and the numbers of clues left.

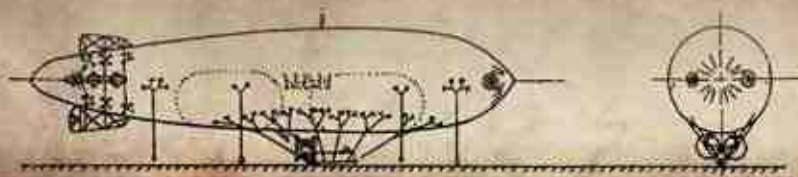




COMBAT

*You swing and thrust, I wrap you in my coat.
I'm suddenly behind you, and my blade is at your throat!
You kick and swing your fists and blade and shoe,
But all your twitching and pulling has cut your neck in two."*

– Abney Park, Victorian Vigilante





Airship pirates inevitably get into fights. Sometimes it involves airships firing broadsides at each other, which is covered in Airships, Vehicles and Beasts (p.117), but at other times the PCs need to face off against their enemies directly, whether it be with fists, guns or steel. Once combat begins, time in the game slows down, and is measured out in combat rounds (which last about three seconds); this is to ensure that everyone involved in a fight gets to take part and to emphasize the intensity of the one-on-one struggle for life or death.

The rules are not intended to cover every situation which might come up in combat, nor are they intended to simulate reality – they are meant to be fast, flexible, and to encourage the characters to do the sort of swashbuckling things heroes do in the movies. The GM can actively encourage players to come up with amazing stunts by offering dice pool bonuses for cool and difficult stunts. (See “The Awesome! Bonus”, p.101).

TIME AND ACTIONS

Once combat begins, actions are resolved in three second bursts called combat rounds. In each round, your character usually gets to perform one action, though characters can sometimes do more than one thing in a round. The following are examples of actions:

- Engage in an attack (whether unarmed, with a melee weapon or with a ranged weapon).
- Throw a stone, bomb, bouquet or other item.
- Draw a weapon.
- Reload a weapon.
- Pick up a nearby object.
- Walk, run, sneak, leap, swim or otherwise move up to your maximum movement (see movement rates on your character sheet).
- Open or close a door.
- Activate or otherwise briefly utilize a piece of machinery.
- Stand up, sit down or lie down.

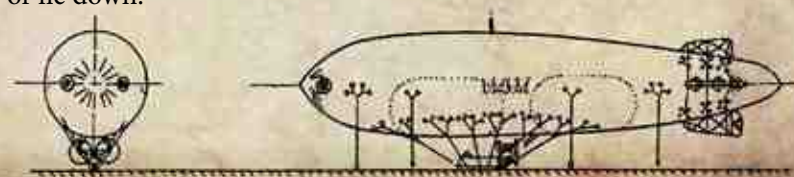
Note that some actions, such as reloading a weapon, or utilizing a piece of machinery, might take more than one combat round. In that case, one action can be used to start, continue or conclude the activity.

FREE ACTIONS

Some actions can be performed at the same time as another combat action without interfering with that action, as long as the GM agrees. As a rule of thumb, if you don't need to roll dice for it, and can perform it in 3 seconds, it counts as a free action. Such things might include speaking a short sentence (“*Quick! Hold on to something!*”), keeping a general eye on the surroundings (A Perception + Wits roll may be allowed at the GM's discretion), etc.

MOVEMENT IN COMBAT

Movement speeds (based on Dexterity and listed on your character sheet) show how far your character can move in a round. This is especially important for determining the relative speeds of characters chasing each other.





COMBAT

BASIC COMBAT SUMMARY

- Roll Initiative and declare actions (p.99).
- Determine who is fighting with whom (p.99).
- Both opponents make their combat rolls (p.99-100).
- Winner of combat roll deals damage to opponent. Damage = degree of success + weapon damage successes. (p.100).
- When all fights are resolved, return to step 1.

BASIC COMBAT MODIFIERS

- Winner of Initiative gets +2 dice to combat dice pool.
- If no ready weapon, at -3 to Initiative and -2 to combat dice pool.
- If outnumbered, +3 black dice per additional opponent.
- If unarmed against weapon with longer reach, +3 to black dice, unless using Martial Arts.
- GM can award Awesome! Bonus of up to +3 dice per roll for spectacular stunts.

- If Initiative rolls are equal, compare Dexterity.
- If Dexterities are equal, compare weapon Skills used in fight.
- If weapon Skills are equal, compare Wits.
- If Wits are equal, both characters go at the same time.

Winning the initiative doesn't mean that your character necessarily goes first. It means you have the initiative, giving you an advantage against the person you are fighting, and allowing you to choose your target or disengage. If you have the initiative over the person you are fighting, you gain a +2 to your dice pool when attacking. You can only actually attack someone who is near enough to you. If you are selected as a target by another character, you have little option but to defend yourself – if you choose to attack another opponent instead, you make yourself into a very easy target. However, it is possible for you to engage multiple targets (by choice or not) – see Multiple Opponents, p.102.

COMBAT BASICS

Now that you know what a combat round consists of, it's time to get down to the rules of combat.

INITIATIVE

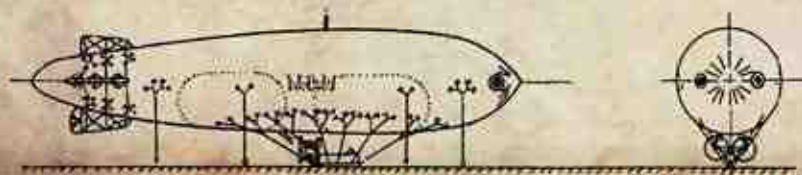
When a fight starts, it's important to know who is going to take the initiative. If you've crept up on someone and they don't know you're there, you obviously have the initiative – but when everyone knows a fight is happening, things are a little different.

To make an initiative check, roll a number of dice equal to your Initiative rating (Dexterity + Wits + Perception). Whoever gets the highest roll gains the initiative. Sometimes two characters will get the same roll. If so, work as follows:

MAKING A MELEE ATTACK

A combat round in *Airship Pirates* represents a flurry of blows, parries and dodges rather than a single attack. Both characters roll Dexterity + weapon skill, and whoever gains the most successes manages to land a blow on her opponent. The more successes than your opponent that you get, the more damage you do. As mentioned above, if your character has the initiative this round, she gets a +2 to her combat dice pool. Successes are added to the damage caused by the weapon itself (see Damage, p.100). If the dice pools are tied, the character who has the initiative is assumed to have won the round, as long as they had at least one success on their roll. The character's weapon causes damage (see Damage, p.100) but the character doesn't get any extra damage for winning the round.

If your character's opponent is unaware of your attack (or chose to attack a different opponent and ignore your character), you get to make a "surprise attack". Your opponent doesn't get to make a roll, and as long





as your character gains at least one success, she does damage as normal.

MAKING A RANGED ATTACK

Ranged attacks include everything from thrown stones to bows, from needlepistols to steamrifles. The great advantage of a missile weapon is, of course, that the user doesn't need to get anywhere near the enemy to damage him. The disadvantage is that the enemy might well be shooting back.

With a ranged attack, the character with the initiative makes a Dexterity + weapon skill roll against the target's Dexterity + Dodge. Of course, if the person dodging wins the test, she doesn't get to do any damage to her opponent because he's too far away. Dodging a ranged weapon is not the easiest thing in the world, particularly at close range. If the person firing the gun is less than five feet from her opponent (point blank), the target only gets to use his Dexterity, without adding Dodge skill. A weapon cannot hit a target beyond its maximum range, unless the user has the Hawk-eyed Aim Talent.

Of course, the opponent may choose to use his own weapon (whether this be a gun in a gunfight, or a melee weapon at close range) instead of attempting to dodge the missile. In this case, he will damage his opponent if he wins the test, but stands to take a lot more damage if he fails the roll, as an attack with a missile or melee weapon against an attack with a missile weapon does not count as a defense, and the character with initiative gets, in effect, a "surprise attack" (see Making a Melee Attack, above).

If you spend an entire round aiming, you gain an extra 1 die to your roll to hit on the following round. You can aim in this way for up to 3 rounds, for a total of 3 extra dice to hit.

FIRING INTO MELEE

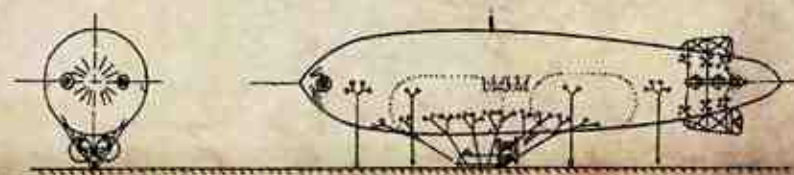
You might choose to shoot at someone from a distance while they are engaged in melee combat. The GM might rule you do not have a clear shot, and that is the end of that. However, if your attack is possible and your target is unaware of your attack, you can roll as if you had surprise. On the other hand, you suffer an additional 3 black dice penalty to your roll for each other person they are fighting. They are likely to get in the way of your shot and, even if you don't care if you hit them, they are not who you are aiming at.

If your target is aware of you, he can make a dodge roll against your attack as with any other ranged weapon, but using only half his dice pool. However, this attack is resolved separately to any other melee attacks and doesn't affect them. On the other hand, the GM might insist on a black dice penalty due to the target's attention being divided between two places.

DAMAGE

Each weapon has a damage rating. This is the number of dice you roll to see how much damage you have done to your opponent. If using a melee weapon, you also get to add your Strength dice to this roll (or subtract them, if you're a weak character). See how many successes you have, then add the number of successes you gained over your opponent in the attack roll. This is the number of pips your opponent must knock off the Health dice on his or her character sheet.

If your character takes damage, you must, of course knock pips off your own Health dice in the same way. Once you have used up all your Health dice, you carry on knocking off pips from the four shaded dice. This means that you are suffering from your wounds. From now on, you suffer a penalty to your dice pool for *all* rolls equal to the number on the





gray die you marked points off most recently. Once the -16 die has both pips marked off, another point of damage will kill you.

Astrid is in a bar, having a fist fight with a rival pirate captain, Johnson Swing. They both roll Initiative, which for Astrid is 8 and for Johnson is 5. Astrid manages 3 successes, Johnson 1. Astrid wins Initiative and both combatants decide to engage each other using their fists. Astrid has a Dexterity of 3 and a Fisticuffs of 1, so has a dice pool of 4. But she won the Initiative, so gets +2 to her dice pool to make it 6. She rolls 1,2,2,2,3 and 6, rerolling the 6 to get a 4, so she scores 2 successes. Johnson fights back, he only has a Dexterity of 1, but has 6 Fisticuffs, so his dice pool is 7. He rolls 1,4,4,5,5,6 and rerolls the 6 to get a 1, a total of 3 successes. Johnson protects his chin from Astrid and lands a jab with his 1 clear success.

Johnson rolls his damage dice, which is 1 for a fist, plus 3 for his Strength – for a dice pool of 4. He only rolls 1 success, so adds that to the 1 that he beat Astrid by, doing a total of 2 damage. Astrid has 4 Health, so once she has marked off two pips she is down to 3 Health. She is bruised, but still in the fight.

THE AWESOME! BONUS

The rules below talk a lot about dice penalties for difficult actions. And players do, of course, have the option of spending Fate Points (see p.114) to add to their dice rolls when attempting something difficult, which will help negate such penalties. But the GM also has a mechanism for encouraging spectacular stunts – the Awesome! Bonus.

If someone says they want to swing across on a rope from one airship to another and kick two enemy sailors in the face while shooting a third, the GM could say “OK, *that’s four actions, so you have to divide your dice pool by four – it’s going to be really difficult.*” At which point the player will probably say,

“Oh, in that case, I’ll just swing across, and not bother attacking until next round.”

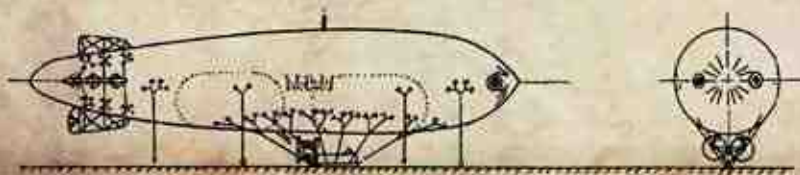
If, on the other hand the GM were to say, “Wow, awesome! *That’s four actions, so you have to divide your dice pool by four, but it’s such a cool move that I’ll give you a three dice bonus to each action!*” then the player will probably shout “Die, Imperial scum!” and start rolling handfuls of dice.

Awesome! Bonuses can only be awarded by the GM, but players (not including the player who came up with the stunt) can shout “Awesome!” on hearing another player’s plan, in the hope of encouraging the GM to award a bonus. This should, of course, not be abused – if players start shouting “Awesome!” every time someone steps over a puddle or winks at the barman, the GM can ban Awesome! Bonuses until the players calm down and stop trying it on.

NPCs cannot, of course be awarded an Awesome! Bonus by the GM – although major NPCs may have Fate Points which the GM can use to similar effect (see p.114).

An Awesome! Bonus should be no more than 3 dice for any one roll, and should usually be less than that, and no more than four bonuses can be awarded for one action – so in the example above, if the player wanted to add an Intimidating howl to his swing, two kicks and a gunshot, this would involve dividing the dice pool by five, and only four of the rolls could be awarded a bonus. A Pretty Awesome stunt should be awarded only 1 die per roll – it takes a Fricking Awesome stunt to get all three bonus dice!

It should be noted that Awesome! Bonuses are awarded as well as any penalties – if a character has a three dice penalty due to wounds, or three black dice due to a howling rainstorm, these penalties still apply, but the Awesome! Bonus is awarded after taking the penalties into account.





COMBAT COMPLICATIONS

ARMOR

If your character is wearing something that might offer protection, or is an automaton or misbegotten with armored exterior, the protection has an Armor Value. This subtracts from the value of the damage done to your character – if you take 4 points of damage but have an Armor Value of 2, then only 2 points will get through the armor and actually cause damage.

See *Armor* in Chapter VI for details on different types of armor and how much protection they offer.

MULTIPLE OPPONENTS

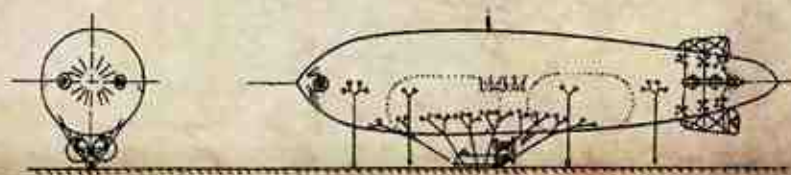
If you get into a lot of trouble, just one action won't be enough. You can make one attack action in any given combat round. If you decide to make more than one action in a round you must halve your dice pool for each action. If two actions aren't enough you can make three actions, but each dice pool is reduced to a third, and so on. However, you cannot make any more additional actions than you have Dexterity bonus dice (so, the limit is Dexterity + your one basic action for the round). In this case, those with a negative Dexterity can count their Dexterity as 0. Remember also that, even though your dice pool may reduce, you roll just as many black dice as you usually would for each roll! You should also remember that there are plenty of actions that will take a whole round no matter how many times you can divide your dice pool. If you are going to pick a lock, you can't do much else that round!

In combat, taking an additional action allows you to roll as if you were 2 or more separate people (albeit with lower dice pools). You could choose 2 opponents (or the same one twice as if you were a multiple opponent on your own!) and get to make 2 combat rolls rather than 1. If you are outnumbered there is a 3 black dice penalty per opponent after the first.

However, no matter how many times you divide your dice pool, you are still actually only 1 person. You make 1 initiative roll and, after that, you declare whether you are splitting your dice pool or not. If you win initiative, the bonus dice are added to your dice pool before you split your actions, not after! You obviously only have one set of Health points, and making 2 combat rolls can mean you get hurt twice instead, so beware!

Thomas and Amelia are fighting an air marine. All characters are armed with cutlasses. They all roll for Initiative. The marine wins, followed by Thomas, and then Amelia. The marine decides to attack Amelia – his Dexterity is 2, his Swordplay 3, and he gets a +2 bonus for winning Initiative – for a dice pool of 7. However, he gets a 3 black dice penalty for being outnumbered. He gets 4 successes. Thomas gets 1 success, Amelia 2, so the marine does damage to Amelia, beating her by 2 clear success. He would like to take advantage of Thomas's low roll, but as he specified he was attacking Amelia, he can't. He rolls 2 successes on his damage dice, added to the 2 clear successes he gained over Amelia, doing her 4 damage in total. Amelia has an armored corset, which deflects two points of damage, so he lands two pips of damage, meaning Amelia's Health drops by one die.

The next round, Amelia wins the Initiative, the marine comes second, Thomas last. Amelia rolls three dice. (She has no Swordplay, so she rolls her Dexterity, which is 1, +2 bonus dice for winning Initiative). She gets 1 success. The marine rolls his 5 dice and 3 black dice, getting 2 successes. Thomas rolls 3 dice (his Dexterity is 1 and his Swordplay 2) and gets 3 successes! Thomas does damage to the marine – he gets 4 successes on his damage dice, quite nasty! The marine got the second best roll. As he elected to go for Amelia again, he hit her (had he decided to try and hit Thomas, he would have missed). He only gets two successes, and as he





was trying to run Amelia through, the blow clangs off her metal bodice.

Next round the marine wins Initiative again, but rolls a poor attack, his black dice penalty leaving him with no successes. Amelia scores 1 success with her solitary die, and Thomas rolls 2 successes. The marine is in trouble. Both Amelia and Thomas have caused him damage. Amelia rolls damage and lands 2 successes, for a damage of 3. Thomas rolls 4, for a total of 6 damage. It is enough to seriously wound him and he falls unconscious (having failed a Resolve+Fortitude roll with 8 black dice).

MOUNTED COMBAT

When fighting from the back of a riding beast, your weapon skill can never be higher than your Riding skill. So if you have a Firearms skill of 6 but a Riding skill of 4, you would roll Dexterity+4 to fire your gun from the back of a moving mastodon, even though your Firearms skill would be Dexterity+6 in normal circumstances.

UNARMED COMBAT

If you find yourself unarmed, up against an opponent with a melee weapon which is longer than your reach, you can use Fisticuffs against your opponent's weapon skill, but suffer a 3 black dice penalty to your rolls. However, this does not apply if you have a Martial Arts skill such as Baritsu or Beast Dancing, as martial artists are trained to fight unarmed against people with weapons.

READYING A WEAPON

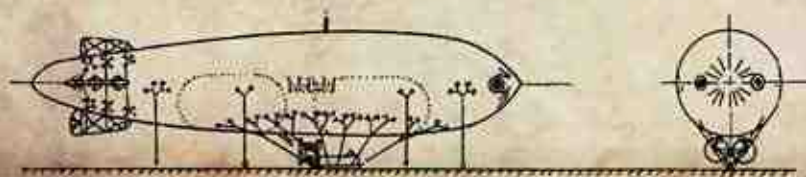
If you find yourself in a fight without a weapon drawn, it is assumed you can get your weapon drawn quickly, but you suffer -3 pool modifier to Initiative, and a -2 penalty to your combat roll in the first round of combat. If you have spent a round moving into

position, it is assumed you drew your weapon while getting to your opponent, so no penalty applies.

DAMAGING OBJECTS

Sometimes you might want to break down the enemy captain's cabin door, smash through a window to escape, destroy a table an enemy is hiding behind, or whatever. Objects have structure dice, which are the same as health dice for a person. Each structure die has two pips as usual. As objects lose structure dice, they will become more damaged looking; when they reach half their normal structure dice they are noticeably broken, and any machinery will stop working. The GM should rule whether an attempt to damage an object is possible – it might be possible to shoulder-barge a door, but to break rocks you will need an appropriate tool, and trying to break a lamp-post with a sword is more likely to break the sword than the lamp-post! Once an object reaches 0 structure points, it is completely destroyed. Below are the structure dice for a number of common items and structures:

Punished Item	Structure Dice
Bush (per yard)	2
Rocks (per yard)	15
Tree, street lamp	10
Lamp post	20
Manhole cover	15
Glass (per yard)	1
Wooden fence (per yard)	5
Brick wall (per yard)	25
Metal lock	2
Wooden door	2
Metal door	10
Vault door	30 (+ 10 Armour Points)
Furniture	5-10
Machinery (per yard)	10-20





DODGING AND EVASION

GETTING OUT OF A FIGHT

If you're not doing well in a fight, you may want to get out of it. If you roll higher Initiative than your opponent in a round, you can choose to disengage instead of attacking; you can then turn and run. Your opponent can chase you, but won't get an attack in that round. If you fail to gain the initiative but still want to disengage, you can still turn and run, but your opponent may attempt to hit you and you can only roll your Dexterity to oppose his attack roll – in the event that you win that roll, you will not be damaged, but you will not inflict any damage on your opponent either.

ALL OUT DODGE

If you find yourself in a fight, and really don't want to be there, but can see no route of escape, you may choose to concentrate on avoiding injury rather than attacking the opponent. Combat rolls are based on Dexterity+Dodge, rather than your weapon skill, and each roll gets a single bonus success added to it – so if you're trying to dodge multiple opponents by splitting your dice pool, you'll get an added success to each roll you make.

DIVING FOR COVER

Sometimes, dodging just isn't enough, and you need to hide – quickly! If bullets are flying through the air, or the enemy airship has just fired a cannon broadside, you'll need to dive for cover behind whatever comes to hand – a table, a bulkhead, the bodies of the slain. If you make a successful Dexterity+Athletics roll, you can dive as far as your normal Horizontal Leap (see character sheet), with an extra 1 yard for each success. If you fail to get behind cover, you will take normal damage; if you make it to cover, and assuming the cover isn't too flimsy, you will take no damage.

PARTIAL COVER

Sometimes you'll find yourself fighting from behind cover, which will make it harder for opponents to hit you. You might be crouching behind a wall, firing at an opponent; or on the other side of a deck rail, fighting with swords. In all such situations, use the following table:

Cover	Ranged Modifier	Melee Modifier
Cover from the feet to the waist (or lying prone)	3 black dice	2 black dice
Left or right side covered, or cover from the feet to the upper chest	6 black dice	4 black dice
Cover from the feet to the neck	12 black dice	8 black dice

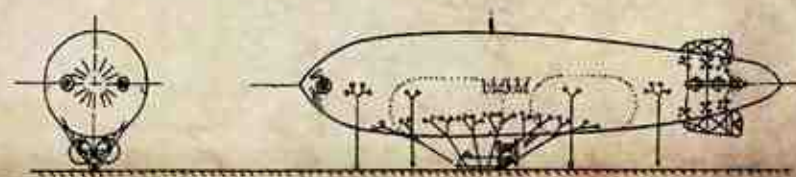
EXPLOSIVES AND OTHER AREA EFFECT ATTACKS

Explosions, poisonous gases, and any other weapons that effect multiple characters in a given area, expanding out from a central point, use these rules. Generally damage decreases the further from the center of effect the character is. The following table shows some examples:

Explosion	Distance from center for each -1 damage die
Stick of dynamite	1 yard
Grenade	3 yards
50 pounds TNT	5 yards

Example: A grenade explodes 7 yards away from Ezekiel Hornblower. Usually a grenade does 8 damage dice, but in this case the damage against Hornblower is reduced to 6 (-1 per full 3 yards away).

Some guns, such as blunderbusses and steam heat-rays can fire at multiple targets due to their firing spread. Such a weapon fired at less than five feet from the target will only hit that opponent. If the gun is further away, it will hit anyone in a forty-five degree arc, out to its maximum range (unless they are in cover, behind someone else, etc.). The firer need not split his dice pool to attack multiple





targets – however, as the gun's power is weakened by spreading, all damage to targets within range is halved.

EVERYTHING ELSE

There are all sorts of things that can happen in a combat, not all of them covered by the rules. If something comes up which is not mentioned here, the GM should decide the following:

- Decide what skill is appropriate. If it is opposed by an opponent's skill, decide what that should be too; if it is not opposed, decide on the Difficulty.
- Decide whether any dice pool penalties, black dice penalties, or Awesome! bonuses apply.

Roll the dice!

Example: Diana Gullwing has pulled a gun on the barman after an argument about the bar tab. Charlie Higgins, her boyfriend, who is sitting to the right of her, wants to grab the gun before she pulls the trigger. Since Diana doesn't want to shoot Charlie, but only keep her gun out of his reach while she shoots the barman, the GM decides that Diana must split her dice pool between *Dexterity+Firearms* to shoot the barman and *Dexterity+Dodge* to avoid Higgins' grab, while Higgins must roll *Dexterity+Fisticuffs* to grapple her gun arm. Both must roll Initiative, then Diana must roll *Dexterity+Dodge* against Higgins' *Dexterity+Fisticuffs*. If he wins, he grabs the gun before she can fire it; if she wins, she keeps the gun, and can then make a *Dexterity+Firearms* roll to see if she hits the barman. The barman also makes an Initiative roll, and dives for cover with a *Dexterity+Athletics* roll. The GM decides he has a bonus die to his Initiative roll, as Diana is distracted from shooting immediately by Higgins' attempt to grab her weapon. The whole combat might be over in a round, or it could continue, depending on whether Higgins gets the gun, Diana gets the barman, or whatever.

DAMAGE AND GETTING HURT

Sooner or later, in a fight, you're going to get hurt. Starting Health is described in the Character Creation chapter on p.42. As your character is wounded, the pips on the Health dice on your character sheet are filled in. These pips represent physical injury – one or two pips might be bruises, or nasty cuts that will heal with time. Large amounts of damage represent serious injury that can maim or kill.

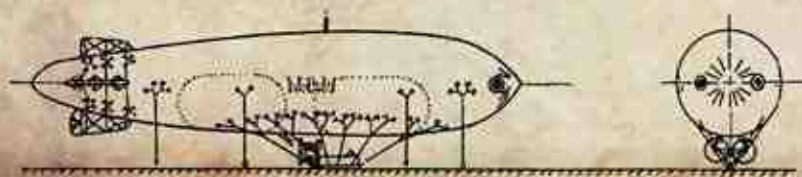
BRUISE DAMAGE

Blunt weapons, such as fists, truncheons, chairs and the like, are more likely to cause bruise damage than serious wounds. Bruise damage is counted in the same way as normal damage, but leads to unconsciousness rather than death, and heals rather quicker (see Recovery, p.106).

DAMAGE PENALTIES

Once you've lost all your Health pips, it doesn't mean you're automatically dead. As you can see on your character sheet, there are four gray Health dice too, each marked with a penalty. When you get down to these gray dice, you are suffering enough shock and blood loss to cause you serious trouble. Once your Health gets down to the gray dice, you must start making a *Resolve+Fortitude* roll each combat round to stay conscious. Assuming you do stay conscious, you take a penalty to your dice pool for all rolls equal to the penalty marked on the gray die on which injuries were last marked off.

If you *do* fall unconscious, you can still keep making *Resolve+Fortitude* rolls every round to see if you wake up again. (The gray dice penalty does not apply to this roll – instead you roll with a black dice penalty equal to the number on the gray dice) When this badly injured, you need to keep making that roll every round as you might fade in and out of consciousness.





DEATH AND DYING

Once all the pips on the gray health dice have been filled in, you will fall unconscious and remain so. You are now dying. You will stay alive for a further Resolve+Fortitude rounds, and then expire, unless someone gets to you with healing before then. The character wishing to prevent you dying must make a successful Wits+Medicine roll (or just a Wits roll if he or she doesn't have the Medicine skill) – this will not heal any wounds, but will stabilize the character so that he or she does not die before the combat is over, when better medical treatment can be given.

Occasionally, fate may intervene. Spending a Scripting Die (6 Fate Points) will prevent your character dying – perhaps that last bullet hit your lucky cigarette case, or you apparently fell from the airship to your death, but actually got entangled in the rigging and are hanging by your ankle from a rope, 20 feet below. Spending a Scripting Die will not revive an unconscious character or remove any lost Health pips, but will enable a character to survive until medical attention can be received.

PERMANENT INJURIES

As can be see from the number of eye-patches, hook-hands and wooden legs among the pirate fraternity, losing a body part is an occupational hazard. Other permanent injuries might cause a limp, a missing finger, a scar, etc. And then there's the infamous pirate, Louis "Half-Ass" le Golif...

If a character takes an amount of health damage equal to their Fortitude in one go, the GM may decide there is a chance of permanent injury. The player should make an Easy roll (five bonus dice) of Fortitude+Resolve, with a number of black dice equal to the number of Health points of damage above their Fortitude. If the roll is a failure, the character has taken a permanent injury. This injury will obviously depend on where the wound was taken and the weapon used. The number

of successes on the black dice will be an indication of the severity of the wound – a simple failure of the roll might indicate a scar across the face, while two successes on the black dice would indicate the loss of an eye, etc.

A character should never become unplayable due to a permanent wound, and the player and GM should come up with a way of making it a feature – if someone loses his right hand, perhaps the GM could introduce the characters to a mad scientist who offers to graft a clockwork hand on the stump if they perform some dubious task for him; and a scar can usually form the basis for a good story, even if it's not entirely truthful.

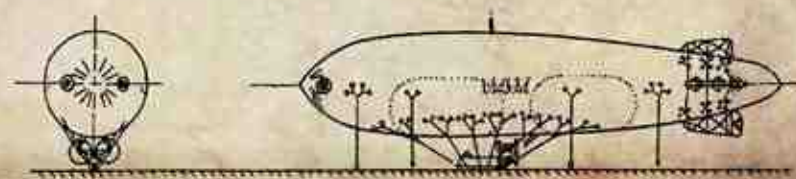
However, if the player *really* doesn't want his character to have a permanent injury, it can be negated by spending 3 fate points (see p.114).

RECOVERY

Once out of combat, healing is rather easier, though it depends on what facilities are available, and how healthy the person was to begin with. Once a combat is over, a person with the Medicine skill can make a Wits+Medicine roll and the patient regains a number of health pips equal to the number of successes the healer had. The healing takes 10 minutes per point of health restored. The Difficulty of the roll depends on what equipment is available:

Type of Healing	Difficulty Level
Skyloft hospital	Very Easy (no black dice, +5 to dice pool)
With medical kit	Easy (no black dice)
Neovictorian hospital (notoriously unhygienic!)	Difficult (3 black dice)
Improvised bandages and no proper equipment	Very difficult (6 black dice)

If the roll fails to get the health pips out of the gray dice, the patient remains unconscious. On a foul failure, the patient takes an extra point of damage for each success on the black dice – which may be





enough to finish off a badly injured patient!

Once the wounds have been given medical attention, the character will recover slowly with natural healing. If resting and not partaking in strenuous activity, the patient will regain 1 Health point per day, plus 1 for every point of Fortitude over 0. If the character insists on partaking in physical activities the GM may disallow an increase in health for that day. If the patient is involved in *very* strenuous activities (this includes further combat), they may tear open an existing wound – the character must roll a Difficult (3 black dice penalty) Resolve+Fortitude roll, and on a foul failure will lose a further number of health points equal to the number of success on the black dice.

AUTOMATON HEALING

Automata do not heal naturally, but need to be mended. Once a combat is over, a person with the Ad-Hoc Repair skill, or the Engineering (Clockwork) skill can make a Wits+skill roll and the patient regains a number of Health pips equal to the number of successes the mechanic had. The repair takes 10 minutes per point of Health restored, and can be repeated every ten minutes until repair is complete. The Difficulty of the roll depends on what equipment is available:

Type of Healing	Difficulty Level
Fully-equipped workshop	Very Easy (no black dice, +5 to dice pool)
With toolkit	Easy (no black dice)
Using improvised tools and materials	Difficult (3 black dice)

If the repairer gets a Foul Failure on a repair roll using improvised tools and materials, no further repairs can be made in that way, and the automaton must wait until proper tools are available before more repair can take place.

THAT'S NOT THE SAME

Players of *Victoriana* may notice that healing is rather easier than in that game. This is because there is no magical healing available in the *Airship Pirates* universe, so we've made it rather more cinematic – there's nothing more dull than having your character lying around for weeks on end waiting to be well enough to go on another adventure.

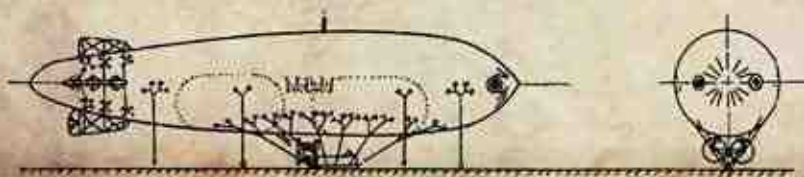
EXAMPLE COMBAT

The following example details a large fight scene. Putting it all together, an extended combat scene might run a bit like this:

Our heroes have been duped by their rival, Johnson Swing. His men have robbed the Cordelia and are holed up in a warehouse on the High Tortuga skyfront, counting their loot. Unfortunately, during the heist they murdered the first mate of the Cordelia and kidnapped Amelia. Itching for revenge, Astrid decides to march straight through the front doors of the warehouse.

Freeman and Thomas decide to find a way to flank the thugs. Knowing the rear entrance is locked, they climb the drainpipe to get on to the roof. They manage the climb and locate a skylight. Freeman opens the skylight and silently sneaks through the hatch, onto the top of some piled boxes. He can see Amelia being threatened by Johnson, just below where he is hiding, and that there are 4 other thugs (3 of whom are slouching about, 1 who is guarding the door). Thomas meanwhile decides to stay by the skylight and aim his pistol at a thug.

Astrid knocks on the door. She holds her cutlass to the throat of the answering guard, and they make their way into the warehouse, to negotiate Astrid's release. Freeman attaches his beast-claws, drops off the boxes and lunges at Johnson. Combat begins. Everyone rolls Initiative. Astrid goes first, then Freeman, Thomas and





Amelia. Johnson and his thugs all rolled poorly, so they go last. The party will all get Initiative bonuses over Johnson and his thugs. The GM asks for everyone else to declare their intentions.

Astrid decides that, as she has a thug already pinned with her blade, she will keep him there. The GM requests an Intimidate roll, which Astrid manages. The thug cowers. Thomas asks the GM whether he can get a clear shot at a thug with his steampistol. The GM agrees, and Thomas fires at one of the previously slouching thugs. Freeman will attack Johnson, and Amelia will use the distraction caused by the Neobedouins entrance to try and escape Johnson's clutches.

So, with Astrid occupied, Thomas goes next. He rolls 10 dice (Dexterity+Firearms+Aiming bonus+2 for winning the Initiative roll) and makes 5 successes. As the thug didn't know he was there he can't roll to defend himself. So Thomas has done 5 damage, plus a roll of 7 additional damage (for the weapon's damage). He gets 5 more successes for a total of 10 Health pips of damage. That's enough to take the thug out of the fight.

Amelia and Freeman are both attacking Johnson. Amelia is using a dagger she had secreted about her person, Johnson his cutlass and Freeman his beast-claws. Freeman gets 10 dice (Dexterity+Claws+Initiative bonus), Amelia just 4 (Dexterity+Swordplay+Initiative bonus) and Johnson 5 (Dexterity+Swordplay). Freeman gets 4 successes, Amelia 2 successes, and Johnson 1. So Freeman does 3 damage and rolls a further 8 dice for the beast-claws, getting another 4, for a total of 7. Amelia manages to deliver another 2 points of damage in total. 9 damage is enough to take Johnson down to -2 reserve dice, but a successful Resolve+Fortitude roll and he is still awake and ready to fight.

So one thug has been shot down and the fight between Johnson, Amelia and Freeman has been resolved. Of the other three thugs, one is being held at cutlass point by Astrid. The remaining two can't attack this round, they

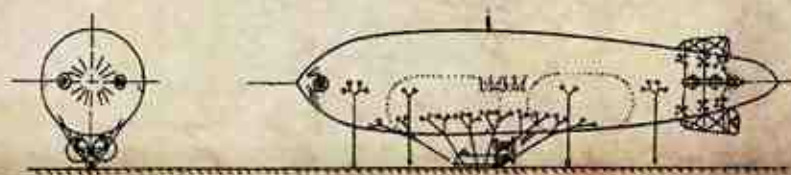
were slouching about, rummaging through the stolen booty. Next round they will be ready to fight.

Everyone rolls Initiative again. The order comes out as Thomas, Freeman, Astrid, the three thugs, Johnson and Amelia. The GM asks everyone to declare their intentions in reverse order. Amelia will try to stab at Johnson again. Johnson will try to run Amelia through. Astrid will keep her thug pinned, but is becoming frustrated at being left out of the fight. The thug she is pinning would like to run, but knows Astrid has the drop, and doesn't want to get killed. He looks at the door, longingly. The other two thugs head toward the melee between Freeman and Amelia. Freeman wanted to finish Johnson off, but decides he would do better to meet the oncoming thugs. Thomas decides he will shoot at one of the thugs, even though they now know he is there.

Thomas fires, and gets 1 success. But the thug can dodge and does so, getting two successes. The bullet lodges in a crate.

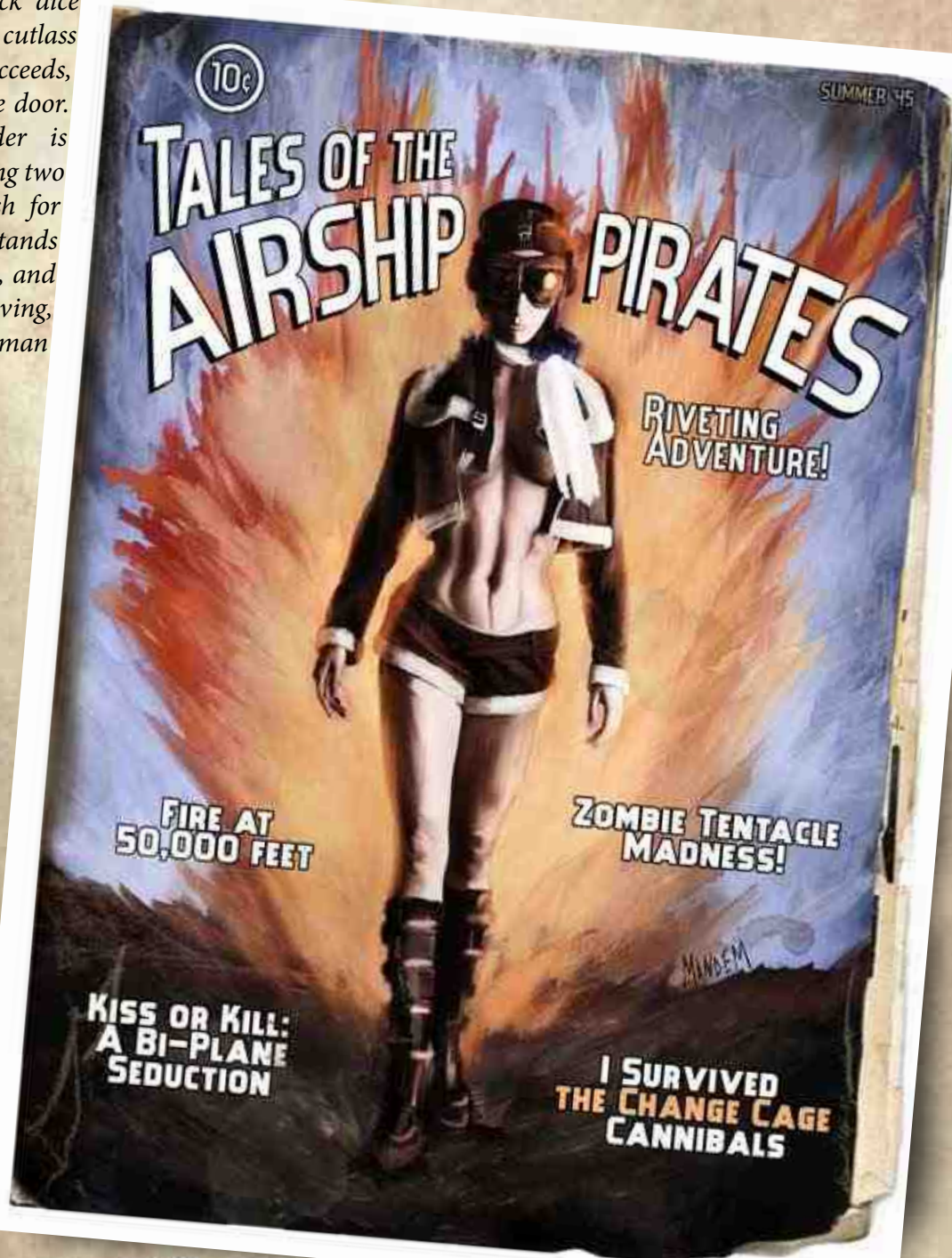
Next the GM resolves the combat with Freeman and Amelia. The GM splits the combat into two. Freeman against one of the thugs, Amelia facing Johnson. Amelia might have also had to fight the other oncoming thug, but he has all-out dodged (to give himself a bonus) to avoid being shot, so he cannot attack this round. Freeman gets just 2 successes from his 8 dice, the thug facing him gets 3. The thug rolls 3 successes for a total of 4 damage to Freeman, who marks off 2 health dice. Johnson has the drop on Amelia, so should get a +2 bonus, but he also has a -2 modifier to his dice pool, due to his wounds. He gets 2 successes to Amelia's 3. Amelia rolls for damage, and gets 3 successes, for a total of 4. Johnson fails to stay conscious this time, and slumps to the ground.

Everyone rolls for Initiative once more. The order is Freeman, Amelia, the remaining thugs, Astrid and then Thomas. Again everyone declares in reverse





order. Thomas draws his cutlass and starts to climb down through the skylight to join the melee. Astrid reluctantly continues to keep her opponent covered. The thug she is covering tries to escape. He makes a Dodge roll, with a 6 black dice penalty due to the cutlass at his throat, succeeds, and slips out of the door. Seeing their leader is down, the remaining two thugs make a dash for it as well. Astrid stands by to let them past, and seeing they are leaving, Amelia and Freeman let them go.

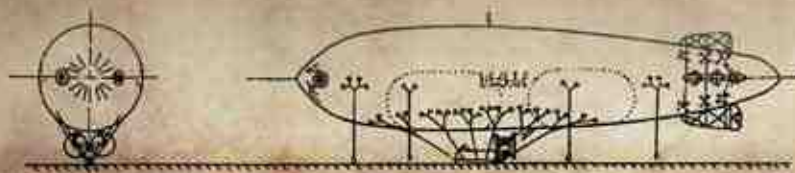




DRAMATIC SYSTEMS

*"Although I'm only eight now,
You need to hear my rules."*

*– Abney Park, Letters Between a
Little Boy and Himself as an Adult*





A lot of what goes on in a role-playing game can be narrated as part of the ongoing story, without needing rules. But there are other things that happen in a role-playing game, from being set on fire, to getting drunk, to learning new skills, which need rules. Such things are discussed here.

PERILS

There are lots of dangers in the world of *Airship Pirates*, not all of them associated with combat. Many of them cause physical damage, whether it's from falling, burning, drowning, poisoning or just bashing your thumb with a hammer.

Rather than provide a rule for every occasion, *Airship Pirates* provides the GM with guidelines on how to decide how much damage is caused in a given situation. When faced with such a peril, the GM should ask herself the following questions:

- What is the peril?
- Can it be avoided?
- How much damage does it cause?
- Does it have any unique consequences?
- How long does it last?

WHAT IS THE PERIL?

This can be something that the GM has decided to add to an adventure; crossing a rope-bridge between sky city platforms in a freezing hailstorm, escaping from a burning oil refinery, avoiding a trap on a pirate's treasure chest. Equally, it could be something that has come up in play; a character falling from the back of a frightened mammoth, drinking from a poisoned cup meant for the Emperor, being run over by a speeding hogtrike.

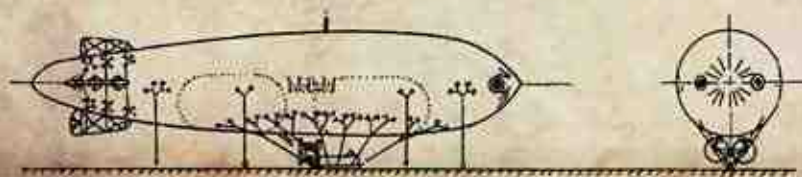
CAN IT BE AVOIDED?

Some perils can be avoided if spotted in time. This particularly applies to hazards such as traps and poisons, but could also apply to an unexpected cliff-edge in front of a speeding steam-truck, or an Imperial frigate looming out of a cloud just in front of the party's airship. A Wits+Perception roll can often be used to spot the peril and give the character the chance to avoid it – hearing a sinister click and getting a chance to jump aside before the trap is sprung; detecting a curious smell about the poisoned wine; slamming the brakes on to avoid the cliff edge. Black dice may be added to the dice roll, depending on how difficult to spot the peril is. The GM should not, of course, let the player know that there is a potential hazard – just tell him to make a Wits+Perception roll without saying why (or if you want to be particularly sneaky, make the roll secretly on the player's behalf) and only tell them what they notice if they succeed, letting the trap or poison have its effect if they fail. Some perils, however, cannot be avoided, only suffered through. If you've fallen from an airship without a parachute, you're going to notice the ground coming towards you rapidly, but there's usually nothing you can do to avoid it – though some players are very inventive! And if the worst comes to the worst, there are always scripting dice (see p.114).

HOW MUCH DAMAGE DOES IT CAUSE?

Once you've decided on a peril, you need to decide how much damage it does, and whether there is any way for the character to mitigate the damage with a skill roll.

The table below shows different intensities of peril, the amount of damage they do, and some examples of perils that fit the category. It also gives some idea of the amount of damage negated on a successful skill roll.





Intensity of Peril	Damage Dice	Difficulty of avoidance	Examples
Minor	1-2d	Easy (+5 bonus dice)	Wood fire, electric battery, weak poison, falling up to a yard, hitting thumb with a hammer
Moderate	3-6d	Average (no black dice)	Burning car, electricity generator, moderate poison, falling up to three yards, accident with a chainsaw
Major	7-12d	Difficult (3 black dice)	Burning oil refinery, struck by lightning, strong poison, falling up to six yards, caught in a collapsing building
Deadly	13d+	Very Difficult (6 black dice)	Falling into a volcano, deadly poison, falling over six yards, squashed by a falling sky city.

A successful roll can often decrease the amount of damage done; for perils involving physically avoiding something (such as avoiding a trap, dodging falling masonry, etc.) a Dexterity+Athletics roll will usually be suitable, while for something which relies upon the character's physical toughness (such as resisting poison, the effects of an electric shock, etc.) Fortitude+Resolve would be appropriate. The difficulty of the task is based on the peril's intensity (see table) and on a successful roll, the damage is halved – however, on a Foul Failure, the damage is doubled!

Sometimes armor can help protect against the penalty – this is true of such things as spiked pit traps, falling masonry, and the like, but not such things as poison, falling from a great height and so on. The GM should use common sense in such a case – is the damage caused similar to being hit by a weapon? If it is, then armor probably protects. Armor will not protect against such things as fire or falling, but will protect against sharp, pointy things. If armor does protect, take the Armor Points (APs) off the damage done before applying it.

DOES IT HAVE ANY UNIQUE CONSEQUENCES?

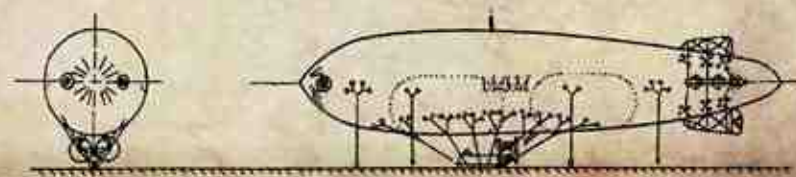
Some perils will have consequences beyond just the damage. A character who's fallen out of an airship's rigging onto the deck is likely to be stunned for a combat round at least before getting up, while someone who's survived drinking poison might spend several minutes being sick. And someone who's been exposed to fire might find their clothes are burning (in which case, see the next section!)

HOW LONG DOES IT LAST?

Some perils (a lightning strike, hitting the ground from a height, etc.) will be over instantly. Other perils will continue to have an effect until the character has escaped – for instance, a character struggling to get out of a burning car will take damage for every round he remains in it, and may need to make several separate rolls to escape (an Easy Dexterity roll to unfasten his seat belt, a Strength+Might roll to open the twisted door), taking damage for every combat round he remains stuck in the car. A person crossing a rope-bridge between city-platforms in a freezing hailstorm might have to make a Difficult Dexterity+Resolve roll every round to make progress on the swaying bridge (with three successes needed to get to the other side), while taking 2 dice of damage from cold and hailstones each round – the more rolls he or she fails, the more damage he or she will take. A character who has fallen into a pit trap full of spikes could suffer immediate damage from landing on the spikes and then 1 dice of damage per combat round from blood loss, until he's made a successful Difficult Fortitude+Resolve roll to pull the spike out his impaled leg and performed a Wits+Medicine roll to staunch the bleeding.

DROWNING AND ASPHYXIATION

Drowning and asphyxiation are a special case of peril, because although they are perils which cause damage all the time a character is unable to breathe, the damage does not start the moment the character





loses access to air. This covers everything from being submerged in a river, to getting caught in an enclosed space during a major helium leak. A character sitting quietly can hold her breath for 8 rounds for every point of Fortitude she has, whereas a character involved in strenuous activity (such as swimming, trying to batter a hole in a wall, etc) can only hold her breath for 2 rounds per point of Fortitude.

ILLNESS

While illness is, of course, a reality in the *Airship Pirates* world, it rarely plays a major part in tales of swashbuckling, so will not be gone into in great detail here. Diseases should generally only be introduced as part of a plot (perhaps a Neobedouin tribe has broken into an ancient secret government research lab, and the PCs must find a renowned scientist on a distant sky city before the plague spreads). If there is a disease about, the GM should decide how easy the disease is to catch, how long it lasts, and what the effects are. If the PCs are likely to catch the disease, they should roll Fortitude against a difficulty set by the GM based on how infectious it is. They will then suffer the disease's effects – which might involve the loss of a number of Health points per day, the slow loss of a particular attribute (e.g. Strength for a wasting disease, Wits for a deadly brain rot), or weird symptoms which could be simulated by giving the character a physical or mental Complication such as Malodorous or Paranoia. Once the disease has run its course, the symptoms will gradually wear off (Health points returning, Attributes slowly rising back to their old level, Complications wearing off). Medicine rolls might help with this, at the GMs discretion, depending whether there is a known cure for the disease in question.

But GMs should always make sure diseases serve the needs of the story rather than being strictly realistic – having the entire ship's crew die one by one from bubonic plague is not a good way to end a campaign!

DRINKING

Pirates like drinking. Time-traveling pirates *need* to drink (see p.254) – well, that's what they say! These rules show the effects of drinking on the human body. They needn't be used every time the PCs go to a bar, but if it seems likely that they're going to need their wits (or co-ordination) about them later on, it's best to have them use the rules here.

Every time a character has a drink, he must make a Fortitude roll. As long as he gets 2 successes, he's fine, otherwise he moves one step down on the Drinking Table below. Effects are cumulative, so anyone on Step 3: Hammered, will also suffer all the effects of being Merry and Tipsy too.

Different types of drinks add different numbers of black dice to the Fortitude roll:

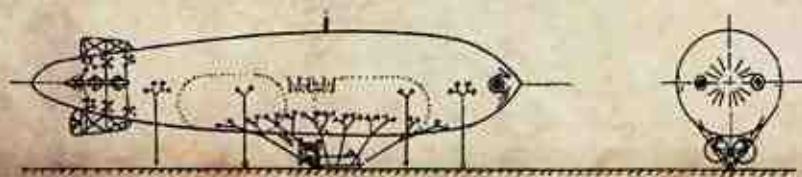
Light alcohol (beer etc.): 1 black die

Wines and Liqueurs: 2 black dice

Spirits: 3 black dice.

These black dice are cumulative as long as the person keeps drinking – so, for instance, a character who has downed a beer and a glass of wine will have 3 black dice against his Fortitude when taking his next roll. Once a character stops drinking, this black dice total reduces by one die for every hour they are teetotal.

The Drinking Table shows the effects of different levels of inebriation. If a character stops drinking he may make a Fortitude roll for every hour (even if sleeping) – if two successes are gained, he moves back up the table one step and loses half the black dice against him (round up).





Step	Inebriation Level	Effect
1	Tipsy	You are having a good time.* You suffer a black dice penalty equal to the step number you are on to any Resolve roll to resist having another drink.
2	Merry	Everything is funny* to you. Make a Resolve roll not to laugh at anything anyone says to you. You suffer a black dice penalty to this roll equal to the step number you are on minus 1.
3	Hammered	Your balance just went. Suffer a black dice penalty to all physical actions equal to the step number you are on minus 2.
4	Bladdered	You are having trouble thinking. Suffer a black dice penalty to all mental actions equal to the step number you are on minus 2.
5	Legless	The world is starting to spin and become very vague. All your dice pools are halved.
6	Plastered	You are only just capable of basic thought. All your dice pools are reduced to a quarter.
7	Paralytic	You pass out until you can drop back to step 6.

* Some drunks get maudlin and irritable rather than overly cheerful. If you are drinking to cheer yourself up because you have a reason to be miserable, its likely you'll just get more miserable. Misery will move on to the feeling that people are being insulting or unsympathetic rather than funny, and that's how bar brawls get started...

FEATS OF STRENGTH

How strong is a character? That is, what can a character with a certain Strength rating achieve? Look up your character's Strength attribute on the table below – you can do anything equal to or less than your Strength on the table, but if you want to achieve anything above your Strength, you must make a Strength+Might roll, and must gain twice as many successes as the feat outstrips your actual Strength.

Strength	To lift a:	To bend or break:	To throw a ball:
-3 and below	Light bag of groceries	Thick balsa wood	1 yard
-2 to -1	Heavy bag of groceries	Thick plyboard, silk	5 yards
0	Child, 2 heavy bags of groceries	Wood boards	10 yards
1-2	Adult female	Copper bar/pipe	20 yards
3-5	Adult male	Wooden door	30 yards
6-9	Street vendor's cart	Iron bar	40 yards
10-11	Row boat	Prison bars	60 yards
12-13	Ganger automaton	Steel bar	80 yards

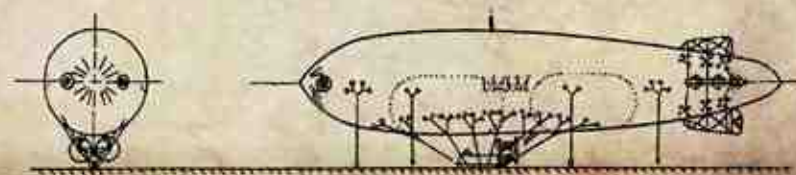
FATE POINTS AND SCRIPTING DICE

Fate points and scripting dice were briefly introduced in the Character Creation chapter (p.53). All characters begin play with a fate pool of eight – since a scripting die is equal to 6 fate points, this means a character begins play with 1 scripting die and 2 fate points. These can be used to change a character's fate on important occasions when the character needs to do something important, or wants to do something showy. These are quite apart from Awesome! Bonuses (p.101) which are awarded by the GM.

FATE POINTS

Fate points can be used in the following ways:

- Fate points can be added to a dice roll to give one automatic success. However, these successes can be canceled by black dice like any other success, and only a maximum of 3 fate points can be spent on a single dice roll.
- Fate points can be used to reduce the damage from an attack. Each point spent reduces damage taken by one Health pip. However, damage cannot be reduced to zero – a successful attack will always cause at least 1 point of damage.
- A fate point can be used to grant a success on the Fortitude+Resolve roll required to stay conscious/alive when you have taken severe damage. If the fate point is spent, you do not need to make the roll.
- Fate can extend the time you have to live. When





you have run out of Health pips, spending a fate point gains you an extra round in addition to your Resolve+Fortitude before you expire.

- 3 fate points can be used to avoid getting a permanent injury (see p.106).
- It is possible for a characters to use fate points on each others' rolls. However, it costs twice as much as it would normally. The character spending the fate points must be in the same place as the benefactor, and you should decide how they are helped. Maybe you noticed something about the lock that was being picked, or your long skirts accidentally staunched the wounds of the injured character you were kneeling next to. You can spend up to 6 points on another's behalf in a turn, but each point you spend is one less point you can spend on your own behalf in that round.

SCRIPTING DICE

Sometimes a fate point isn't enough – you need a miracle! If you spend 6 fate points at once, it is called a scripting die, and you can do so at any time, ignoring the normal fate point rules. This is a major invocation of fate, such as only major heroes or villains can call upon.

- A scripting die can be used for the following actions:
- A scripting die may be used to reroll an action or effect roll. The player must decide to reroll the dice before the effects of the dice roll in question are applied (in other words, immediately). If the new dice roll is worse, the player may choose to keep the original roll. However, only one scripting die can be used on a single roll – you can't keep spending scripting dice until you get the result you want.
- When a character dies, a scripting roll can be used to save her from her fate. A mortal wound turns out not to have been so deadly after all, merely knocking the character unconscious. A character falling from a height might land on something soft. The character doesn't get any health back, beyond being stabilized, but she is still alive.
- A scripting die may be used to change an aspect of the story in the players' favor. For instance, an autophrenometer might malfunction just as the PCs are about have their identities checked at a Desolation city-block

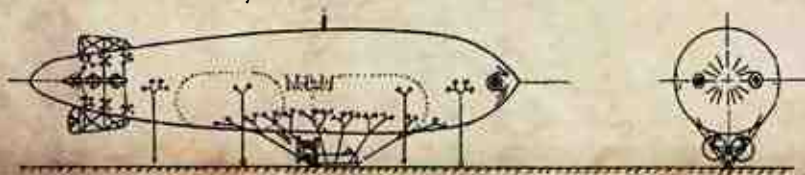
checkpoint, causing the the autocrat in charge to wave them through while he attempts to mend it. Or a character, unarmed in the villainous captain's cabin and facing a fate worse than death, might find a heavy candlestick just by her hand.

There are three very important rules to remember when using scripting dice:

- The GM may veto any use of a scripting die which they feel is too potent or destructive to the story.
- The player must use his imagination to explain how the scripting die helps. He cannot say "I use a scripting die to stop that happening." Unless he comes up with a good reason for how and why he gets a break, the use of the scripting die will be disallowed.
- A scripting die cannot change what has already happened. It can adjust or amend what is unclear but not what definitely occurred. So you cannot spend a scripting die to make a guard fail to notice you when he's already succeeded in his roll, but you can spend one to ensure that a drunk ruffian staggers out of a nearby tavern and picks a fight with him while you escape.

GAINING EXPERIENCE

As airship pirates have adventures, they gain experience, becoming better at what they do. For every game session in which you take part, you gain 1-3 experience points, which can be spent to increase skills and attributes. At the end of each adventure you will also gain a number of fate points, based on how well you did in the adventure – this can vary from 2-6 fate points, depending on the length of the adventure and how heroic you all were. The GM should be careful when awarding experience and fate points to be neither too generous nor too stingy – too generous and characters will become too powerful, making it difficult to throw new challenges at them; too stingy and the players may feel they're getting





nowhere and cannot gain the skills they want.

SWAPPING EXPERIENCE AND FATE POINTS

Experience and fate points are interchangeable, *but only when first awarded*. When first given experience points, a player may choose to spend them, convert them into fate points, or keep them for later. Equally, fate points, when first awarded, can be converted into experience points. But this can only be done when the points are first given – a player cannot suddenly decide to turn some experience points (which he was saving toward a skill increase) into fate points in the middle of a game because he's run out.

TRAINING

Sometimes you will wish to learn a new skill which you don't have. Some skills you can just pick up as you go along – if you keep getting in fights, your weapons skills are going to increase even without training, and if you're constantly riding a mammoth, your Riding skill will improve. But if you want to learn a new skill (be it Beast Dancing or learning to play the guitar) you'll probably need to find a teacher. This should be part of the story – finding someone who will teach you Beast Dancing may be an adventure in itself, and even after that, you may have to spend a couple hours a day on deck practicing your moves. Learning an academic skill might involve finding a tutor, or acquiring the right books and spending hours locked away reading, or grumbling about people interrupting your reading.

There are no set rules about how much training needs to be done to learn a new skill, or improving one you already have – but it should be role-played within the game if you want to persuade the GM to let you spend your experience points on a skill which you would not otherwise be learning. Alternatively, if there are periods of "downtime" between adventures (while waiting for your ship to be fitted with a new

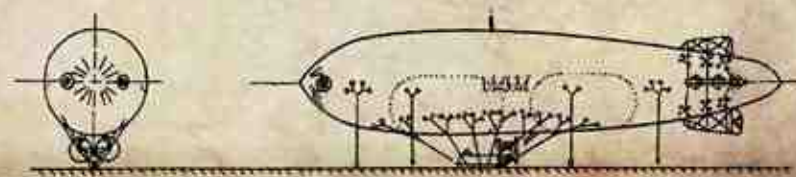
gasbag, for instance, or because one of the party is serving a prison sentence), you could say that you've spent the time learning a new skill "off camera" and come back prepared to show off your new talent.

SPENDING EXPERIENCE POINTS

The cost of various things on which experience points can be spent are detailed here:

Characteristic or Trait	Experience point cost equal to:
Attribute	Four times the new level.*
Skill (Common or Specialty)	The new level of skill.
New Specialty	4 points, for a level of 0.
Talent	Twice the talent's character point cost.
Buy off a complication	10 points for each complication.

* a negative level or 0 counts as 2 points.

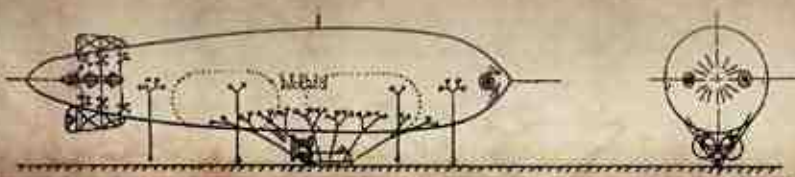




AIRSHIPS, VEHICLES AND BEASTS!

*"Steady on, she doesn't need to burn,
She tries to flee, she tries to turn,
Grappling fire, we grab her hull,
We're starting to roll, but we've got her on a leash!"*

– Abney Park, Airship Pirate





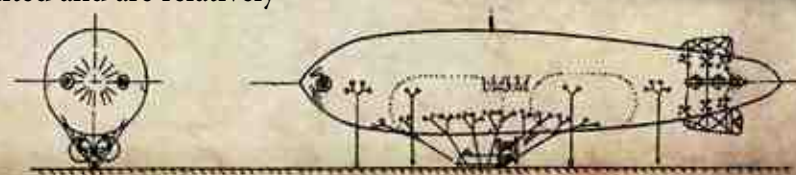
The following chapter covers a number of areas. First it gives an overview of how airships, vehicles and giant beasts are used in the world of 2150. This is followed by a number of interconnected rules. First comes Airship Customization (p.122), which allows players to take a standard airship design and add and remove certain modular items to make the airship better suit their purposes – it works in much the same way as buying Talents and Complications for a character. This is followed by Crew, which deals with the crews of airships and how they should be dealt with in the game. Chases (p.133), explains how vehicles (both airships and wheeled vehicles) and uber-beasts interact when trying to catch or escape from each other. (Beasts themselves are described in the Bestiary on p.261 – players are encouraged not to peek at this chapter to avoid knowing too much about the foes they will face). Finally comes Vehicle Combat and Airship Combat, which deals with how vehicles interact with each other, and in particular how airships fight.

Remember that these rules are not designed to be an accurate simulation of vehicle and mass combat – if we did that, it would turn *Airship Pirates* into a wargame. They're intended to guide players and GMs through fighting entertaining battles in a role-playing game, and GMs should use their own discretion and improvise if the rules don't quite seem to fit the situation at hand. They're more like guidelines than actual rules...

AIRSHIPS

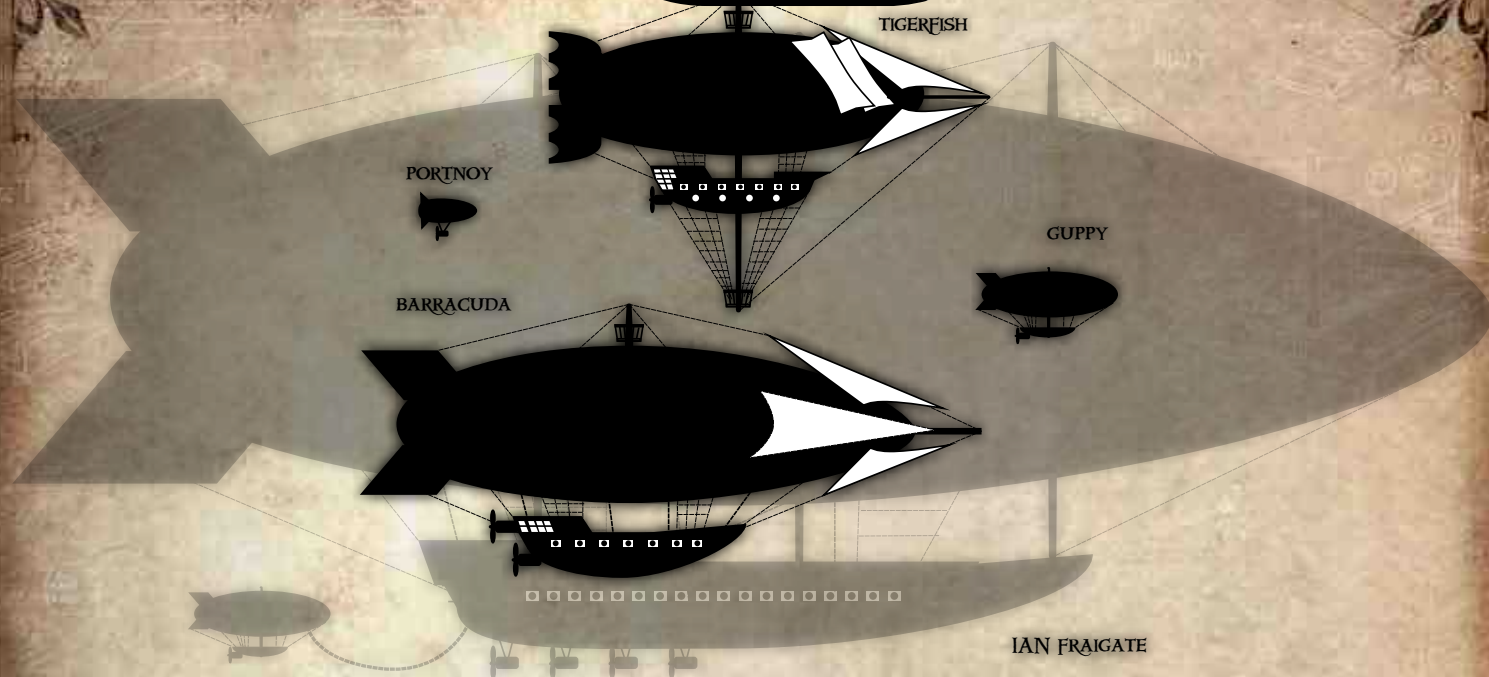
In 2150, airships rule supreme. In a world where the ground is dangerous, space for runways at a premium and factories almost non-existent, airships – which can be largely hand-crafted and are relatively

easy to repair – are the vehicle of choice. Most airships conform to the same pattern – a ship-like wooden hull strung beneath a streamlined cylindrical gas-bag. Some of the bigger airships have rigid hulls, but most are blimps, their gas-bags kept in shape by gas pressure. Most have individual gas cells within, so that a puncture does not lead to the loss of all lifting gas, and many have outer skins made of Calgorite, a rubber-like material which is “self-sealing”, naturally expanding and bonding together to close small punctures such as those caused by bullets.



AIRSHIP PIRATES

AIRSHIPS, VEHICLES AND BEASTS



Most airships are lifted by helium, much safer than inflammable hydrogen (though the latter is cheaper). They are usually propelled by either steam engines (fueled with easily obtainable wood or more expensive but more efficient coal), or by diesel or gasoline engines. Many augment their engines with sails, extending their range as long as the winds are blowing in the right direction. Some of the more experimental ships augment their lift with steam and/or hot smoke from steam engines, or hot exhaust fumes from diesel engines.

Though the airships of 2150 usually look ramshackle and hand-built, they are often remarkably sophisticated, as the people who build them, and nurse their often idiosyncratic systems, are masters of the art of lighter-than-air flight. They have developed systems of ballast control and pressure regulation which put the more sleek-looking airships of previous eras to shame, and what the airships lack in technical refinement is more than made up for by the expertise of their crews.

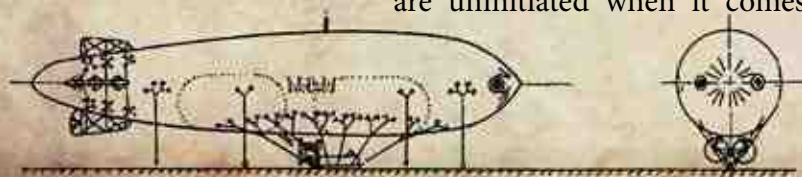
The only parts of an airship which can't easily be hand-built are the engines. While Jervis & Bottingly

and a few other Skyloft companies (all of them small, traditional family firms) produce a range of relatively efficient steam engines, most diesel and gasoline engines are reclaimed from pre-apocalypse vehicles and tinkered with to fit their new roles. To an airship pirate, a small, light, efficient diesel engine is a find worth more than gold.

AIRSHIPS OF THE SKYLOFT

In the Skyloft, no two airships are alike. Though there are shipyards which produce standard designs, owners of airships take pride in customizing their craft and making "improvements", whether it be to speed, lift capacity, weapons capability or interior luxury. Some insist on building their own airships from scratch. Others will buy a standard ship from one of the big shipbuilding companies of Isla Aether and tinker with it, so that within six months a sleek design such as Jervis & Bottingly's popular "Tigerfish" model is bristling with extra engines, gun ports, sails, grappling-hook launchers and the like, and is almost unrecognizable to the uninitiated.

That said, there are very few within the Skyloft who are uninitiated when it comes to airships. From





the schoolyard to the bar-room to the retirement home, nothing is more guaranteed to encourage excited conversation than airships – lift capacity, aerodynamics, the latest helium valve, Captain “Crazy” Eagle’s forward fin design. Everyone has an opinion, and things can often get heated, particularly where alcohol is also involved. People in High Tortuga still speak in awed tones of the Great Brawl of 2147, which took in seven bars, led to the serious injury of a hundred-and-thirty-seven people, and began as an argument over the relative merits of water and sand as ballast.

The Neobedouin have been wont to say that if all the hot air spoken about airships by Skyfolk could be collected, they’d never need to buy Helium again.

AIRSHIPS OF THE IMPERIAL AIR NAVY

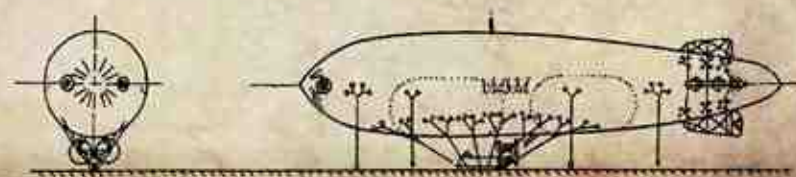
The Neovictorians’ airships are made in factories to a number of tried and tested designs. They tend to be sleek and efficient and lack the numerous added features and strange customizations that characterize a Skyloft airship. Only the Imperial Air Navy and the Chuno Ggun operate airships for the Neovictorians, as no-one outside the military (with the exception of the occasional bureaucrat) is allowed to travel. Discipline aboard an IAN ship is harsh, and cleanliness and neatness drummed into the sailors with severe punishments for non-compliance. IAN airships are always gleaming, their decks scrubbed constantly, their paintwork touched up regularly. The officers and sailors of the IAN see Skyloft airships as messy and inefficient and often underestimate their capabilities in combat. Conversely, the Skyfolk describe the Imperial Air Navy as “all scrub and no scrap”, though they are careful to avoid a broadside from an Imperial Frigate, which is more than most Skyloft airships can cope with.

LAND VEHICLES AND RIDING BEASTS

The Neobedouin make extensive use of land vehicles and beasts of burden in their wanderings. They are a motley mixture of vehicles, many of them cobbled together from parts of pre-apocalypse vehicles, mixed with technology traded from the Skyloft. The larger vehicles are used for pulling the tribes’ brightly painted caravan homes – these include steam-trucks, ancient and much-repaired diesel trucks and massive beasts of burden such as mammoths, mastodons and the truly gigantic indrikki. Smaller carts and caravans will be pulled by horses, and loads might also be carried on vans, trucks, mules and camelops. Outriders who escort the caravans and keep a look out for wild predators will usually ride on either horses or hogtrikes.

The Neobedouin on the whole have a much less romantic view of their vehicles than the Skyloft do with their airships, seeing them as necessary tools rather than an end in themselves, though individual Neobedouins may have a different attitude. The Neobedouin spend a lot of their energy on survival, and have better things to do in their small amount of spare time than tinkering with engines for the sake of it – like partying! Their vehicles are functional rather than smart – though in the North American wilderness, function runs to roll-bars, spikes, barred windows and armor.

Beasts of burden are given rather more attention. Outriders are proud of their horsemanship, and the keepers of the giant beasts such as mammoths and indrikki often dote on their gigantic charges. The only exception to this are the camelops which, although strong and enduring, are bad-tempered, uncooperative and prone to spitting at anyone who gets on the wrong side of them. Camelops are tolerated as a necessary evil rather than animals which garner much affection from their owners.





RAILROADS

A network of railroads crosses the continent between the Neovictorian cities, and out to various coal and mineral mines. Trains are few and far between, being used mostly to transport important upper class passengers between Desolation, Everglade and Old Borealis, and workers from one mine to another. The trains are completely enclosed so that the people within cannot see out – this is partly to keep them safe from attack by airships or tribesmen, but mostly to stop those within getting a glimpse of the outside world. While anyone important enough to be traveling between cities is probably in on the secret of the existence of the Free Peoples, mine-workers will definitely not be, and must be sheltered from the possibility of seeing airships or Neobedouin tribes. Naturally, they are told that the armor and lack of windows is for their protection from wild beasts.

Railroad engines are always steam-powered, and carry large stocks of coal for the long journeys they make. They tend to be heavy and brutal-looking, with massive “cow-catchers” on the front and only narrow windows slits through which the driver can see out. The drivers *are* of course allowed to see out, but are sworn to secrecy about what they see, with the threat of joining the workers in the mines hanging over them if they fail to comply.

WATER VESSELS

CANALS

Alongside the railroads, and in a few other places too, canals criss-cross the continent. These are used for transport of such things as coal from the mines to the Change Cage cities, as well as other raw materials for use in Neovictorian factories. The barges too tend to be heavily armored, often with swivel-guns on the roof to fend off airship pirates, wild beasts and raiding Neobedouins. The Bargefolk who work these steam-powered vessels are a law unto themselves, living

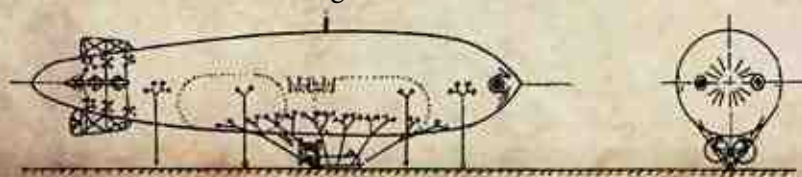
on their boats for the weeks-long journeys (see p.224). Canal boats tend to be brightly painted and well-maintained by their owners, as (much like the Neobedouins’ caravans) these are the only homes they have.

Many of the canals are quite narrow, meaning that boats are relatively small; the canals often climb sloping ground in a series of locks, or plunge underground in long tunnels through the mountains which would be a marvel of engineering if there were anyone but the Bargefolk to marvel at them. Although the only docking facilities are in the Change Cage cities and the mining complexes, there are unofficial mooring points where the Bargefolk will stop off to engage in illicit trade with the Neobedouin. Many IAN officers know of these “black wharfs”, having seen them from the air, but turn a blind eye as they themselves are recipients of contraband goods brought into the Change Cage cities by the Bargefolk.

LAKES AND SEAS

Bargefolk vessels traveling from Everglade via the mines of the Appalachian Mountains toward Old Borealis must deal with the open waters of the Great Lakes and tend to be larger and more suitable for such conditions than the smaller barges of the other canals. Large Bargefolk steamboats ply the waves, wary of the storms for which these vast bodies of water are notorious and always on the lookout for the monstrous beasts which supposedly live in the depths.

Few vessels are ever seen close to the shores of North America. The Neovictorians do not have a sea presence, and although the Imperial Air Navy patrols the margins of the land from time to time in search of Neobedouins attempting to settle down, the Seafolk tend to stay far from shore on their floating raft cities, houseboats and converted ocean liners and are little known by the people of the continent.





AIRSHIP CUSTOMIZATION

To make life simpler for the players, and keep the emphasis on role-playing rather than complex rules, players are offered a number of airship templates, to which they can add a few modifications in much the same way as they buy Talents and Complications for their characters at the beginning of the game. A ready-made airship, the *Cordelia*, is available on p.148 for those who don't want to bother with the whole design process. Some of the Airship Resources deal with the airship's crew, and more details of crew rules are found later in this chapter, in Crews Combat, p.128.

Each airship template (see p.148) has a Resource Space rating; this tells you how many points you can spend on Airship Resources. Some parts of the airship cannot be customized but are part of the standard hull, so the players need not worry about changing them; these are not counted in the Resource Space rating, which covers *only* customizable space. In some IAN vessels there is a set provision for housing air marines, in many Skyloft vessels there are standard cargo holds.

STARTING AIRSHIP RESOURCE POINTS (ARPS)

Assuming players are beginning with either a standard "Tigerfish" design, or the pre-customized airship *Cordelia*, the PCs will have 50 points of Resource Space to fill, and 50 Airship Resource Points to spend on Resources; if running a different sort of campaign (for instance, a game where the PCs are all crew on an IAN frigate) they might have more Resource Space to fill and correspondingly more ARPs. But bear in mind that once play starts, Resources will cost money rather than points, so if they want something special for their ship, it's best to get it before the campaign starts.

AIRSHIP RESOURCES

The following is a list of resources that can be bought

to customize your airship. Each resource has an Airship Resource Point (ARP) cost and a financial cost in Helios. Each airship type has an Airship Resources rating, which is the maximum number of ARPs that can be spent on a ship – you can't go over this as there is simply no room to cram more stuff in. If you want to add more assets, you must either remove something or get a Complication for the ship (see p.126).

Remember that Airship Resource Points are a general measure of how much space an item takes up aboard ship – the ARPs for a cannon include the space needed around it for the gun crew to work.

This is not an exhaustive list – if players come up with an asset not listed here, the GM should decide on an ARP and Helios cost based on those that *are* listed.

SELLING RESOURCES

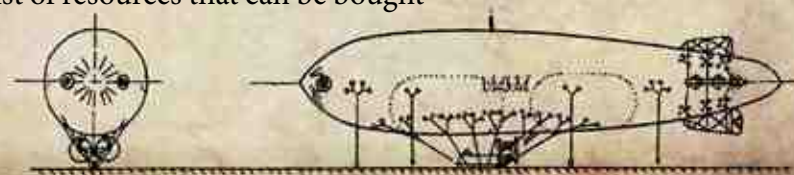
If the characters decide they no longer need a particular resource, they may decide to sell it. Most resources will sell for no more than half the listed cost of buying one, though it will depend where they are at the time they sell it – for instance, the contents of a music studio (i.e. the musical instruments) are more likely to sell to a Neobedouin tribe than a large cannon.

ARMOR (1 ARP, HES0)

This adds 1 AP to the overall armor of the airship by strengthening the hull, internal bracing, etc. As such things are normally included in the basic design of the ship, this resource can only be bought once; any more and the ship will become un-airworthy.

AUTOMATON MOUNT (2 ARPs, HES)

A rack on the side of the airship capable of holding a single ganger-sized automaton for quick deployment. These are usually only available to the Chuno Ggun black frigates, although they occasionally appear on the black market at vastly inflated prices.



AIRSHIP PIRATES



AIRSHIPS, VEHICLES AND BEASTS

CABIN, LUXURIOUS (5 ARPS, HE200)

A splendidly decked-out cabin with rich carpets, wall-hangings, a large four-poster bed and the like. May be the cabin of a particularly decadent captain, the working room of a high-class prostitute, or a room to house well-paying passengers.

CABIN, STANDARD (3 ARP, HE100)

A plain, functional cabin, with bed, washstand, small writing desk and the like. Suitable for a ship's officer with simple tastes or a paying passenger.

CANNON, LARGE (2 ARPS, HE40)

This large cannon can be mounted on deck, or fitted out belowdecks with a proper gun port (or just a hole in the side of the ship, if you're in a hurry!). It does 15 dice damage.

CANNON, SMALL (1 ARP, HE20)

This small cannon can be mounted on deck, or fitted out belowdecks with a proper gun port (or just a hole in the side of the ship, if you're in a hurry!). It does 10 dice damage.

CANNON TURNTABLE (4 ARPS, HE40)

This turntable can be fitted on deck. A cannon (large or small) can be mounted on the turntable, allowing it to be swiveled in any direction for firing, although care must be taken not to shoot away rigging or fellow pirates.

CARGO HOLD (SPECIAL)

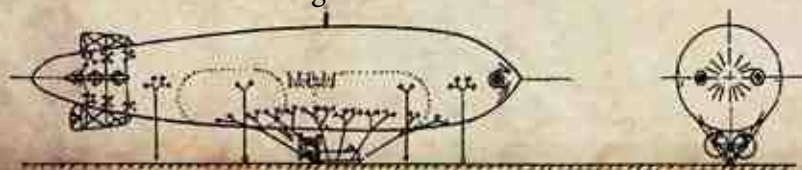
Cargo space does not cost anything to buy. Any spare resource space not used up by other resources remains empty and is used as extra cargo space, by default. If more resources are bought, the cargo space goes down accordingly. Airships are assumed to have enough



space to house all the crew needed to run them; extra air sailors or marines can be crammed into spare cargo space (sleeping in hammocks suspended from the beams) at a rate of 2 sailors per 1 ARP.

THE CHRONONAUTILUS (4 ARP, PRICELESS)

The Chrononautilus is a time travel device invented in 1906 by Professor Calgari. Only two were ever built; one is in Abney Park's airship, *HMS Ophelia*, the other may, at some point, fall into the hands of the PCs. The chrononautilus consists of a series of glass globes containing a pink swirling gas, connected by coils of copper wire to a brass and mahogany box studded with dials and a large lever like something from an old Frankenstein movie. The control box has a brass plaque on which is inscribed the words "WARNING: temporal travel



AIRSHIP PIRATES



AIRSHIPS, VEHICLES AND BEASTS



should always be undertaken in periods of exactly a year. Check your settings!" When first discovered, the globes are wrapped in cotton wool in separate compartments in a packing case. In the bottom of the metal box is a drawer containing a hand-written manual, "Assembly and Usage Instructions for the Mark I Chrononautilus, by Professor Leguminus Calgori." Studying the book for 21 hours will allow a character to gain the Specialty Skill, Science (Temporal Physics) at 0. The globes must be fitted along the length of an airship, connected by the wires; this takes eight hours and a successful Ad-Hoc Repair or Engineer (Electrical) roll. Further details on use of the Chrononautilus can be found in the Time Travel chapter, p.249.

This device is not available to buy, and will probably

not be available at the beginning of the game. It is up to the GM to introduce it into the game, whether this be in the form of treasure, a weird device found in a ruined city, payment for a job done, a gift from a mysterious old man (one of the PCs, 50 years from now?), etc.

CREW SPACE (5 ARPS, HE100)

Space for 10 crew to sling their hammocks. This means the ship starts with a crew rank 1 higher than normal, though if they are killed, new crew must be recruited in the usual way. This Resource can be bought three times: the first time, it also adds +1 die to Handling as well as +1 to crew rank; the second time it adds +1 to crew rank but nothing to Handling; and the third time it adds +1 to crew rank, but adds 1 black die to Handling as the ship is so crowded that air sailors get in each other's way and impede the efficient

handling of the vessel.

GRAPPLING HOOK LAUNCHER (2 ARPS, HE20)

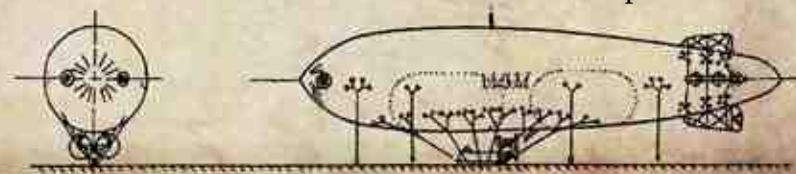
Can be fired to grapple an enemy airship and pull it closer for boarding. Each added launcher adds one die to the Gunnery roll when attempting to grapple. Range is 25 yards.

LIGHTNING GUN, MOUNTED (4 ARPS, HE80)

The barrel is attached to a large generator. Shoots an arc of lightning. It does 12 dice of damage, which ignores armor.

MARINE QUARTERS (5 ARPS, HE 100)

Space for 10 air marines to sling their hammocks. These marines do not add to the crew of the ship and count as a separate unit of troops in fighting involving



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crews. This Resource can be bought three times, and has no effect on any airship handling rolls.

MUSIC STUDIO (10 ARPS, HE500)

This room has all that is needed for a group of musicians to practice; cost includes whatever musical instruments are needed for the band, instrument stands, electrical connections to the airship's engines to provide power for electrical instruments, a cylinder-recording device, etc. Characters who have access to a Music Studio needn't take too much trouble keeping track of which musical instruments they have, but can (within reason) produce any instrument when needed, whether it be a kazoo or a double bass. However, GMs may disallow any ridiculous claims; if players want to equip a 50-strong marching band with tubas, they can't just get them out of the music room without a *very good* backstory!

PETTY CASH (1 ARP, SPECIAL)

This is not a resource which customizes the ship, but a way of the players starting with some shared petty cash at the start of the game. It gives the PCs He100, but cuts down by 1 the number of Airship Resource Points they can spend on their airship. Once play begins, this resource cannot be bought – further cash must be earned, stolen or begged! This resource can only be bought once.

PROPS ROOM (8 ARPS, HE300)

This room has all the equipment, costumes, make-up, etc. needed by a theater group, circus troupe or the like (not including performing animals!). Characters who have access to a Props Room needn't take too much trouble keeping track of costumes and clothing they have, but can (within reason) produce any props or costumes when needed whether it be a Neovictorian gentleman's dinner suit or a vase of artificial roses. However, GMs may disallow any ridiculous claims; if players want to equip a 50-strong marching band

with red uniforms, they can't just get them out of the props room without a *very good* backstory!

SAILS (1 ARP, HE50)

Extra sails have been added to the airship, meaning that the vessel can travel further on the same amount of fuel. Standard range for the ship is increased by 50%. This Asset can only be taken once.

SCIENCE LAB (5 ARPS, HE200)

This room has all the resources needed for doing experiments and is fully equipped with scientific equipment. A useful asset for the budding mad scientist.

SICK BAY (5 ARPS, HE300)

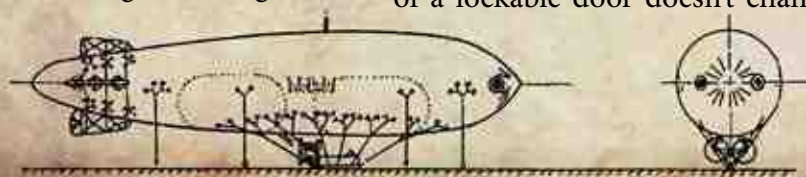
A sterile, well equipped environment which makes all Medicine rolls aboard ship Easy (+5 to dice pool).

STABLES (3 ARPS*, HE50*)

A 3 ARP stable costs He50 and provides enough space for one horse and storage space for food. A 10 ARP stable is big enough to hold a mammoth or a mastodon and costs He300, and a 12 ARP stable will hold an indrikki and cost He500. High costs for mammoth and indrikki stables include deck-strengthening to take the weight, and a ramp and hatch big enough to get the animal through! Stables include closable ports through which animal waste may be shoveled in flight – not to be used in port or while flying over a built-up area, unless you want to make enemies!

STORAGE ROOM (1 ARP*, HE10)

This is a storage room separate from the cargo hold, which can be locked to prevent the crew getting in. It is not completely secure to a determined thief, but will withstand casual pilfering. Larger storage rooms will add ARPs, but the cost will not go up, as the cost of a lockable door doesn't change, no matter what





the size of the room. Can be used to store those items which the PCs want to keep to themselves, whether it be a side of mammoth bacon, a Portnoy portable dirigible or a deactivated doll.

TRAINING ROOM (10 ARPS, HE100)

A training room is a space big enough for a group of people to practice physical activities, whether that be weapons training, circus skills or dancing. It will include other necessary equipment – padded mats, wall-bars, gym equipment, a cylinder-player, space to keep a small amount of equipment, etc. Crews wanting space for more equipment are encouraged to fit their airship out with a Props Room or Weapons Locker.

WEAPONS LOCKER (3 ARPS, HE 500)

A small storage room filled with weapons, ammunition, etc. There will be enough weapons in this locker to kit out a Rank 5 crew with two weapons each (usually sword and some form of firearm); larger airships will need to buy multiple Weapons Lockers. On top of weapons for the crew, there will be plenty of ammunition and a few specialist items such as grenades, a mammoth gun, etc. Characters who have access to a Weapons Locker needn't take too much trouble keeping track of which weapons they have, but can (within reason) produce any weapon when needed, whether it be brass knuckles or a heat-ray. However, GMs may disallow any ridiculous claims; if players want to equip a 50-strong mercenary unit with steam gatlings, they can't just get them out of the weapons locker without a *very* good backstory!

WORKSHOP (4 ARPS, HE300)

A fully equipped workshop with all the tools needed for building and repairing equipment large and small. Adds 2 to the dice pool of to any Ad-Hoc Repair rolls made aboard ship.

AIRSHIP COMPLICATIONS

These are modifications made to the ship which give more space for extra Resources at the expense of inefficiencies in the ship's operations. Each has a negative ARP value, which can be added to the standard ARP total available for the airship being customized.

CRAMPED (-5 ARPS)

Some of the crew space has been removed, leaving less space for the crew. This automatically reduces the crew by 1 Rank (10 crew members) – see opposite. This Complication can be taken up to three times; if the crew falls below the minimum needed to crew the airship, the normal penalties will apply.

FRAGILE (-5 ARPS)

Some of the ship's internal structure has been removed to make room for Resources. The airship has 2 less Health dice (12 pips) than normal due to weaknesses in the hull. This Complication can be taken up to three times, each time taking 2 Health dice off the ship's total.

SLUGGISH (-5 ARPS)

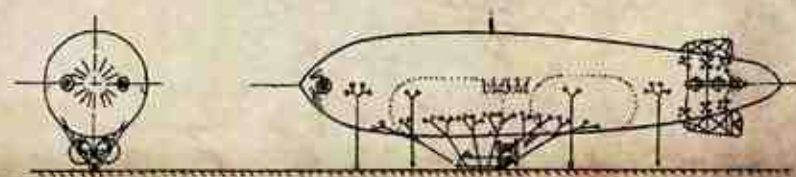
An engine has been removed, or an existing engine has been replaced with a smaller, less powerful one. The airship's Handling will be reduced by 1 and Movement will be reduced by 10 mph. This Complication can be taken up to three times, each time taking 1 from Handling and 10mph from Movement.

WALLOWING (-5 ARPS)

The airship is a bit too heavy for the amount of lift in its gasbags. If the ship has a full cargo hold, it will suffer a 2 black dice penalty to Pilot rolls.

AIRSHIP CREWS

*"Expendable crew starts to reel her in,
Our swords are sharpened and we're ready to sin,
I'm three miles up, we're about to swing aboard,
My tether's made of leather so I'm not about to fall
here."*



AIRSHIP PIRATES



AIRSHIPS, VEHICLES AND BEASTS

Abney Park, *Airship Pirate*

All airships (apart from the very smallest) have a large crew, quite apart from the PCs. On a “Tigerfish” class airship such as the PCs begin play with, there are 50 others aboard. Now obviously, neither the GM nor the other players are going to want to keep track of 50 NPCs and all their stats, so we’ve come up with a way of keeping track of all these people without getting bogged down in too many numbers.

How players deal with their airship’s crew is up to them. Some players treat them as an anonymous mass and use them (literally) as cannon fodder. Others will insist on naming every single crew member and getting quite upset when their favorite dies. The happy medium is probably somewhere in between – the majority are an anonymous mass, but a few stick out as heroes, villains and lovable eccentrics.

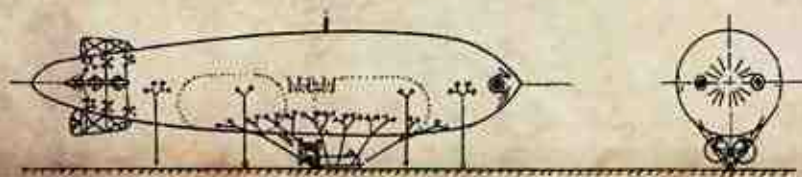
terms of game mechanics, together with information about how these mechanics can be turned into role-playing opportunities. Bear in mind that these are not meant to be *realistic* rules – if we were to get into the accurate simulation of airship crews, *Airship Pirates* would cease to be a role-playing game. If at any point the numbers don’t seem to make sense, go with sense rather than the numbers!

Note that these rules also apply to other large bodies of people such as angry mobs, units of marines and the like.

CREW STATISTICS

The following table shows crew ranks and their statistics.

-----Competency and Attributes -----						
Rank	Size	Mutinous	Scurvy	Common	Competent	Elite
1	10	+3/+0	+4/+1	+5/+2	+5/+3	+6/+4
2	20	+4/+0	+5/+1	+6/+2	+6/+3	+7/+4
3	30	+4/+0	+5/+1	+6/+2	+6/+3	+7/+4
4	40	+5/+0	+6/+1	+7/+2	+7/+3	+8/+4
5	50	+6/+0	+7/+1	+8/+2	+8/+3	+9/+4
6	60	+7/+0	+8/+1	+9/+2	+9/+3	+10/+4
7	70	+7/+0	+8/+1	+9/+2	+9/+3	+10/+4
8	80	+8/+0	+9/+1	+10/+2	+10/+3	+12/+4
9	90	+9/+0	+10/+1	+11/+2	+11/+3	+13/+4
10	100	+10/+0	+11/+1	+12/+2	+12/+3	+14/+4
11	110	+10/+0	+11/+1	+12/+2	+12/+3	+14/+4
12	120	+11/+0	+12/+1	+13/+2	+13/+3	+14/+4
13	130	+12/+0	+13/+1	+14/+2	+14/+3	+15/+4
14	140	+13/+0	+14/+1	+15/+2	+15/+3	+16/+4
15	150	+13/+0	+14/+1	+15/+2	+15/+3	+16/+4
16	160	+14/+0	+15/+1	+16/+2	+16/+3	+17/+4
17	170	+15/+0	+16/+1	+17/+2	+17/+3	+18/+4
18	180	+16/+0	+17/+1	+18/+2	+18/+3	+19/+4
19	190	+16/+0	+17/+1	+18/+2	+18/+3	+19/+4
20	200	+17/+0	+18/+1	+19/+2	+19/+3	+20/+4





RANK

This is an overall measure of the crew's Rank. It is a tenth of the Size of the crew, rounded up. If an airship's crew size falls below the minimum required, all rolls involving ship-handling, Gunnery and the like will suffer a black die penalty for each level of Rank below the optimum.

Example: If the airship has Minimum Crew Size of 30, and it only has 20 crew left, it is 10 below the minimum needed to handle the ship effectively. As a crew of 10 has a Rank of 1, all skill rolls for the airship will suffer a 1 black die penalty.

SIZE

This is the number of people in the crew. As crew members are killed or incapacitated, the number will go down, and when they drop below the minimum for the crew's current Rank, the Rank will go down.

Example: A crew of Rank 5 starts with 50 people in it. If 7 people are killed, it will have 43 people in it but will still be Rank 5. If another 3 are lost, taking the total down to 40, it will become a Rank 4 crew, and it's Physical Attribute will drop accordingly.

PHYSICAL AND MENTAL ATTRIBUTES

The Physical Attribute replaces Strength, Dexterity and Fortitude in a normal PC, while the Mental Attribute represents Presence, Wits and Resolve. In the table they are represented by two numbers (e.g. +7/+1); the first number is the Physical Attribute, the second is the Mental Attribute.

COMPETENCY

As can be seen, there are five levels of crew competency; Mutinous, Scurvy, Common, Competent and Elite. This shows how good they are in a fight. As a crew's Rank goes down due to losing numbers, it's Competency will stay the same. Competency is a general measure of how well the

crew works together. As the crew gain morale from winning battles, getting treasure and the like, their Competency will go up. If they lose battles, don't get paid, get killed in large numbers, or whatever, their Competency will go down.

Mutinous: The crew are very dissatisfied with their lot and are likely to cause trouble for the captain and have fights amongst themselves. They don't work at all well together as a team. If they drop below this level, they will likely leave the ship en masse at the first opportunity.

Scurvy: The crew are not happy, though not ready to desert yet. They will make demands of the captain and don't work particularly well together as a team.

Common: The crew are reasonably content, though there will be a few rivalries below decks. They work together, but don't pull out all the stops.

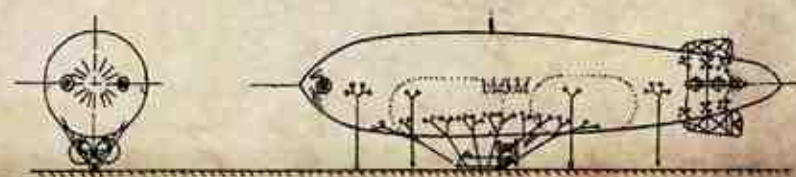
Competent: The crew work well together and rarely grumble about conditions.

Elite: The crew are soul-mates. They work together like a well-oiled machine and there's nowhere they'd rather be.

CREW COMBAT

When two ships' crews get together to fight (or a ship's crew and a rowdy mob of young Neobedouins, angry street thugs, or whoever), they don't fight as individuals, but as a seething mass. Combat is conducted in just the same way as normal combat, but each crew is treated as an individual.

Whatever the majority of the crew are armed with is assumed to be what causes the most damage – so if most of the crew have steamrifles, they'll be able to perform ranged attacks and do ranged damage; if they're mostly armed with cutlasses, they'll be restricted to attacking face to face, even if some people in the crew have ranged weapons.





Normally, two crews will fight each other, but if the PCs are leading their crew into battle against an enemy crew, the enemy crew can attack every PC present as well as the PCs' crew. It has as many attacks as it needs. (The same is obviously true of the friendly crew attacking any major NPCs in the enemy crew).

However, instead of using the rules for multiple opponents, each PC fights the crew as an individual. You cannot gang up on a crew, as it is effectively ganging up on you with the combined strength of its numbers. So the crew can generate an "opponent" for every attacker within range without splitting its actions, although it does roll a single Initiative (using Physical + Mental).

Note: The above method makes for speedier combats, but there will be a lot of occasions where it is best for the GM to resolve the crew vs crew combat separately from the individual battles each PC is involved in. For instance, during a boarding action, the GM might run the fight between the opposing crews in the background, and just give the players an overview of how things seem to be going round by round, while describing the individual foes that each PC faces and using individual NPC stats for resolving each personal battle the PCs are fighting.

CREW HEALTH

Crews also don't have Health in quite the same way as individuals. Instead, the crew's opponents are considered to be knocking out or disabling the weak individuals to reduce the overall strength of the crew. So for every pip of damage, one crew person is considered out of the fight (though whether they're dead or merely unconscious remains to be seen – see Healing Crews, below). For every 10 crew members taken out of the fight, the enemy crew's Rank goes down by 1. If the Rank is reduced to 0, there's no-one left standing.

STRIKE THE COLORS!

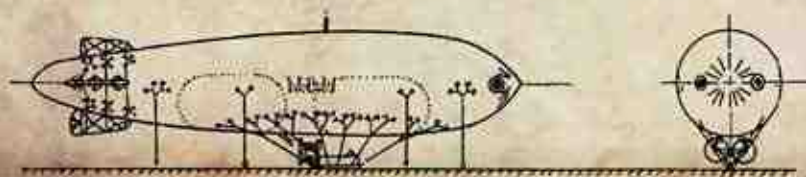
To avoid having to utterly destroy an enemy crew to get rid of it, crews will retreat or surrender if their numbers are reduced enough. Few pirate crews will fight to the death – they'd rather fight and run away and live to fight another day. Once a crew has lost a third of its Rank in combat, it must make a Rank + Mental roll to keep fighting, and another one every time it loses another Rank. The crew's captain, or some other important leader figure, may make a Wits + Leadership roll to rally the crew and keep them fighting, but takes a 3 black dice penalty for every point of Rank that the crew have lost so far. Any successes on this roll can be added to the Rank + Mental roll.

If the crew have no successes on their Rank + Mental roll, they will give up fighting. This might mean running away if on land, but on a ship (where there's nowhere to run to), this will mean laying down their weapons and surrendering. The officer in charge will "strike the colors" (i.e. take down the ship's flag) to signal surrender, and the looting can begin!

HEALING CREW

Once combat is over, anyone with Medicine can attempt to heal the ship's crew. Each hour allows one roll (using the difficulty levels on p.106), and a successful roll will heal a number of crew members equal to the number of successes on the healer's dice. It is assumed that they were just incapacitated, rather than being killed. This roll can be made twice, over a two hour period, but any crew who aren't treated after that time are assumed to have died of their wounds. The GM may make an exception if the fight was a brawl without weapons, in which case, the rest of the crew will wake up with sore heads the following day.

If healing the crew takes them back over the next Rank level, their stats will go up accordingly.





CREW MORALE

A crew's morale (and hence its Competency) can be affected by numerous factors. The GM should bear in mind the crew's current state of mind when role-playing them, and make sure that their morale is affected by the PCs actions. Here are some ideas of things that can affect a crew's Competency.

Note that a crew's competency can never permanently move by more than one level in either direction in a single week.

RAISING COMPETENCY

- A successful Presence + Leadership roll before a battle. The speaker must role-play the speech, and the GM may add dice or give black dice penalties according to what the player actually says to the crew. A Foul Failure may result in the crew losing Competency instead. This is only a temporary raise in Competency, which will last for the duration of a single battle.
- A successful raid which garners treasure for the crew.
- A major successful performance using the ship's Schtick.

DROPPING COMPETENCY

- A successful Presence + Intimidate on the part of an enemy leader before a battle. This is only a temporary fall in Competency, which will last for the duration of a single battle.
- A failed raid in which people are killed for very little or no reward.
- A major failed performance using the ship's Schtick.

CREWS IN AIRSHIP-TO-AIRSHIP COMBAT

Crews affect the running of an airship – see the airship combat rules on p.138 for more details.

RECRUITING NEW CREW

If crew are killed in a major combat, the PCs are likely to want to recruit more to fill empty spaces on their ship. This can be role-played, with the PCs going into bars in pirate havens and rounding up new people

(either by charm or force), but can quickly be decided with a Presence+Charm or Wits+Business roll while docked in a friendly port. The number of successes should have a bearing on the Competency of crew recruited, but it's really down to what sort of people are likely to be on the docks at any given time.

The Competency of a crew when new members are added is usually the same as the Competency of the remaining members of the old crew, unless the new crew outnumber the old crew by more than a third. In that case, the new Competency will be raised or lowered to one different from the new crew. So if there are 40 members of an old Scurvy crew, and 10 new members of a Competent crew are added, the overall Competency will still be Scurvy, as old habits die hard. But if there are 10 members of a Scurvy crew are joined by 40 members of a Competent crew, the new crew will be Common.

ATTRIBUTES OF INDIVIDUAL CREW MEMBERS

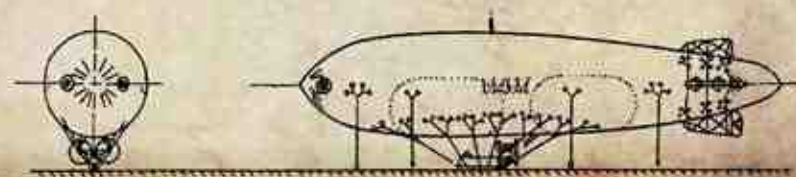
If one of the members of a crew rises to prominence as an NPC, his Attributes needn't be the same as those of the crew from which he comes. Just choose an NPC from p.240 who fits the bill and tweak skills to personalize him or her. If the character is memorable for anything in particular, you may want to add a Talent or Complication.

BEASTS

Rules for using uber-beasts in combat with vehicles and airships are described below, but descriptions of the beasts themselves are to be found in the Bestiary, p.261.

VEHICLE RULES

These rules apply to vehicles and creatures, whether they be airships, biplanes, hogtrikes or saber-toothed cats. In the following rules, for simplicity, the word



AIRSHIP PIRATES



AIRSHIPS, VEHICLES AND BEASTS

“vehicle” also refers to the giant beasts described in the Bestiary (p.XX). It is quite possible to attempt a boarding action from a motor-bike or a mammoth!

VEHICLE ATTRIBUTES

Vehicles have the following Attributes, which obviously differ from those of a person.

HANDLING

This is an abstract measure of speed and maneuverability for the purposes of vehicle combat. If designing vehicles of your own, it is calculated by dividing the vehicle's Movement by ten and then adding or subtracting up to 2 from that to represent how good it is at turning, with smaller vehicles having bonuses and large vehicles having penalties. Handling is used in chases, and is added into to the pilot's Wits+Pilot when deciding Initiative in vehicle combat.

MOVEMENT

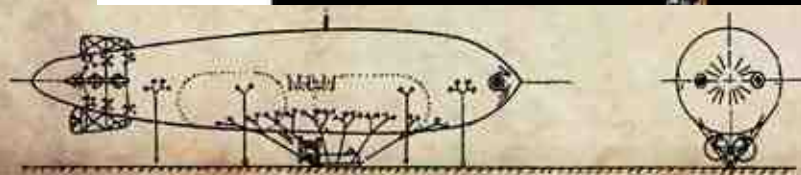
This is the maximum speed of the vehicle measured in miles per hour.

ARMOR POINTS

This is the amount of armor the vehicle has.

HEALTH

Health for a vehicle works the same as that for a person or beast, though they generally have a lot more pips. As with a person, Health pips will eventually reach the gray dice, at which point there will be dice pool penalties to the vehicle/beast's Handling (as well as any other rolls in the case of a beast). Airships are a special case, since they are so much bigger than other vehicles and people. Airships have





per Health die rather than the usual 2.

CREW

This shows two numbers separated by a slash. The first is the optimum crew, the second is the minimum that can handle the airship effectively. If the total crew drops below the minimum, the ship takes a 2 black dice penalty to Handling and any skill rolls involving crew (e.g. Gunnery).

ASSET SPACE

This is an abstract number which measures how much space is free to be used for customizing the airship, whether this be guns, cargo space, a music rehearsal room, onboard store, etc.

RANGE

This is the range of the ship in miles, assuming the ship is using coal for fuel. If the ship is using wood, this distance is halved, and if the ship is using diesel fuel, it is doubled. Airships have sophisticated multi-fuel steam engines, which can take whatever fuel is available.

COST

How much it costs to buy such a vehicle.

VEHICLE INTERACTION

The following rules are abstract, designed to encourage roleplaying rather than being a strict simulation of chases and combat. Spectacular actions should always win out over accurate simulation, and the GM may be required to improvise on occasion. Keep it fast and loose, and don't get bogged down in minutiae, and you should be fine.

HOW IT WORKS

Vehicle combat is divided into three phases; the Sighting, the Chase and the Combat. Once two

vehicles spot each other, it needs to be decided whether a chase begins. If both sides wish to fight, there is no chase; things move directly to Combat. If a chase is indicated, it is played out in a number of "Chase Rounds" until either the chased escapes, or the chaser catches up to the chased. Vehicles can be firing at each other during this phase, if they are within range. Once the chaser catches up with the chased, the game moves on to Combat.

SIGHTING

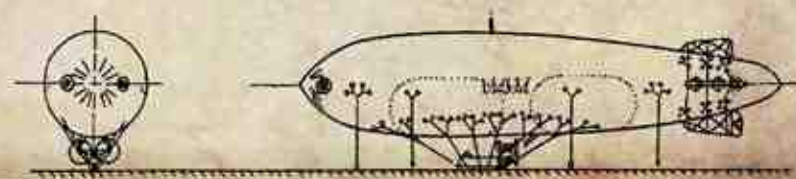
Mostly, once two sides spot each other, the GM decides on the starting range of the chase (see below) and the chase begins. If there's some doubt about who has seen who, have both sides make Perception rolls:

- If both sides succeed, decide on range and begin a chase.
- If the hostile party succeeds, and the party wishing to flee fails, move to combat, with the hostile party getting a surprise attack on the other.
- If the fleeing party succeeds, but the potentially hostile party fails, the fleeing party gets to escape to cover, and the hostile party don't even know they were there.

SPECIAL RULE FOR AIRSHIPS

In the case of airships, a special rule applies. Airships can often see each other even though they're miles apart, and spend hours catching up with each other. If both sides spot each other, have both pilots make a Pilot roll, adding the airship's Handling dice pool and the crew's Mental to the roll.

- If the hostile party wins, they spend the next 1-4 hours catching up with their opponent, and then move to the Chase phase at Extreme Range.
- If the fleeing party wins, they spend the next 1-4 hours fleeing their opponent, and then escape – disappearing over the horizon, getting into cloud cover, reaching a safe port, or whatever.



AIRSHIP PIRATES



AIRSHIPS, VEHICLES AND BEASTS

CHASE

Once the vehicles are close enough to each other, a chase begins. As has been said, these rules are abstract. The distance between the chaser and chased is measured in Range Increments, but these increments vary depending on the vehicles involved.

Size of Range Increment	Type of vehicles involved
2 yards	People, bicycles, etc.
10 yards	Cars, hogtrikes, uber-beasts.
20 yards	Biplanes, triplanes.
100 yards	Airships.

There are five Range Increments, and it is up to the GM to decide how far apart the vehicles are at the beginning of the combat.

Distance	Distance apart in Range Increments
Close	1
Near	2
Medium	3
Far	4
Extreme	5

Example: Two cars chasing each other at medium range would be 2x10 yards apart, i.e. 20 yards; whereas two airships chasing each other at medium range would be 2x100 yards apart, i.e. 200 yards. This gives the players some indication as to whether their opponent is within range of their guns.

Chase Rounds are not 3 seconds long like combat rounds. They are a fairly arbitrary length, based on the vehicles involved. For car and beast chases, they might be ten seconds, for airships, five minutes.

Despite that, people using weapons only get to roll once per round. It is assumed that a lot of jockeying for position is going on, the terrain is bumpy, the air currents variable. A single Firearms roll is meant to simulate a flurry of shots from a moving vehicle at a moving target, only one of which possibly hits. If it is important that the players keep track of ammunition, because they only have a little left, assume that for

every attack they make, they use 3 times the normal ammo.

DECIDE STARTING RANGE

Before the chase begins, the GM should decide how far apart the chaser and chased are. This will obviously affect the length of the chase and the chances of the chaser catching the chased.

SCALE DIFFERENCES

If vehicles with different scale increments are chasing each other (e.g. a bicycle and a car), the smaller vehicle gets a 3 black dice penalty to Handling for every step of difference, and you should use the range scale for the larger vehicle.

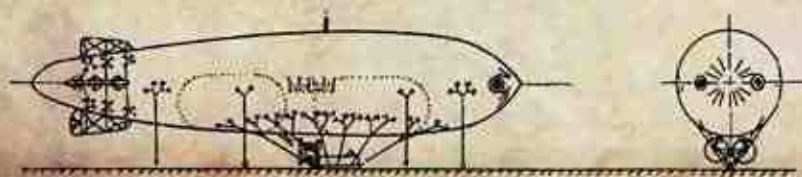
INITIATIVE

At the beginning of a chase, everyone involved, including both the person in charge of the vehicle and any passengers who might get involved in combat, should roll for Initiative. Then chase rounds go as follows:

CHASE ROUNDS

In each chase round, the following things happen:

- The person in charge of each vehicle makes an opposed roll of Wits+vehicle control skill+Vehicle Handling. (The skill used will be either Drive, Ride or Pilot, depending on the vehicle involved. If the "vehicle" is a wild uber-beast not being controlled by a rider, it will be a Mental+Physical+Handling roll instead). If the person controlling the vehicle wants to fire a weapon as well as controlling the vehicle, his dice pools for each action are divided, as described in Multiple Opponents, p.102. Though vehicle control rolls are always made at the beginning of the chase round, the driver's weapon skill roll will come at the appropriate point in the combat phase, based on his Initiative roll. Other characters who are present may be able to add bonus dice to the dice pool for this roll – see Everyone Joins In!, below.





- The winner of the roll gets to move one Range Increment. So if the vehicle being chased succeeds in the roll, they will be one Range Increment further away from the chaser. If the vehicle chasing succeeds, they will be one Range Increment closer to the vehicle fleeing. If the vehicles end up more than 5 Range Increments apart, the vehicle fleeing has escaped and the chase is over. If the vehicles end up 0 Range Increments apart, they are close enough together to initiate Combat; see Combat, p.136.
- If there is a Hazard, those controlling the vehicles should make a Wits+vehicle control skill roll to avoid it. (See Hazards, below).
- If the vehicles are still chasing each other and the Range Increment indicates that the people in the vehicles are within range of their opponent, they may each fire as in a normal combat round. Plus see How Do I Know What I've Hit?, below. It is important to remember that vehicles can only fire weapons that are actually pointing toward their target. An airship with 40 guns along each side of the ship cannot bring them to bear on a ship directly in front or behind. Anyone who's already used a skill to help the person in control can't fire as well, unless they split their dice pools for each action.

Note: At the beginning of each chase round, either side can decide to give up the chase. The person doing the chasing may decide to give up (because he doesn't think he'll catch up, or because his passengers are injured, or whatever), in which case the one being chased automatically escapes. On the other hand, if the person being chased decides to stop running, this will automatically initiate combat, as the vehicle in front slows to face their enemy. The characters in charge of vehicles should declare their intention at the beginning of the round, in reverse Initiative order, so that the others get a chance to change their tactics appropriately.

EVERYONE JOINS IN!

If the vehicle has someone other than the controlling character present (whether it be a mammoth with a few people in a howdah on its back, a car with a

passenger in the front seat, or an airship with a full crew aboard), other characters can add to the dice roll of the person in control. Other players may suggest skills they could use, and how they could use them to help the main character. The GM should encourage imaginative skill use, but disallow any that seem silly or aren't sufficiently justified. Anyone who comes up with a good suggestion can roll dice for the applicable Skill (but not the Attribute) and add the successes to those gained by the lead character. Here are a few examples:

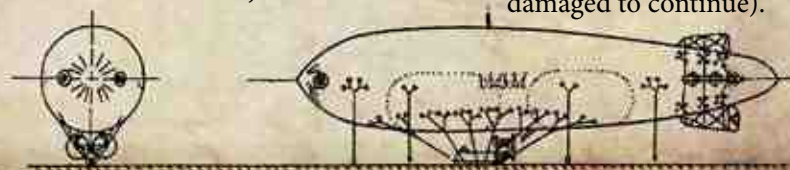
- A character in the passenger seat of a car could roll Perception to keep an eye out for potholes and warn the driver, thus allowing him to avoid them and go faster.
- A character on a mammoth's back could roll Animal Handling to keep the animal calm and more manageable.
- A mechanic on an airship could make an Engineering roll to get more power out of the engine.
- An officer on an airship could make a Leadership roll to get the crew working better together.

HAZARDS

GMs should feel free to put hazards in the way of a vehicle chase, whether this be rough ground, bad weather, an unexpected chasm, or whatever. These should be handled in a similar way to Perils (see p.111). The GM should decide what the peril is, how easy it is to avoid, and how much damage it does to the vehicle and/or its occupants.

The driver, rider or pilot should make a straight Wits+vehicle control skill roll (Drive, Ride or Pilot); uncontrolled beasts make a Physical+Mental roll. When a Hazard is encountered, use the following guidelines:

- As long as the dice roll is made well, the hazard is avoided and the chase goes on as usual.
- If the dice roll is made with only 1 success, the vehicle and passengers take damage, and the vehicle falls back one Range Increment, but is still going (unless it's too damaged to continue).





- On a failure, vehicle and passengers take damage and the vehicle is forced to stop. The person in charge of the vehicle must make a successful Wits+vehicle control skill roll to get the car moving again, and drops back two Range Increments. If the second roll fails, the chase is over – either the pursuer has caught up, or the pursued has escaped.
- On a Foul Failure, the vehicle and passengers take maximum damage and the chase is definitely over – either the pursuer has caught up or the pursued has escaped.

Here are some examples of Hazards that might get in the way of the PC's vehicle. GMs should encourage players to come up with cool stunts to avoid them, and award an Awesome! Bonus if he feels the stunt deserves it (see p.101).

Intensity of Hazard	Damage Dice (vehicle/occupants)	Difficulty of avoidance	Examples
Minor	1-2d/0-1d	Easy (+5 bonus dice)	Rough ground, railroad track across the chase path, clear air turbulence, pedestrian in the way, etc.
Moderate	3-6d/1-3d	Average (no black dice)	Hidden arrayo, widely spaced trees, high winds, another vehicle ahead traveling more slowly than you, etc.
Major	7-12d/3-6d	Difficult (3 black dice)	Small chasm to leap, closely spaced trees, herd of buffalo, thunderstorm with hail, another vehicle suddenly crosses path, etc.
Deadly	13d+/7d+	Very Difficult (6 black dice)	Unexpected edge of a high cliff, unexpected dead end in narrow alley, another vehicle coming at high speed in the opposite direction, tornado, etc.

HOW DO I KNOW WHAT I'VE HIT?

So you've shot at an opposing vehicle. Did you hit the vehicle or the driver? Mostly, unless you say you're aiming otherwise, you'll hit the vehicle (whether that be a mammoth or a car). The vehicle or riding beast will take the damage rather than its occupant. If you say you're shooting at a particular part of a vehicle (e.g. the tires) or at the driver or a passenger, the GM will assign a black dice penalty based on the following table:

Black dice penalty	Part aimed at
0	Vehicle or beast.
1	Rider on horse, person in open-topped car.
2	Rider on mammoth, person in car with windows, beast's head.
3	Rider on indrikkus, person in car with window-slits, car wheel.

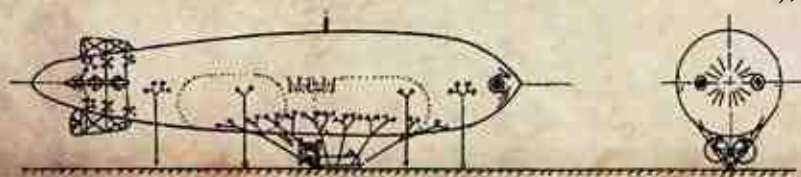
Normal rules for aiming apply as they do for combat rounds, but remember that chase rounds are longer, so every round you spend aiming gives your opponent time to catch up or escape.

If a creature or vehicle is hit somewhere vital (like the head or a wheel) and the damage is not enough to take the Health Dice into the gray, the rider or driver will still need to make a roll to control the beast or vehicle, or crash/fall off, etc. In that case, use the Peril rules (p.111) to adjudicate damage.

If the player comes up with some cool trick, by all means award Awesome! Points as described in the Combat chapter. Any interesting tricks can be made up on the fly. For instance, if a player decides to aim for the fuel tank of a car he's chasing, you can decide that it will lose a quarter of its fuel in each subsequent round, and come to a halt after three rounds.

CONTACT!

Once the pursuing vehicle and the pursued vehicle have caught up with each other (i.e. the Range Increment between them is 0), the chase ends and





combat begins.

But before combat gets going, there's one last roll to make – the Contact roll. This is an opposed roll, and the winner gets to decide where the vehicles are relative to each other when combat begins.

Both characters in control of a vehicle make a Wits+vehicle control skill+Handling roll, adding their Tactics dice pool (just the Skill, not the Attribute). If the driver/rider/pilot doesn't have Tactics, or has lower Tactics than another character who is present, the vehicle controller can use the Tactics skill pool of the other character, but must take that character's advice as to where to position the vehicle.

How the vehicles are positioned will have a impact on the coming fight, but cannot be used to win the fight automatically.

Example 1: A small pirate airship catching up to an IAN frigate wants to try to board the larger vessel while staying out of the way of its massive cannon broadside. The pirate captain wins the roll, and the player of the character says "I'm going to put our ship above the frigate, so we're both flying at the same speed and the IAN ship can't bring its cannons to bear on us. When combat begins, we're going to lower ourselves down on ropes, climb down the rope netting on the side of the frigate's gasbag, and drop to the deck." The GM allows this. If the player had said "I'm going to pull alongside the frigate and attach grappling hooks before the enemy pilot can fire," this would not have been allowed, as the frigate's broadside would be a separate action which the frigate captain could legitimately have taken at that point.

Example 2: A heavily armored car is chasing a hogtrike. The character playing the driver of the car wins the Contact roll. The player says "I'm going to pull slightly ahead of the hogtrike, so that when combat begins I can skid to a halt in front of him in the hopes that he'll crash into the side of my car." This is allowable, as it

means the hogtrike rider can get in a Drive roll to avoid the swerving car.

Example 3: A sabre-tooth cat is chasing a Neobedouin riding a mammoth. The player of the sabre-tooth (probably the GM, unless the players are involved in some weird Airship Pirates/Jungle Book crossover game!) says, "I'm going to position myself directly behind the mammoth, so that I can leap on its hindquarters when play begins." This is legitimate.

The above examples all show the pursuer winning the Contact roll. Now let's look at the same examples with the pursued winning the roll.

Example 1: The player of the captain of the IAN frigate says "I'm going to position myself alongside the pirate airship, 150 yards away, so that my larger guns can fire a broadside at his ship, and his shorter range guns can't reach me."

Example 2: The player of the hogtrike says, "I'm going to pull up right alongside the car, then when combat starts, I'm going to leap onto the car's roof."

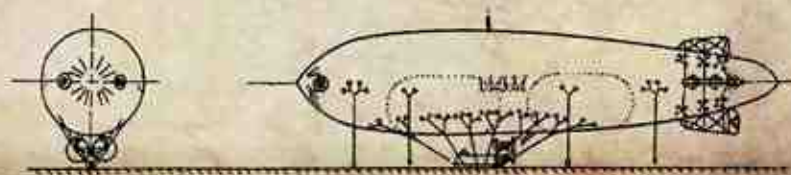
Example 3: The player of the mammoth-rider says, "I'm going to stop the mammoth and whirl it through 180 degrees and hope that when combat starts, the sabre-tooth will run onto the mammoth's tusks."

COMBAT

"A swish of air and my boots hit deck,
No cash, no fuel, no – not a speck!
Grape-shot's made this bird a wreck,
And a glance below deck shows a crew of nuns and orphans!"

– Abney Park, Airship Pirate

Once the vehicles have caught up with each other, combat between vehicles takes places exactly as combat between individual characters, with the following differences:



AIRSHIP PIRATES



AIRSHIPS, VEHICLES AND BEASTS

INITIATIVE

"Initiative" is rolled on the pilot/driver/rider/beast's Initiative+Vessel Handling.

LENGTH OF COMBAT ROUNDS

Combat rounds are not a fixed length but will vary depending on the vehicles involved. Two cars attempting to ram each other off the road will probably be in rounds of 3 seconds, while airships attempting to fire broadsides will probably take ten minutes for a round.

CHARACTERS IN VEHICLE COMBAT

Characters who want to take part in a vehicle combat (e.g. firing at people in the opposing vehicle) still only get one action per round, even if the round is ten minutes long – it does not represent a single shot but a flurry of shots from one moving vehicle to another, only some of which may hit. Other actions take place at the normal pace.

WEAPON SKILLS

Characters using a single weapon mounted on a vehicle (e.g. a swivel gun on a train) use their normal Firearms skill. Characters controlling the firing of a whole host of guns on an airship use Wits+Gunnery and also add the current Mental of the airship's crew. If none of the PCs on an airship have Gunnery skill, the Mental of the crew is used instead.

EVERYONE JOINS IN!

As in a chase, PCs can join in with suitable skills (see p.134).

SPECIAL VEHICLE COMBAT MANEUVERS

COLLISIONS

Sometimes vehicles will collide, whether this be airships ramming each other, cars trying to sideswipe each other off the road, or a car and a mammoth going

head-to-head.

This is covered by opposed Driving/Riding/Pilot rolls. The winner does 10 dice of damage, plus a bonus or penalty based on the size of the vehicle:

Size of Vehicle	Damage modifier
Bicycles, etc.	-5
Hogtrikes, etc	0
Cars, etc	+5
Steam Trucks, Biplanes, Triplanes, etc.	+10
Airships	+15

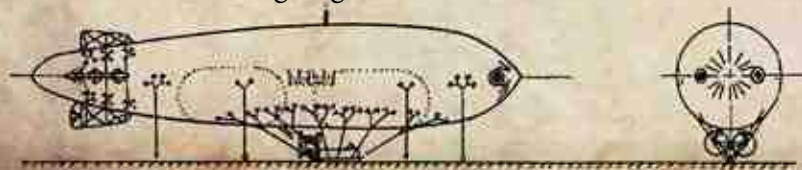
If a smaller vehicle is attacking a larger vehicle, it gets a -5 penalty to its damage modifier for each level of size difference. So a bicycle will have a total penalty of -10 and not be able to do any affective damage against a vehicle bigger than itself, a car will will have a +0 bonus against a Steam Truck, etc.

If a larger vehicle is attacking a smaller vehicle, it gets a +5 bonus to its damage modifier for each level of size difference. So a hogtrike will have a bonus of +5 against a bicycle, a car will have a +5 against a hogtrike and a +10 against a bicycle, etc.

When two vehicles are in collision, both vehicle handlers must make a Drive/Ride/Pilot roll to keep control of their vehicle, with the vehicle being attacked taking a number of black dice penalty equal to the number of dice of damage done. On a failure, the handler must spend the next round just keeping control of his vehicle (trying to attack as well will involve splitting dice; on a foul failure, the vehicle spins out of control and may crash, if there's anything to crash into).

GRAPPLING

Assuming two vehicles are in combat range, one vehicle can fire a grappling gun (using Firearms if a personal grappling gun is used, or Gunnery if firing an airship grappling gun) against the opposing vehicle's combat roll for that round. On a success,





the two vehicles are joined together, and the game switches into normal combat rounds as the characters and crews in each vehicle fight it out, either by leaping onto each others' vehicle, or boarding each others' ships.

VEHICLE DAMAGE

DAMAGE TO PASSENGERS

Characters in a vehicle which has been hit by another must make a Dexterity+Wits roll to see how well they brace for impact. If successful, they each take a quarter of the damage taken by the vehicle. On a failure, they take half the damage taken by the vehicle. (This does not apply aboard airships, where other rules apply; see p.139).

COLLISIONS

If a vehicle hits a stationary object, it will take a number of dice of damage equal to its Handling+Size Modifier minus Armor Points. If two vehicles collide head-on, the Handling and Size Modifiers of both vehicles are added together and each vehicle takes that number of dice of damage, minus its Armor Points.

GRAY DICE

As with people, when vehicles get down to gray dice, they take penalties to all rolls to control the vehicle, as bits are falling off and systems are not working properly. (In the case of a beast, this is just like normal damage). Once all the vehicle's pips are used up, the vehicle is a write-off. (Special rules apply to airship damage, see p.139).

VEHICLE REPAIRS

After combat, an Ad Hoc Repair roll will return lost Health to a damaged vehicle – each success returns one Health, as with Medicine for humans. Each roll

takes an hour of work, and the repairer can carry on working on the vehicle for as long as it takes. However, this only applies if the repairer has the necessary spare parts; if not, the repairer can do a bodge job, but can never repair more than half the vehicle's total Health.

Airship repairs work differently and are covered below, p.139.

SPECIAL RULES FOR AIRSHIP COMBAT

AIRSHIP HEALTH DICE

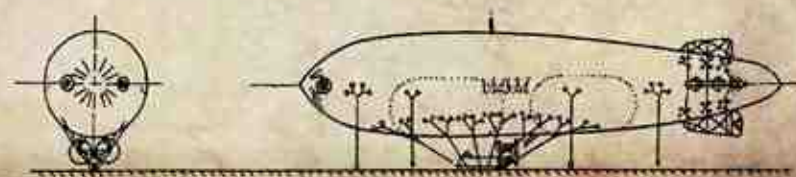
As was mentioned earlier, airship Health dice have 6 pips each rather than the usual 2, to make it easier to keep track of the large amount of damage being done by cannon broadsides.

BROADSIDES

When firing a cannon broadside (using the Gunnery skill), the damage dice of all the cannons fired in the broadside are added together for a single dice roll. But an airship might have 10 cannon on one side, each of which does 15 dice of damage. I can see what you're thinking – that means I need 150 dice! Don't despair.

When an airship is firing on another airship, divide the number of damage dice by ten, roll that number of dice, add up the successes together with the successes from your Gunnery roll, subtract the Armor Points of the ship, then multiply the number of points of damage that got through by ten to get the amount of damage the ship actually sustained. (The armor of the ship is not taking the whole broadside damage in one spot, but along the whole length of the ship, so it doesn't need to be divided by ten).

When two ships go at it with cannons, side by side, remember that the combat round represents a period of maneuvering for advantage. The ship with the initiative will be in the better position to cause damage, and will get its broadside in first, causing the other airship to shake and swing in the air and putting off



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its aim. It doesn't mean that the second airship hasn't fired a broadside, but that the cannonballs whistled harmlessly through the opponent's rigging, maybe took out a wooden railing or went right through the ship without hitting anyone or causing any serious damage. At the end of a combat in which an airship has not taken any damage, the GM may rule that it has actually taken 1D6 damage, but without any effect on crew, to represent the holes and broken woodwork that need to be repaired.

AIRSHIP DAMAGE

DAMAGE TO THE AIRSHIP

Airships take damage as a normal vehicle (see above). However, once an airship is into its gray dice, it will begin sinking toward the ground at the dice penalty in yards per combat round. (So an airship which has lost pips on its first gray die will begin falling at 2 yards per round, if it has lost pips on its second gray die it will be falling at 4 yards per round, etc.). The rate of fall can be reduced by 2 yards per round by jettisoning airship Resources – each point of Resources thrown overboard will lighten the ship enough to prevent it falling by 2 yards per round. Once an airship's last gray die has been filled in, it is assumed that the gasbag is completely destroyed and the airship will plummet from the sky – use the Peril rules to calculate damage to PCs based on the airship's initial height.

CREW CASUALTIES

For every Health Die of damage that an airship takes, 3 crew members are put out of action (see the Crew rules, p.129 for more information on crew casualties). During airship combat, a character with Medicine skill may make a roll each round; on a success, 1 crew member is made well enough to continue the fight. This is resolved after all other rolls in the round, and before the next round begins.

PC CASUALTIES

During an airship combat, the PCs can be in one of three situations:

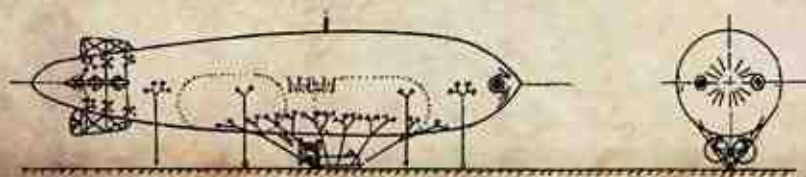
Exposed: If a character is on deck in a prominent position, commanding men, sniping at enemy officers, etc., he or she counts as exposed. If the ship is hit by a broadside, he or she will take damage equal to the damage the ship takes after armor but before it is multiplied by ten again. So if an airship takes 100 damage from a broadside, an exposed character will take 10 points of damage. Ouch! You should really keep your head down if someone's firing a cannon broadside. An exposed PC may Dodge or dive for cover to avoid damage.

Sheltered: If a character is going about the ship's business (commanding the gun crew, steering the airship, etc.) and in a reasonable amount of cover, he or she will take damage equal to half the damage the ship takes after armor but before it is multiplied by ten again (round down). So if an airship takes 100 damage from a broadside, a sheltered character will take 5 points of damage.

Hidden: If the character decides to hide rather than take any part in the airship combat, he or she can find a well-protected corner, and will take only 1 point of damage for every 10 points of damage the airship takes after armor but before it is multiplied by ten again (round down). So if an airship takes 100 damage from a broadside, a hidden character will take 1 point of damage. However, a hidden character cannot use any skills to help the combat in any way without breaking out of the hiding place.

AIRSHIP REPAIRS

Airship repairs after battle: As with other vehicle repair, an Ad Hoc Repair roll will return lost Health to a damaged airship – each success returns one Health pip, as with Medicine for humans. Each roll takes an hour of work, and the repairer can carry on working





on the vehicle for as long as it takes. However, this only applies if the repairer has the necessary spare parts; if not, the repairer can do a bodge job, but can never repair more than half the vehicle's total Health.

Crew help in repairs: The person making the repairs can get the crew to help; for each crew member (up to a maximum of 10) he can add the Mental dice of each crew member to his Ad Hoc Repair roll.

Airship repairs in combat: Repairs can be hurriedly made during combat, with each repair roll taking only a vehicle combat round, but the repairer takes a 3 black dice penalty to the roll, and on a Foul Failure causes more damage equal to the number of successes rolled on the black dice.

Crew help in combat repair: Again, up to 10 crew members can help with repairs, as above; but if the number involved in repair would take the remaining crew number down below the Crew Minimum, other airship rolls will suffer penalties as though those crew were out of action.

EXAMPLE: FIRE AT WILL

Example: The pirate ship Bright Shadow has a broadside of 8 small cannon, each of which does 10 dice of damage. It has seventeen Hit Dice, 5 APs and a Rank 5 Competent crew. It has (rather foolishly) gone up against the IAN frigate, HMS Invincible, with a broadside of 20 large cannon each of which does 15 dice of damage. The Invincible has 50 Hit Dice, 7 APs and a Rank 15 Common Crew.

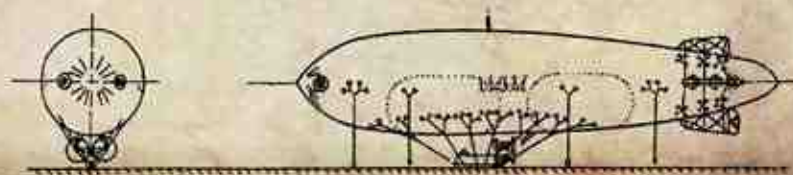
The Pilots have rolled for Initiative, and Bright Shadow wins. Bright Shadow's gunner has Wits+Gunnery of 8, and adds the Wits dice pool of the crew (+3) and an extra 3 dice for the Tactics of the captain, who's giving orders to the gunner. The gunner also gets an extra 2 to his dice pool because the ship won the Initiative. His total dice pool is therefore 16.

The Invincible's gunner has Wits+Gunnery of 7, and

adds the Mental dice pool of the crew (+1), and 1 die for the Tactics of the captain. His dice pool is therefore 9.

Both makes their rolls. The Bright Shadow gets 10 successes, the Invincible gets 2, giving the Bright Shadow 8 successes to add to the damage roll. The pirate ship has a total of $8 \times 10 = 80$ damage. Divide that by 10 to get 8 damage dice, and rolls a further 4 successes. Adding the 8 successes from the combat roll gives a total of 12. Take off the Invincible's Armor Points of 7; 5 points get through. This damage is then multiplied by ten, meaning that the Invincible takes 50 points of damage. That's 8 Health dice plus two more pips, meaning the crew lose 24 members, dropping them from a Rank 15 crew to a Rank 13 crew.

It's now the second round, so both sides roll for Initiative again. This time, the Bright Shadow only gets 3 successes, while Invincible gets 7. Both gunners roll again, and this time the Bright Shadow's gunner gets only 4 successes, while the Invincible gets plenty of 6s and ends up with 11 successes! The IAN ship has a total of $20 \times 15 = 300$ damage dice! That's 30 dice, plus 3 for the successes on the Gunnery roll for a total of 33. The GM decides that, rather than roll 33 dice, he'll take the average damage for such a roll, which is 33 divided by 3, or 11 damage. Of that, 6 gets through the pirate ship's armor of 5 AP. Total damage is 6, multiplied by 10, equals 60 damage! The Bright Shadow loses 10 Health dice and 30 of her crew are out of action. This puts the crew down 10 below it's minimum crew of 40, meaning it gets one black die for all future actions. The decks are strewn with bodies, there are big holes in the side of the ship, and it looks like a good time to make a strategic withdrawal.

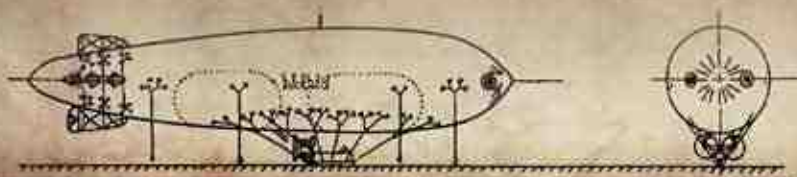




EQUIPMENT

"I would be someone instead of buying something."

– Abney Park, *Off the Grid*





THE MONETARY SYSTEM

There are two main currencies in use in North America in 2150; the Helios and the Dollar. They fluctuate with respect to each other, but luckily are more or less equal at this time.

THE HELIOS

The Helios is the form of currency issued by the independent city-state of Helium City (see p.227). In much the same way as the American dollar was originally based on the value of gold, the Helios' value is based on the value of Helium gas – five cubic feet of Helium costs one Helios. There are 100 cents in a Helios. A Helios takes the form of a golden (though not solid gold) coin with a picture of an airship on one side, and the current president of Helium City on the other. There are various smaller denominations of coinage: 50 cents, 10 cents, 5 cents, 1 cent. Denominations larger than a Helios take the form of notes, which usually depict famous airships, heroic helium miners at work or important buildings within Helios City itself. (The singular and plural are both spelt “Helios”, but the singular is pronounced “Heely-oss” and the plural “Heely-ows”).

Needless to say, it is *very* illegal to use Helios within a Change Cage city, as the very existence of the coin is evidence that there *is* civilization in the wilderness. Helios coins are sometimes used by rebels and subversives within the Change Cage cities as tokens of identification to other like-minded people, and as symbols of hope that there *is* a better life than the drudgery of the factories and slums.

THE DOLLAR

Emperor Victor's cities use the Dollar as their main form of currency, again divided into 100 cents. Other coins and notes are largely the same as the Helios, though they show a profile of the Emperor on one side and various beasts of the wilderness on the other.

OTHER CURRENCIES

Some of the Skyloft cities produce their own coinage, but this is rarely used outside the city which minted it. Such coins may occasionally be accepted for their scrap metal content, but notes are generally worthless.

BARTER

Neobedouin rarely use money if they can help it, especially within and between tribes. They prefer barter, swapping things of like value, usually after a lively bit of haggling.

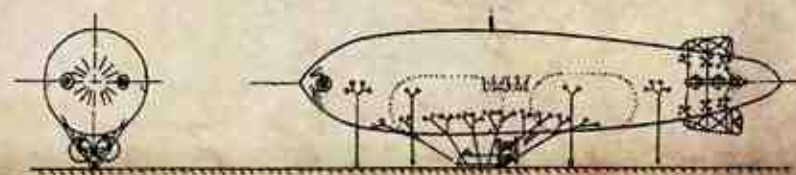
GOODS AND SERVICES

It's well known that pirates rarely hang onto their money for long. Once you've found the treasure and traded it in for ready cash, chances are you're going to fritter it away on drink, debauchery and a nice new pair of goggles. And weapons, of course. A pirate can never have enough weapons.

The items listed in this chapter will not be available everywhere. Anything manufactured in the Skyloft or by the Neobedouin is unlikely to be available in an Imperial city, unless its on the black market at vastly inflated prices. Items from the Neovictorian cities do get out into the wider world, usually smuggled out by the Bargefolk, but again at inflated prices.

QUALITY

Prices in this chapter are for a standard quality item. A “fine quality” item will cost double the listed amount – such an item will not function any better than its cheaper counterpart, but will be of obviously superior manufacture and be seen as something of a status symbol. A truly unique item, possibly hand-crafted, made with semi-precious substances, or just unbelievably hard-wearing, would cost four times the amount stated here, and may function better (at the GMs whim). Second-hand items, or those





of inferior quality would cost half the price listed, but they will be either scuffed and/or tattered or of obviously shoddy workmanship. Such an item might well break on a Foul Failure.

PRICES

All prices are in Helios and cents, abbreviated as "He0.00". Prices in the Neovictorian cities will be the equivalent in dollars, "\$0.00".

CLOTHING

Bloomers of Concealment, He0.25 Neovictorian ladies' skirts tend to be bulky and concealing, particularly when wearing crinoline hoops. These voluminous undergarments contain numerous pockets and can be used to hide a large number of small items from prying eyes, although getting the said items out in a hurry can be a problem.

Boots, He1.10 Boots come in many shapes and sizes: the sturdy hobnail boots of a Neovictorian factory worker; the square-heeled buttoned boots of a Neovictorian lady; the tough "cowboy" boots of a Neobedouin hunter; or the high-grip "deck boots" of a sky sailor. Workboots with steel toecaps add +1 to damage in unarmed combat.

Corset, He0.25-0.90 Worn by women in Neovictorian cities because that is what is expected, and by women of the Free Peoples as a fashion statement, to shock, or to titillate, cheap corsets are made of cloth, while the more expensive ones are made of whalebone, steel, or even hardened Calgorite. Corsets costing He0.90 provide 1 Armor Point of protection, and fine quality armored corsets costing He1.80 provide 2 AP.

Crinoline Frame, He0.20 A frame used to create the traditional bell-shaped dress popular in Neovictorian cities, they are cumbersome to wear and make getting through narrow doorways difficult.

Crinoline Frame, Patent Collapsible, He1 As above, but the hoops will collapse at the touch of a button into flexible material, making it easier to get through narrow spaces, perform martial arts maneuvers, etc. Some will also constrict into a narrow pencil dress – handy if you realize you're dressed wrong for the sort of party you're attending.

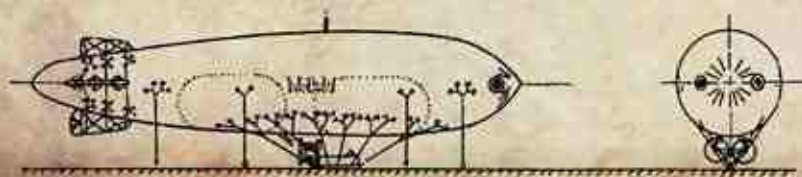
Diving Dress, He20 A waterproof suit, including lead-weighted boots and brass helmet with portholes in front and sides. Includes self-contained air supply. Wearer can walk underwater for two hours on one tank of air.

Dress, He1.00-5.00+ From the simple cotton or hemp dresses of the Neovictorian lower classes, through the swirling silks of Neobedouin dancing dresses to the fashionable satins and velvets of fashionable ladies. Those of Neovictorian women will be demure and concealing, while the dresses of the Free Peoples tend to be more revealing and may be artfully cut to display tattoos and piercings to best effect.



Goggles, He0.25 Simple eye-goggles, usually made of brass and leather. Protect the eyes from cannon-smoke and the wind of flight, and look cool when pushed up on the forehead. No self-respecting airship pirate should be without a pair. See also Multi-lens Goggles and Crepuscular Goggles in the Tools section.

Greatcoat, He1.06 A long overcoat to protect against the elements. Usually black, though brown is popular in the Skyloft. Provides 1 Armor Point of protection. A fine quality greatcoat made of leather costs double the price and provides 3 AP of protection. Greatcoats are often provided for Air Marines working in cold





climates, usually in the colors of their regiment.

Hat, He0.25-0.50 Hats come in all shapes and sizes: the flat cloth cap of a Neovictorian factory worker; the flowery confections of a Neovictorian Lady; the shiny top hat of a Neovictorian toff; the leather helmet of a Skyloft pilot; the wraparound head-cloth of a desert Neobedouin. In Neovictorian society it is considered scandalous to be seen outdoors without a hat, and there are numerous rituals around the removal of the hat to show respect for a superior, etc.

Leathers, He4 Leather clothing is very popular amongst the Skyfolk and the practical choice of the hogtrike rider. Usually just a jacket and trouser combo, although some people accessorize. Provides 3AP of protection.

Money Belt, He1.40 Leather belt containing a pocket for carrying money in; much more secure than a wallet or purse.

Purse, He0.10 A clutch bag or handbag, often used by women to carry essentials such as toiletries and a small handgun.

Robes, He1-3 Often worn by Neobedouin, and by some Skyfolk, robes are immensely practical and cool in hot desert environments. The simplest ones are plain white cotton, linen or hemp, but robes dyed in bright colors are popular (often with matching wrap-around head-cloths). Worn by men and women alike, usually with some sort of cloth or rope belt, or leather weapon belt or bandoleer.

Shirt/Blouse, He0.15 Shirts are generally worn by men, and blouses by women, though the differences are those of style rather than usage. Neovictorian shirts tend to have removable collars – the lower classes often cannot afford more than one or two shirts, so change the collars to give an impression of smartness. Shirts are often worn without the collar except when dressed up smart. Blouses tend to be of lighter material than shirts, and often include decorative flounces, tucks,

pleats, patterned material, etc.

Shoes, He0.50+ Lighter than boots, shoes are usually either leather or canvas, though this category also includes Neobedouin sandals, formal black shoes for special occasions, sensible shoes, running shoes and a wide-range of weird and wonderful platform-soled and/or high-heeled fashion shoes.

Silk Stockings, He0.10 Rare and expensive (most stockings are cotton) silk stockings are considered highly erotic. Often worn by upper class ladies, prostitutes and dolls. Usually held up by garters or garter belts.

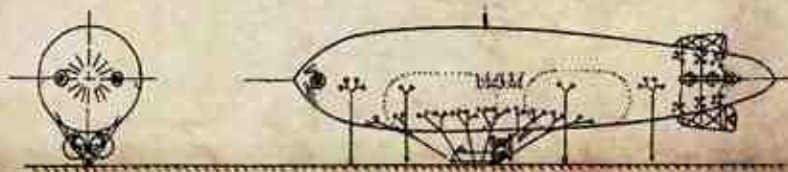
Skirt, He0.15 Worn with a blouse by women, they come in many styles, though those of the Neovictorians are always floor-length.

Suit, He1.50+ Consists of jacket, trousers and sometimes a waistcoat. Worn by men in the Neovictorian cities, and by both sexes in the Skyloft. Rarely seen among the Neobedouin. Material varies depending on climate, with wool in colder regions and cotton or linen in warmer climes.

Tie/Cravat, He0.10: A strip of material worn round the neck (usually by men) as a means of decoration. Can be tied in various ways which may denote status in Neovictorian society.

Trousers, He0.25 Called trousers in the Neovictorian cities and pants by everyone else, they are a very popular item of clothing, coming in various shapes, colors and styles. A Neovictorian woman would probably be arrested and charged with indecency or consigned to a lunatic asylum if seen wearing trousers in public.

Waistcoat, He0.25+ A sleeveless jacket worn over a shirt, often under a suit jacket. When worn with a suit, they generally match, but they are very much a fashion accessory in the Skyloft, and come in numerous styles and materials, from leather waistcoats costing He0.75 and providing 1 Armor





Point of protection, to the many-pocketed waistcoats of gadgeteers (He0.50) which provide much storage space for tools, notebooks, small components, etc.

Winter Coat, He4 Thick coat, often made of fur, designed to keep out the elements. Provides 1 Armor Point of protection.

LODGINGS

When in port, the crew of a pirate airship will usually want a change from the cramped conditions to be had when on a voyage. Below are some prices for staying in different places.

Respectable Hotel, He0.50+ per night Skyloft cities will provide high quality accommodation and food in hotels. Service includes hot running water, room service, evening meal and breakfast. There is actually a chain called "Respectable Hotels" found throughout the sky cities, though their degree of respectability will vary from one city to another, depending on local customs. Neovictorian cities do not have hotels as their inhabitants rarely travel – the few Upper Class government officials and naval officers who travel from one Change Cage city to another will generally be put up in the homes of their fellow bureaucrats, while the lower ranks of the Imperial Air navy will be housed in barracks.

Average Hotel, He0.30 per night Cheaper hotels will have smaller rooms than Respectable Hotels (in either the generic or specific sense) and though they will generally provide breakfast, room service and an evening meal will be extra.

Lodging House, He0.01+ per night In the grimmer parts of some of the less enlightened sky cities (and this definitely includes High Tortuga) a place to sleep can often be found in some low dive where you have to sleep on a straw mattress in a big room with lots of other people. This is probably even less pleasant than sleeping in a hammock on the lower deck of a pirate ship, and often less preferable than bedding down in

a doorway (unless the weather's bad or the local law enforcement officials are particularly unpleasant) but it's worth knowing for an emergency.

Yurt, (no charge) Neobedouin tribes will often set up a yurt (a large, round and surprisingly cozy tent) for visitors. You don't have to pay, but will be expected to do some work in return, whether this be helping with the cooking, chopping firewood, fetching water from the oasis, or whatever. The Neobedouin see hospitality as important, so you won't be asked to do anything they wouldn't do themselves and will often be working alongside them. Anyone who refuses to work will be escorted to the edge of the encampment and asked to leave – no further hospitality will be extended to them.

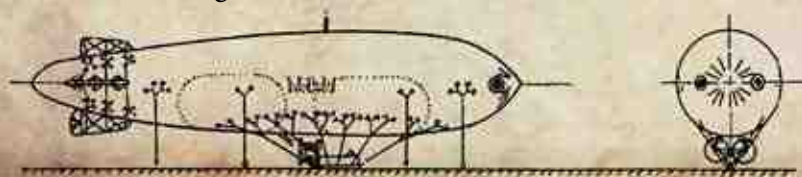
DINING OUT

Momma Chiffon's House of Lard, He.20+ Momma Chiffon's House of Lard is a chain of cheap eateries found throughout the Skyloft, and in many other times and places. Wherever you go, there's a House of Lard, the staff are always *exactly* the same as in the last one you visited, and they *always* remember your last visit, even if it was fifty years ago in a different timeline. No-one knows how this comes to be, and Momma Chiffon certainly isn't saying. The premises are bright and tiled, and the food is tasty and filling, though probably not healthy. Momma Chiffon has strong opinions about what she calls "plant food" (salad), believing it thins the blood and leads to laziness.

ENTERTAINMENT

Beer, mug of, He0.01 Enough to wet your whistle without getting you drunk. May as well have another...

Wine, jug of, He0.30 Made by upper class Neovictorians from their own vineyards, or by Neobedouin from wild fruits. Expensive to buy due to its rarity.





Weak Gin, cup of, He0.01 Nasty stuff, but it gets you drunk.

Strong Gin, cup of, He0.02 Nastier stuff, but it gets you drunker.

Weak Gin, bottle of, He0.08 Nasty stuff, but it gets you very drunk. Equivalent to twelve cups.

Strong Gin, bottle of, He0.12 Block hospital time.

Prostitute (for one night), He0.15 Both client and worker must be desperate for this sort of money. Often a doll in need of repair.

Prostitute, High Class (for one night), He1+ More properly known as a courtesan, or "a good friend of mine". Usually paid in gifts rather than cash.

Rum, bottle of, He0.02 Slightly better than gin; gets you drunk without rotting your insides so quickly.

MEDICAL PROVISIONS

First Aid Kit, He0.60 There's usually one of these around an airship, even if there's no-one properly trained in medicine. Useful for everything from mosquito bites to bullet wounds. Needs replenishing from time to time, and it always seems, in an emergency, that the person who used the last bandage forgot to get any new ones.

Doctor's Bag, He1.20 Slightly more sophisticated than a first aid kit, and can be used by a doctor to perform more serious surgery, amputations, and the like.

Healer's Kit, (not for sale) A collection of useful herbs, poultices and the like, collected by a Neobedouin shaman. As useful as a first aid kit, but only if you know what all those funny green leaves are.

TOOLS

Animal Trap, He0.01-0.50 Animal traps come in all shapes and sizes, from a mousetrap (often useful aboard ship) to massive spring-driven sabretooth-

traps, sometimes used by the Neobedouin to guard their camp perimeter. A large trap counts as a Moderate Peril (see p.112) and requires a Strength of 3 or more to escape without making a roll (see Feats of Strength, p.114).

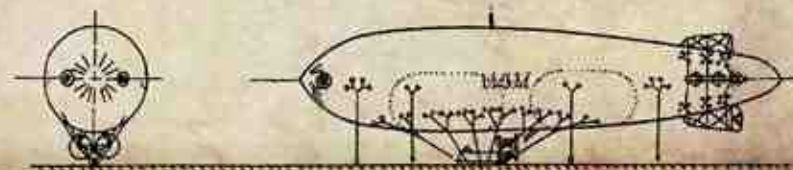
Autophrenometer, He5.00 This device is common in Neovictorian cities, where it is used at security checkpoints between city blocks. The person to be checked stands on a target spot on the ground, while a mechanical hand comes down from above and feels the bumps on the person's head. These bumps are then compared to those recorded on the person's identity punch-card to check he really is who he says he is.

Compass, He0.10 Points north. Unless you're standing too near some piece of weird tech, in which case north is anyone's guess.

Difference Engine, He5.00+ A sophisticated mechanical computer, which can make complex calculations at the turn of a crank. Some of the faster models are powered by clockwork, steam or diesel. Can store and record information on punch cards and is used for a variety of purposes from recording population movements in Change Cage cities to calculating the correct settings to feed into a chrononutilus before a time jump. The standard Imperial Business Machines CogitationBox-500 is a cube a yard long on each side, with fine mahogany exterior and "QuickScoop" brass punchcard hopper. The largest and most powerful difference engine in the world is the Emperor's steampowered IBM-2100, nicknamed "Big Smoky", which fills an entire room and keeps details of all subjects of the Empire throughout the world.

Goggles, multi-lens, He0.75 Standard goggles with an added series of lenses which can be slid into place to allow them to be used as a simple microscope or telescope.

Goggles, crepuscular, He1.25 Goggles coated with





a special substance which enhances vision in dim lighting conditions. Useless in complete darkness.

Heliograph, He0.25 Hand mirror with simple shutter mechanism, which can be used to flash Morse code messages across large distances as long as the sun is shining.

Ladder, Collapsible, He0.18 A folding ladder which can be collapsed down to 1 foot square, but extends to 10 feet when the joints are locked. Can be unfolded in 5 combat rounds.

Lantern, Clockwork, He0.15 An electric lantern powered by clockwork. The light lasts an hour after two minutes' of winding. Can also be used to flash Morse code messages like a heliograph (see above) at night.

Lantern, Hurricane, He0.06 An oil lamp with a glass cover to prevent it blowing out in a wind. Most can burn diesel or vegetable oil, though the Neobedouin have adapted some to burn solid animal fat.

Rope, He0.1 50 foot of high quality rope.

Tent, self-erecting, He2 Just pull the cord and watch this handy two-person tent self-erect before your eyes. Collapses easily too.

Telescope, He1+ 1 Helios will get you a basic brass telescope. Price increases with ornamentation and according to the materials used in the manufacture.

Telescopic sights, He0.9 This miniature telescope allows an extra die on the Firearms roll as long as the firer is aiming.

GENERAL EQUIPMENT

Carpet Bag, He0.10 Made from remnants and capable of holding 50lbs.

Cane, spyglass, He5 Made with a hollow inside into which two lenses are fitted. Simply remove a rubber cap from the base and flip open the top to have a workable spyglass.

Grog Dispenser, Mechanical, He1 Good for ensuring everyone gets an equal ration.

Musical Instruments, He0.20-6 Ranging from a harmonica to a steamsynth.

Phonograph, He2 Plays the latest music cylinders. An average cylinder holds 80 minutes of music. Cylinders cost He0.06.

Pocket Watch, He1.10+ A pocket watch for telling the time.

Pocket Watch, Talking, He2.20 Same as a pocket watch, but speaks the time aloud.

Rucksack, He1.10 Waterproofed rucksack with plenty of storage and side-pockets suitable for an intrepid explorer.

Tea or Coffee Dispenser, Clockwork, He1.50 A wind-up device which boils and dispenses the beverage of your choice at a set time of your choosing.

Trunk, He0.60 Made from lightweight wood panels, held together with quality brass fittings. Holds 150lbs.

KITS

Actor's/Disguise Kit, He0.80 Make-up kit with greasepaint, false hair and beards, and molds with which to create false facial features (such as fake noses).

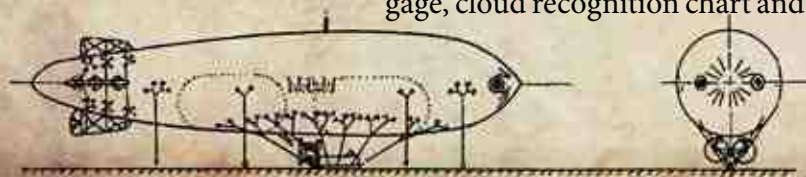
Basic Tool Kit, He2.10 Screwdriver, small hammer, saw, awl and other basic tools.

Camping Kit, He8.10 Comes with a 4-man tent, folding cots, folding camp stools, writing desk and cooking set. Comes in a special steamer trunk.

Clockwork Repair Kit, He1.20 Comes with small screwdrivers and files, useful for repairing anything from a small pocket-watch to a large automaton.

Mechanic's Kit, He3 Comes with spanners, screwdrivers, spare nuts, bolts, screws, a slide rule, etc.

Meteorology Kit, He2 Comes with barometer, wind gage, cloud recognition chart and other tools to enable





the prediction of the weather.

Navigator's Kit, He4 Contains a compass, spyglass, thermometers, altitude calculation charts, sextant, map tools and writing implements.

Photography Kit, He5 Everything you need for producing photographs. A Neovictorian kit contains camera, tripod, flash powder and plates, while the Skyfolk sell smaller box cameras for a similar price.

Recording Kit, He10.10 Microphones and stands, cylinder recorder – everything for the budding musician to lay down some tracks.

Science Kit, He5.10 Comes with heat resistant glassware, tubing, a small burner, microscope, petri dishes etc. Depending on the scientific interests of the individual, contents may vary.

PROSTHETICS

The following prices are for clockwork prosthetics. Many Skyfolk cannot afford the prohibitive costs of such items and so make do with more conventional peg legs, hooks and stumps. Clockwork limbs are considered to be just as good as the real thing, but if injured require Ad Hoc Repair.

Arm, He40

Foot, He30

Hand, He25

Leg, He50

AIRSHIPS

Below are a number of airships, with full statistics, useful for PCs and enemies. Much more information on airships can be found in *Airships, Vehicles and Beasts*, pp.117-138.

BASIC JERVIS & BOTTLINGLY "TIGERFISH"

Handling: 8 **Movement:** 100 mph

Armor Points: 5

Crew: 50/40

Resource Space: 50 **Range:** 1000 miles

Fixed Cargo Space: 50

Cost: He14,000

Resources: (to be added)

Weapons: (to be added)

Broadside Damage: –

Health: 17 Health Dice

This airship, built in the famous Jervis & Bottlingly shipyards in Isla Aether, is very popular with pirates and small traders. It has plenty of space for adding resources, is frequently customized by Skyfolk, and is a common sight in the skies of 2150.

THE PIRATE SHIP CORDELIA "TIGERFISH" CLASS

Handling: 8

Movement: 100 mph

Armor Points: 5

Crew: 50/40

Resource Space: 50 **Range:** 1000 miles

Fixed Cargo Space: 50

Cost: He15,680

Resources: 20 Small Cannons (20 ARPs), 4 Grappling Hooks (8 ARPs), Music Studio (10 ARPs), Luxurious Cabin (5 ARPs), Weapons Locker (3 ARPs)

Free Cargo Space: 4 ARPs.

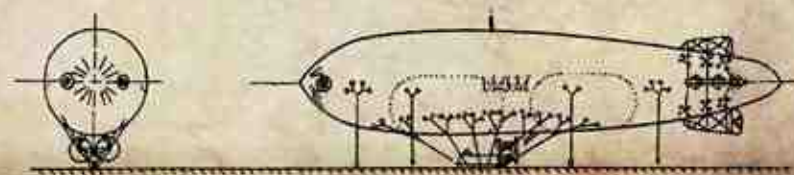
Complications: none

Weapons: 20 small cannons (10 on each side).

Broadside Damage: 100

Health: 17 Health Dice

This small airship is built on the Jervis & Bottlingly "Tigerfish" template. It supports a crew of 50 (plus PCs) and is fitted out for a life of piracy and musicianship. It is a good ship for a starting crew of pirates, and can be used without any changes by the ready-made characters on pp.67-84. It can easily



AIRSHIP PIRATES



EQUIPMENT

be customized for other PC groups by swapping out unwanted Resources and replacing them with others (see pp.122-26).

BASIC JERVIS F BOTTLINGLY "BARRACUDA"

Handling: 11 **Movement:** 130 mph

Armor Points: 6 **Crew:** 100/80

Resource Space: 100 **Range:** 1500 miles

Fixed Cargo Space: 75

Cost: He20,000

Resources: (to be added)

Weapons: (to be added)

Broadside Damage: -

Health: 34 Health Dice

Often used by merchants and traders, this hull can also easily be customized as a heavily armed pirate or privateer. It is often used by some of the larger pirate and mercenary combines, being able to outmaneuver an IAN frigate and prey on smaller ships.

HMS INVINCIBLE - TYPICAL IAN FRIGATE

Handling: 9 **Movement:** 110 mph

Armor Points: 7 **Crew:** 150/100

Resource Space: 150 **Range:** 3000 miles

Fixed Marine Quarters: 150

Cost: He50,000

Resources: 40 large cannons (80 ARPs), 2 Grappling Hooks (4 ARPs), Luxurious Cabin (5 ARPs), 6 Standard Cabins (18 ARPs), Sick Bay (5 ARPs)

Free Cargo Space: 39 ARPs. (Sometimes used to house extra marines)

Weapons: 40 large cannons (20 on each side).

Broadside Damage: 300

Health: 50 Health Dice

The *Invincible* is representative of the most commonly-used patrol ships of the IAN. With better firepower than most pirate ships, and plenty of space for air marines, it is a formidable vessel. This ship type is also the basis of the feared black frigates of the Chuno Ggun, who add 10 Automaton Mounts. The black frigates have extremely quiet engines and are black all over, including sails and rigging!

BASIC JERVIS F BOTTLINGLY "GUPPY"

Handling: 6 **Movement:** 50 mph

Armor Points: 2 **Crew:** 2 (+up to 6 passengers)

Resource Space: 1 **Range:** 20 miles

Cost: He1,000

Resources: (to be added)

Weapons: (to be added)

Broadside Damage: -

Health: 7 Health Dice

This small airboat is often used to travel short distances. Some larger airships have an airboat which they use to transport small numbers of crew between airship and docks or between different airships within a fleet. The IAN has a very similar design, which is often used for ferrying officers about. Resource space is often kept for cargo, though a small cannon may be fitted instead, facing forward.

PORTNOY PATENT PORTABLE DIRIGIBLE

Handling: 6 **Movement:** 46 mph

Armor Points: 0 **Crew:** 0

Resource Space: 0 **Range:** 20 miles

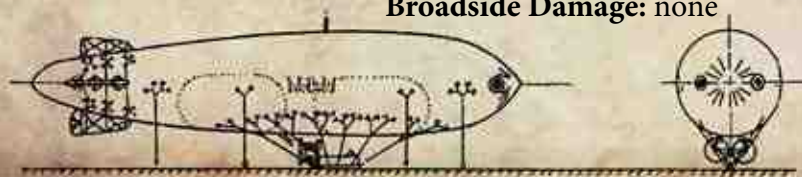
Cost: He100

Resource Space: none

Resources: none

Weapons: none

Broadside Damage: none



AIRSHIP PIRATES



EQUIPMENT

Health: 1 Health Die

Whether it be for business or pleasure, the Portnoy Patent Portable Dirigible is the ultimate in personal transportation systems. With an envelope of finest silk treated with “self-healing” Calgorite, an ingeniously-folding frame of hand-crafted spruce, and the smallest electrical propulsion system yet devised, the Portnoy can be packed small enough to fit in a single suitcase. Yet, when inflated from the nearest public helium dispenser, you can be in the air in less than fifteen minutes, and this little aerial runabout can travel in excess of forty-five miles per hour! No more waiting for the airferry, with a Portnoy, the sky is yours!

Already, our little aerial miracle is famed in song and dance – visitors to Mrs Haversham’s Tea and Opium Rooms in High Tortuga are already “doing the Portnoy” and cylinders of the dancefloor hit, performed by the Salamander Swing Orchestra, are selling like hot pastries.

The Patent Portable Dirigible from Jervis & Bottingly – do the Portnoy!

New! The Portnoy now comes in a range of colors, from lemon yellow to midnight black. Order your favorite today!

Notes: Stated speed is in calm weather. Vehicle may not be practical in adverse meteorological conditions. Always check local by-laws; air traffic control regulations may prohibit use of personal aerial vehicles within sky-city limits. Ladies and infirm gentlemen may require a manservant to carry the vehicle when folded. Ballast not included.

VEHICLES

These vehicles use the statistics described on p.131. The number of passengers listed includes the driver.

AUTOMATON CAB

Handling: 2

Movement: 20mph

Armor Points: 1

Passengers: 4

Range: 20 miles (coal)

Cost: He0.05-0.15 (cab fare)

Health: 15 Health Dice

Weapons: none

This Neovictorian cab is a four-wheeled vehicle with an inbuilt automaton at the front and room for four passengers at the back. The automatons in these cabs are programmed with information about the best routes through their home city and are on friendly terms with the autocrats who guard the block gates. The automaton has Physical 10, Mental 3, and a Drive Skill of 6.



BARGE, ARMORED

Handling: 2

Movement: 10 mph

Armor Points: 6

Passengers: 10

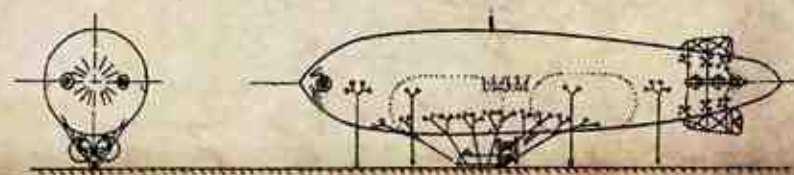
Range: 1,000 miles (coal)

Cost: He1,200

Health: 20 Health Dice

Weapons: Steam
Gatling on turntable

This is a typical canal barge, as used by a Bargefolk family. Although heavily armored, it is very slow. It can carry up to 20 ARPs of cargo, together with enough coal to travel 1,000 miles. The quarters for the family are cramped and dark (due to the lack of windows) but usually very neat and tidy. Many families paint their barges in bright colors, or decorate the dour-looking armor with flower, animal and bird motifs. Some even grow flowers or trays of herbs on the top of the barge. The barges which ply the Great Lakes are rather larger than this, with room for 30 ARPs of cargo.



AIRSHIP PIRATES



EQUIPMENT

BICYCLE

Handling: 2 **Movement:** 20 mph
Armor Points: 0 **Passengers:** 1
Range: NA **Cost:** He3
Health: 3 Health Dice **Weapons:** none

A standard bicycle.

BICYCLE, STEAM

Handling: 2 **Movement:** 25 mph
Armor Points: 0 **Passengers:** 1
Range: 20 miles (diesel) **Cost:** He4
Health: 3 Health Dice **Weapons:** none

Similar to a normal bicycle, but with a small diesel-fueled steam engine attached, which prevents the need for the rider to pedal, except on steep hills. Try to buy one of the ones with the engine on the rear wheel – the ones with the engine at the front are difficult to steer (Handling 1) and you spend all your time in a small cloud of steam.

BIPLANE/TRIPLANE

(The first set of stats is for the biplane, the second for the triplane).

Handling: 9/11 **Movement:** 80mph/100mph
Armor Points: 2/2 **Passengers:** 2/3
Range: 100 miles (diesel) **Cost:** He500/600
Health: 9 Health Dice **Weapons:** Forward firing steam gatling

These small, maneuverable aircraft are rare, since there are few sky cities large enough to have runways, and few pilots want to land in the wilderness. Isla Aether, for instance, has a short runway with a catapult to launch aircraft and arresting wires to bring them to a rapid halt when they land. Biplanes and triplanes are sometimes used by larger sky cities for defense, and an occasional Neobedouin tribe

(particularly those living in flat desert regions) may have a single aircraft which it uses for scouting. The main difference between the two-winged biplanes and the three-winged triplanes is their speed and maneuverability.

CARAVAN, NEOBEDOUIN

Handling: 2/1* **Movement:** 30/15 mph*
Armor Points: 2 **Passengers:** 20
Range: 300 (if diesel) **Cost:** He500
Health: 10 Health Dice **Weapons:** 1+ Steam Gatlings

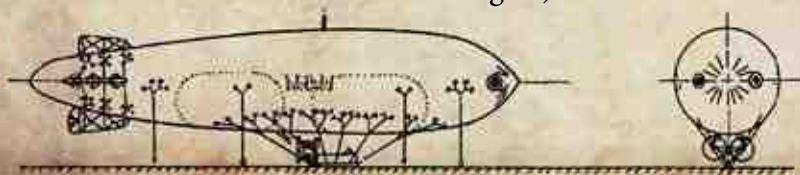
* Handling and Movement are when attached to a steam truck/mammoth or indrikkus.

These beautifully decorated two and three story Neobedouin caravans are usually pulled by steam trucks, though in areas where fuel is scarce, mammoths, mastodons or indrikki are used instead. The caravans are often beautifully hand made from wood and animals skins, intricately painted and decorated, and with plenty of room inside for an extended family. Most have one or more steam gatlings on the roof to fend off IAN and pirate attacks. Though there is a price listed, they are rarely for sale.

CAR

Handling: 8 **Movement:** 80mph
Armor Points: 5 **Passengers:** 5
Range: 200+ miles (diesel) **Cost:** He200+
Health: 10 Health Dice **Weapons:** varies

The Neobedouin often use customized cars to help guard their caravans and transport people. They are usually heavily armored, with roll-bars and spikes to fend off wild beasts. Some have steam gatlings on fixed mounts on the front of the car, others have a gun on a swivel on the roof to be aimed by a passenger. More expensive cars may go faster (up to 150mph and Handling 15).



AIRSHIP PIRATES



EQUIPMENT

HOWDAH

Handling: NA **Movement:** NA
Armor Points: 1 **Passengers:** 8
Range: NA **Cost:** He30
Health: 2 Health dice **Weapons:** varies

This open-topped seating area is designed to be fixed onto the back of a mammoth, mastadon or indrikkus. It can carry up to 8 people, or 6 people and a mounted gun. Many howdahs have a canopy to protect the riders from sun and rain.

HOGTRIKE

Handling: 10 **Movement:** 80mph
Armor Points: 0 **Passengers:** 2
Range: 400+ miles (diesel) **Cost:** He95
Health: 6 Health Dice **Weapons:** none

These three-wheeled motorbikes are often used by Neobedouin outriders scouting out the land ahead and to either side of a tribal convoy. They are not armed but have large wheels, enabling them to travel over rough ground at relatively high speed.

MICROLITE

Handling: 4 **Movement:** 40mph
Armor Points: 0 **Passengers:** 1
Range: 20 miles (diesel) **Cost:** He40
Health: 3 Health Dice **Weapons:** None

This is basically a kite with an engine, able to carry a single person relatively slowly. Cannot be used in bad weather conditions. Many Skyloft kids make one of these as a teenage project, and not all of them survive their own craftsmanship.

ROCKET VAN

Handling: 9/8* **Movement:** 80mph/200mph*
Armor Points: 3 **Passengers:** 5
Range: 200 miles (diesel) **Cost:** He250
Health: 8 Health Dice **Weapons:** varies

*The two figures represent the vehicle in normal travel mode and when speed is boosted by rocket. When traveling under rocket power, the driver gains 3 black dice to driving rolls due to the difficulty of controlling it at such a speed.

The term rocket van covers a variety of vehicles in the form of cars and vans which can use rocket thrust to put on a burst of speed for a short distance (usually about a mile) in order to escape uber-beasts and other threats, or catch up with those being pursued. Rocket vans are usually converted from more normal vehicles by their owners, and have, on occasion, been known to explode unexpectedly!

STEAM TRAIN, ARMORED

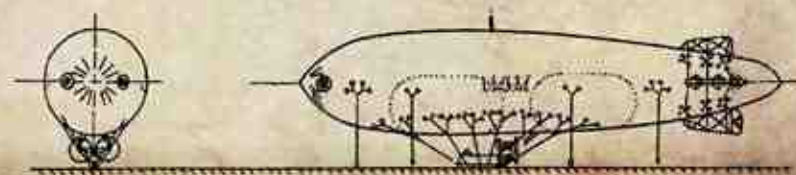
Handling: 8/0* **Movement:** 100mph
Armor Points: 10 **Passengers:** 2-100
Range: 2000 miles (coal) **Cost:** Not for sale
Health: 2-8 Health Dice **Weapons:** 2-8 steam gatlings

*The first figure can be used in chases involving speed, but the train has absolutely no maneuverability as it is limited in where it can go by the rails it is traveling on.

These Neovictorian trains traverse the long distances between the Change Cage cities and the Emperor's mines. They generally pull a number of carriages, carrying up to 100 passengers or 500 ARPs of minerals, depending on carriage configuration. They have guns on the roof and very heavy armor – only the driver can actually see out!

STEAM TRUCK

Handling: 2 **Movement:** 30mph
Armor Points: 2 **Passengers:** 2





Range: 500 miles

Cost: He800

(coal or wood)

Health: 10 Health Dice

Weapons: none

These heavy, steam-powered, trucks are usually used to pull Neobedouin caravans, though occasionally they may be used to pull other trailers such as oil tanks or coal wagons. They are powerful enough to pull up to four trailers or caravans.



WHEEL-SKATES

Handling: 4

Movement: 30mph

Armor Points: 0

Passengers: 1

Range: NA

Cost: He1.50

Health: 1 Health Dice

Weapons: none

These wheeled contraptions can be fitted to boots, and by moving the legs in a pumping action, the wearer can propel himself along remarkably rapidly on flat ground. But beware of unexpected bumps in the road – you could do yourself a mischief!

ARMOR

Cuirass, He20, A breast-and-backplate made from two body-molded steel sheets. Provides 3 Armor Points.

Improvised Armor, He1 or free Slung-together body protection using a combination of padding and metal offcuts. Provides 2 Armor Points.

WEAPONS

Statistics for weapons can all be found on the tables on pp.155-6.

RANGED WEAPONS

Blunderbus, He1.10 Large bell-mouthed shotgun rifle. Usually filled with nails and bolts. Damages all targets in a 45 degree cone from the muzzle (see p.104).

Bow, yew, He2 Used by some Neobedouin tribes.

Crossbow, He1.50 A bow mounted on a stock, with a mechanism to wind back the string. Shoots bolts.

Harpoon, He3 A handheld harpoon.

Heat Ray, Steam, He12 Lethal weapon which emits a jet of steam that scalds opponents in a 45 degree arc from the muzzle (see p.104). Comes with a backpack, which contains water and a heating engine.

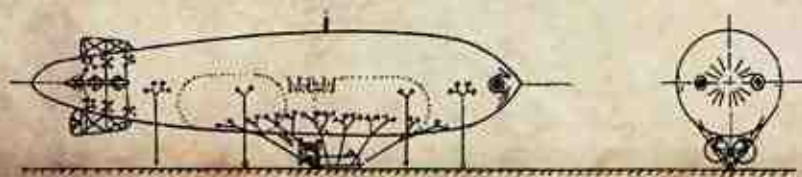
Lightning Gun, Portable, He10 Shoots an arc of lightning. Although the range is short, the effects can be devastating. Ignores armor.



Machine Gun, Portable Clockwork, He40 Set it up, wind it up, and fire.

Mammoth Gun, He40 Large 2 bore weapon with a fierce recoil.

Needlepistol, He5 Fires a small metal dart. Underpowered, but villainous types often poison the tips of the projectiles with psychotropic drugs or venom.





Needlerifle, He8 Fires a large metal dart. Underpowered compared with an ordinary rifle, but favored as an anti-airship weapon as they are thought to be more effective in damaging gasbags.

Pistol, small, He5 Often single shot, and more concealable than the larger revolvers.

Revolver, He6 Has a revolving cylinder, which means it can hold multiple shots.

Rifle, He8 Long barreled gun, with a rifled barrel for greater accuracy.

Shotgun, He6 Smoothbore and designed to be fired from the shoulder. The shotgun is extremely useful at close range, damaging opponents in a 45 degree arc from the muzzle (see p.104).

Steam Gatling, He80 Similar to the clockwork machine gun, but less portable. Unlike the clockwork version, it doesn't need winding up. Once it has reached the correct temperature the firer can fire almost continuously. Of course, the steam produced makes it hard to see what you are hitting, so you cannot aim with this weapon.

Steamrifle, He10 Heavier than a normal rifle, the steamrifle fires larger ammunition. Does have a tendency to overheat and become too hot to hold as well as leaking steam, which can make aiming difficult.

Steampistol, He7 Heavier than a normal pistol, the steampistol fires larger ammunition. Gets warm quite quickly, and like all steam weapons, aim can be spoilt by obscuring steam.

MELEE WEAPONS

Arm Blades, He8 Double-bladed weapons used by Neobedouin beast dancers.

Ax, He0.1-0.3 Usually a tool rather than a weapon, axes come in a variety of sizes according to the task they are used for (e.g., chopping wood, felling trees, etc.).

Beast Claws, He10 Finally crafted weapons, favored by Neobedouin beast dancers. These gloves come armed with a dagger like spike emanating from each digit.

Brass Knuckles, He0.15 A set of brass rings, welded together to increase punching power.

Cane, Sword, He2 This walking cane conceals a rapier. Twisting the handle allows the body of the cane to be pulled off, exposing the sword within.

Cane, Weighted, He1 The head and top quarter of the cane are weighted with lead.

Chain, He0.2 4 feet of chain that can be swung at an opponent. Can also be wrapped around the knuckles and used as brass knuckles.

Cosh, He0.1 Small club or sand-filled sock. Popular amongst petty criminals.

Cutlass, He1 A short slashing sword with a basket shaped hilt.

Knife, He0.05+ Small bladed weapon for stabbing or cutting. Price varies according to size and ornamentation.

Machete, He0.1 Large cleaver-like cutting tool.

Night Stick, He0.1 Solid truncheon usually wielded by Peelers.

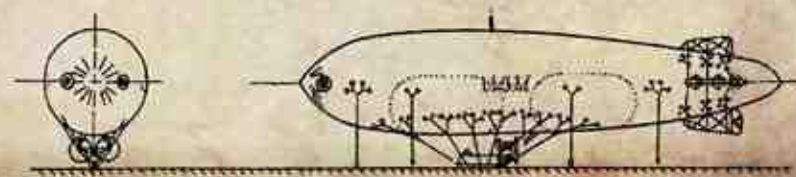
Quarterstaff, He0.1 or free Heavy wooden staff.

Spear, He0.2 A 5 or 6 foot long wooden pole with a sharp metal tip.

Sword, collapsible, He0.3 A flick of the wrist and the ten inch steel rod transforms into a rapier, a twist of the handle locking the blade in place. Only suitable for stabbing, as it has a sharp point but no edged blade.

Sword, military, He1 Standard saber wielded by the air marines.

Whisk, Peelers', NA Unpleasant whisk with



AIRSHIP PIRATES



sharpened blades that fits as an attachment to the wrist of an automaton. Usually used by Peelers during interrogations.

CARGO

Cargo can be bought, sold or stolen and transported in the cargo space on an airship. The costs are average costs for a Resource point of cargo space (roughly equivalent to a large barrel or crate).

Basic Foodstuffs, He20

Luxury Foodstuffs, He80

Luxuries, He100

Manufactured Goods, He80

Mineral Ores, He50

Scrap Metal, He40

DOCK REPAIRS

Airship Repair Costs per Health Pip, He10/20

Airship repairs cost He10 per pip of health repaired, if the crew carry out the work themselves. If the work is carried out by the dockyard workers, the cost is He20 per pip. Remember, only the damage that the crew couldn't patch up in flight has to be paid for (see p.139-40).

FUEL COSTS

In reality, different vehicles consume different amounts of fuel but for simplicity and to reduce the need for careful book-keeping use the following fuel costs to work out how much it costs to refuel airships, etc.

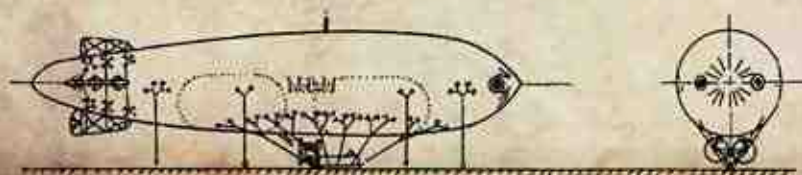
Coal per 100 miles, He4

Diesel per 100 miles, He6

Wood per 100 miles, He2

MELEE WEAPON TABLE

Melee Weapon	Skill Required	Damage Dice	Cost
Arm Blades	Specialized Weapons (Arm Blades)	8	8
Ax, Large	Improvised Weapon or Specialized Weapons (Ax)	8	0.10
Ax, Small	Improvised Weapon or Specialized Weapons (Ax)	6	0.30
Beast Claws	Specialized Weapons (Beast Claws)	8	10
Brass Knuckles	Fisticuffs	+2	0.15
Cane, Sword	Swordplay	4	2
Cane, Weighted	Blunt Weapons	3	1
Chain	Improvised Weapon or Specialized Weapons (Chain)	4	0.20
Cutlass	Swordplay	7	1
Kick	Fisticuffs	+2	-
Knife, small	Swordplay	4	0.05
Knife, large	Swordplay	5	0.10
Machete	Improvised Weapon or Specialized Weapons (Machete)	6	0.10
Night Stick/Cosh	Blunt Weapons	4	0.10
Punch	Fisticuffs	+1	-
Quarterstaff	Blunt Weapons	5	0.10
Spear	Swordplay	6	0.20
Sword, collapsible	Swordplay	4	0.30
Sword, military	Swordplay	7	1
Whisk, Peelers'	Specialized Weapons (Whisk)	6	NA

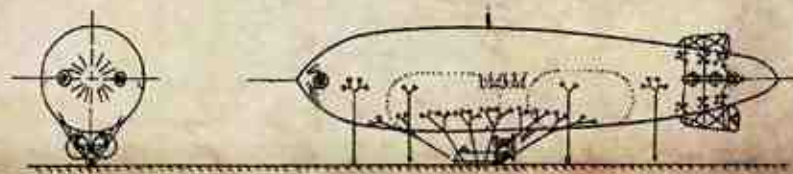


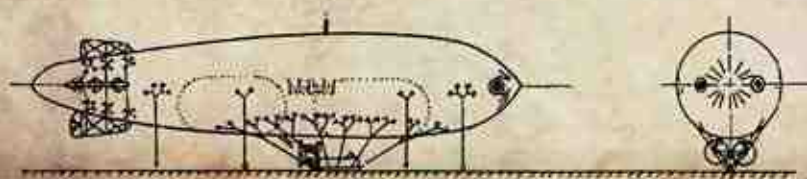
AIRSHIP PIRATES



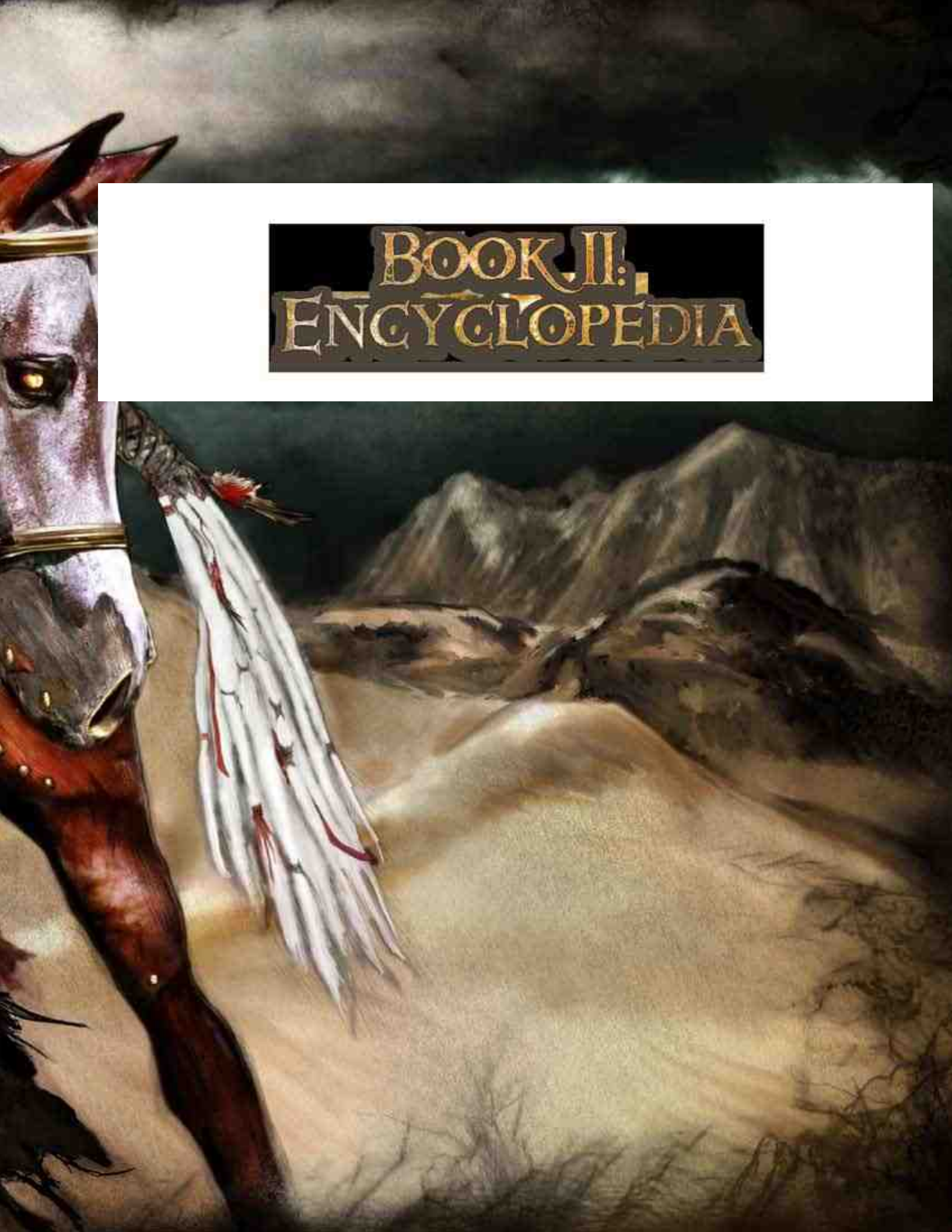
RANGED WEAPONS TABLE

Ranged Weapon	Skill Required	Damage	Range	Cost
Blunderbus	Firearms	8	20 yards	1.10
Bow, yew	Archery	6	200 yards	2
Cannon, small	Gunnery	10	200 yards	20
Cannon, large	Gunnery	15	300 yards	40
Crossbow	Archery	6	125 yards	1.50
Grappling Hook Launcher	Gunnery	6	25 yards	20
Harpoon	Archery	8	50 yards	3
Heat Ray, steam	Firearms	10	10 yards	12
Lightning Gun, mounted	Gunnery	12	100 yards	80
Lightning Gun, portable	Firearms	9	30 yards	10
Machine Gun, portable clockwork	Firearms	20	150 yards	40
Mammoth Gun	Firearms	20	100 yards	40
Needlepistol	Firearms	5	25 yards	5
Needlerifle	Firearms	7	80 yards	8
Pistol, small	Firearms	5	20 yards	5
Revolver	Firearms	6	30 yards	6
Rifle	Firearms	8	100 yards	8
Shotgun	Firearms	12	50 yards	6
Steam Gatling	Firearms	20	150 yards	80
Steamrifle	Firearms	9	75 yards	10
Steampistol	Firearms	6	15 yards	7









BOOK II: ENCYCLOPEDIA

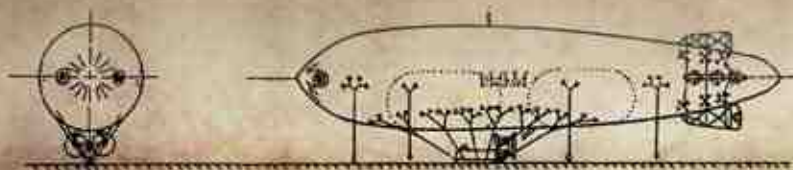


HISTORY

*"After our days, and the fall of man
One day this will heal again.
Beasts crawl forth over desert clay,
And mankind will be nature's prey.
Ruined towns spring forth in vines;*

*Trees, leaves, fleet combine.
Humankind will have lost its sway,
The world again will be theirs one day!"*

– Abney Park, The End of Days





HOW IT ALL STARTED

It all began with Abney Park. In 2006, while on their way to a gig in a light aircraft, they were caught in a storm and unexpectedly crashed into an airship, the *HMS Ophelia*. The airship turned out to be a time-traveling British airship from 1906 – its mission was to patrol time, making sure things went well for the British Empire. With some members of the band, and some members of the airship's crew dead, Robert Brown of Abney Park found himself promoted to Captain Robert, and so the band's adventures began.

With the aim of righting the wrongs of history and making the world a better place, the crew of the *Ophelia* visited various different time periods, changing the outcomes of battles, getting rid of unpleasant dictators, and generally making time nice. (The full story will be told in Robert Brown's forthcoming novel, *The Wrath of Fate*.) The result was a world at peace and totally unprepared for the rise of the great dictator, Victor Hypocrates.

TIMELINE

The timeline that we know, the timeline that leads to the 21st century in which we live, has been lost. Abney Park's attempts to meddle with the past in order to make the world a better place have resulted in a completely different history of the past, leading to an unexpected future.

Abney Park like to talk of the "Apocalypse" of 1906. For them, the invention of the Chrononautilus was the beginning of the end for the world they knew. For the people of 2150, the world has always been the way it is, and if they talk about the Great Apocalypse, it begins the day Victor Hypocrates I took power at the end of the 20th century.

Note: The first two eras (1650-1750) are identical to the real historical world; it is only in 1751 that the timeline begins to diverge. Remember that time travelers cannot get back before 1650 or ahead of 2150.

1650-1700: THE RISE OF KNOWLEDGE

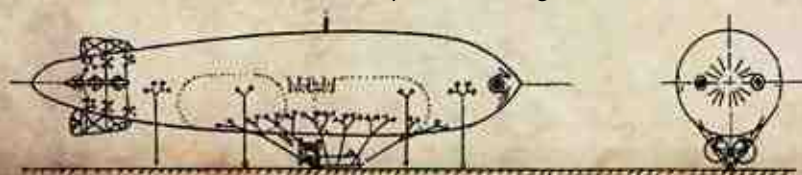
In the west, this was an age of increasing knowledge, of the beginnings of science. In England, the Royal Society was founded and great figures such as Isaac Newton were laying the foundations of our modern understanding of the world. Meanwhile, wars over religion were still being fought across Europe and people being burned as witches from Scotland to Massachusetts. Explorers were making new geographical discoveries, by land and sea. In America, Jamestown was founded, and colonization of the Americas continued. In Paris this was the age of swashbuckling, of Cardinal Richelieu and the musketeers. In the Caribbean, it was the beginning of the "Golden Age of Piracy", with pirates attacking Spanish treasure ships, and the buccaneers of Tortuga being given letters of marque by the English.

1701-1750: PIRACY AND COLONIZATION

Piracy continued in this era, and European nations spread across the world, seeking new lands to conquer. The French founded New Orleans in North America. For much of this period the English and Spanish were great rivals, and frequently at war. It was the beginning of the industrial revolution, as the first steam engine, designed by Thomas Newcomen, was installed in a coal mine in England. The slave trade was at its peak, shipping thousands of Africans to the New World to work on plantations.

1751-1800: LOST EMPIRES

This was an era of continued attempts at imperial expansion, when the British East India Company tried to take over the Indian subcontinent. But Robert Clive's attempt to conquer the city of Arcot was a failure. Some claim that a mysterious flying machine was seen over the site of the battle and joined in against the British. The imperial forces





were routed, and the failure was taken as a sign that European colonial armies were not as all-powerful as previously thought. Over the next century, people throughout the far east threw off their colonial shackles and sought independence from western rule, with great success; and Great Britain's attempts to hold onto North America also failed completely, leading to the creation of the United States of America (USA), a vast country stretching from the North Pole to the equator. Meanwhile, remote areas such as Australia and New Zealand remained untouched by western imperialism.

1801-1850: THE RISE OF AFRICA

The attack on a slave ship off the coast of Africa by a mysterious airship led to the freed slaves acquiring the beginnings of their own navy. Over the next few years, African sea power grew, and the slave trade was halted. The Europeans, their overseas colonies lost, were busy fighting in Europe, as Napoleon conquered one country after the other, in what later became known as the Last Great War. The Africans, meanwhile, spurred by their successes at sea against slavery and imperialism, formed the United African States (UAS), and an age of peace and plenty descended on the continent. Political pressure on the USA by the UAS led to the emancipation of slaves in the southern states, and headed off what could have been a nasty civil war.

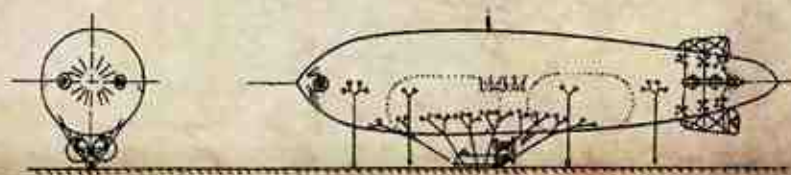
By the end of this period, most of the world was at peace, with turmoil only continuing in Europe. Wars, revolutions and invasions continued from France to Russia. When Britain asked the UAS for help in fighting off a French invasion force, the appearance of an African airship fleet over Paris was enough to cause the octogenarian Napoleon to surrender. He died shortly afterwards and his Empire, stretching right across Europe and Russia, quickly became the Eurasian Confederation (EC), built on the American and African models.

1851-1900: THE AGE OF STEAM

The world was at peace. Populations grew, international commerce thrived. Great Britain, now a part of the EC, became the workshop of the world, and a model for others to emulate in fashion and technology. Because members of the EC were allowed to keep their own rulers, as long as they obeyed the laws formulated in the Senate in Brussels, Queen Victoria ruled Great Britain during this period, and Victorian style took over the world. Steam power, airships, the bustle and the top hat, were seen from Moscow to the Mississippi. People saw themselves living in a golden age of peace and prosperity. Whole landscapes were reorganized for the benefit of mankind; rivers straightened for the use of steamships, dams built to generate power, marshes drained to provide new land. But already the seeds of future destruction were being sown. The world's population was growing at a phenomenal rate, and without the checks of disease and war, had already reached 5 billion by the end of this era.

1901-1950: THE DIESEL AGE

The invention of the internal combustion engine at the beginning of this period led to a great leap forward in transport technology. Slowly, the automobile spread throughout the world, and air transport moved away from airships toward aircraft. In a world with no conflict, and with increasing crowding of the cities, people sought other forms of excitement. For some it was travel, but the world was becoming increasingly homogeneous with global tourism and communications. In the Middle East, some advocated a return to traditional ways, and many gave up their homes to join the growing Neobedouin movement. Young people from across the world flocked to join the tribes, or create tribes of their own, and soon similar groups were setting themselves up on other continents, wandering through the increasingly constrained countryside and living off the land, much to the dismay of their parents and the disgust of local





landowners.

Meanwhile, others embraced the new technologies, seeking their thrills in increasingly dangerous auto-racing, airplane stunts and the like; the sometimes bloody competitions were watched by avid crowds on the big “televisor” screens which had become popular in urban areas.

1951-2000: WORLD GOVERNMENT

As industry and population continued to grow, pollution increased – rivers choked with dead fish, birds and animals died of strange birth defects, acid rain decimated the forests. Scientists tried to warn of dire consequences to come – that the climate itself might be thrown out of kilter by the ever-increasing industrialization. But their calls for a change of life were compared to the “eccentric” exhortations of the young Neobedouin movement and dismissed as groundless by those in power.

And then, it seemed, a savior came along. A young man by the name of Victor Hypocrates, who had spent his early years traveling with one of the more extreme Neobedouin tribes in the American Mid-West, stood for President of the United States of America. Handsome and charismatic, his speeches were attended by the young and watched by millions across the world on televisors set up at public rallies. He spoke of the need for a world united against the threats of pollution and overpopulation. He advocated a move away from polluting technologies, a return to simpler times, the creation of a “new wilderness”. Soon his supporters were wearing his distinctive green armband and doing his work throughout the world – it began with cleaning up rivers and tidying littered streets, but soon moved on to smashing up the racing cars and airplanes of famous stunt-men and -women and throwing bricks through the windows of neighbors who left lights on unnecessarily.





Hypocrates came to power in a massive landslide, and immediately opened negotiations with the other continental powers to create a world government with himself as its first head. His fanatical followers, now calling themselves Neovictorians (partly because of their leader's name, partly because they called for a return to the "golden age" of the Victorian period), marched through the world's capitals demanding that Hypocrates be made World President. The other governments, either fearing for their lives, or equally caught up in the Neovic hysteria, gathered in Washington and agreed – Victor Hypocrates was now ruler of the world.

2001-2050: THE SLOW APOCALYPSE

In the long centuries of peace, the world had lost its immunity to charismatic dictators. Sometimes it seemed as if everyone on the planet was carried away on a wave of adulation for their new leader and his increasingly draconian policies. In truth, those who stood against him did so quietly in the background, for fear of the inevitable knock on the door in the middle of the night.

Victor Hypocrates' open policies were simple enough to understand. Technology had created the mess the world was in, therefore it must be stopped. There was to be freeze on any new innovations, and a slow program of winding back technology to the Victorian era. Populations were to be cut back (quite how, he didn't say) and smaller towns and cities "rationalized" and returned to the wilderness. Massive new mega-cities were to be built to house the people of the disbanded towns, and much of the agricultural land returned to its natural state as the need for food decreased. At the center of each of the new cities a Change Cage was to be built – a massive building symbolic of the changes that must be made for the good of the planet – and into it would be thrown any innovations, and anyone seeking to

encourage innovation.

Hypocrates' secret policies (known only to a few top-level advisors) were frightening indeed. When the world president said he wanted to save the planet, he said nothing of saving humanity. In fact, he saw humanity as a blight on the face of the Earth, to be kept alive only in a few overcrowded settlements while the land was given back to the beasts.

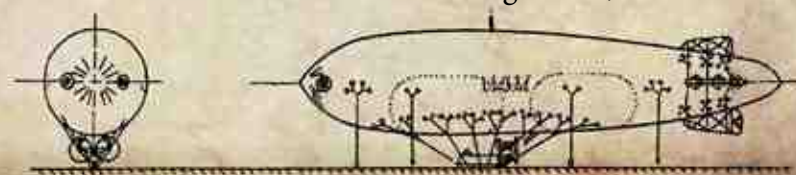
In remote areas, he built research stations, where genetic manipulation was used to recreate the mighty creatures of the time before humanity became dominant; from out of his labs came sabre-tooths and hyaenadons, mammoths and giant lions, all the carnivores genetically "programmed" with a taste for human flesh.

When his son (also called Victor) was born, the world president declared himself an Emperor, and proclaimed that his son would follow him as ruler of the world; the Neovics cheered his announcement and held massive rallies in his support.

2051-2100: CITIES IN FLIGHT

When Victor II came to power, he continued the policies of his father. He stocked special areas of wilderness with carnivorous beasts, and the people rounded up from the "rationalized" towns, far from being sent to the new cities that were being built, were dumped into these "national parks" to be eaten by his beloved animals. By this time, the telephone networks had been disabled as part of the drive to reduce technology, and without a reliable way of contacting friends and relatives in distant towns it was impossible for anyone to figure out quite how many were being slaughtered by the new "uber-beasts" that increasingly roamed the wild.

The new beasts had begun wandering into existing towns and cities, increasing the desire of people to leave and be assigned a place in one of the Change Cage cities, which were depicted by the Emperor as





being safe havens. But he was careful only to pick those who would be most tractable to live in one of these cities – the rest were fed to the beasts. Things were going well for the Hypocrates dynasty's mad plan.

But there was one thorn in the new Emperor's side – the Neobedouin. When his father first came to power, they had supported him in his desire to protect nature and return to a simpler life; but when he began

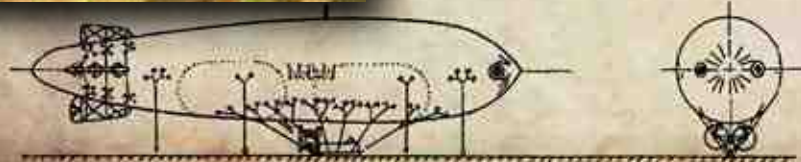
rounding up their tribes and either feeding them to the beasts or cramming them into his new Change Cage cities, they turned against him. But what were they to do?

A lot of the Neobedouin had been hunted to extinction, either by the new beasts, or by the Chuno Ggun (named after an ancient Chinese slave-hunting band the Emperor had taken a fancy to), an elite force created especially for that purpose. But they were being joined by new people from the cities – people looking for an escape from the population roundups and the knock on the door in the middle of the night. While they wished to escape the Emperor's draconian rule, not all of them wished for the primitive life of a wandering nomad – they had enjoyed technological city life.

Finally, someone came up with a bright idea – take to the skies. The world had had no need of an air force for centuries, so Victor II had nothing with which to take out a flying city. The wilderness-loving Neobedouin agreed to help their more urban-minded fellows and soon the first cities were beginning to drift over the landscape, or nestle down on mountain-tops in remote areas, and their aircraft flew protection patrols for their Neobedouin allies.

Victor II realized he needed his own flying machines to protect his troops, but most people with technical know-how had been purged from his organization long ago. The Imperial Air Navy was never a match for the fleets of the sky cities and though an intermittent war in the air was fought for many years, the Skyloft always had the upper hand.

Toward the end of the century when the vast majority of the world's population had been slaughtered, and the remainder were mostly huddled into the Change Cage cities, Victor II (now living a life of luxury in Yellowstone Palace) passed a decree that anyone still living in the outside world was an outlaw, and could expect nothing but a swift death from his forces; to





the Neobedouin and the Skyfolk, this mattered little, as that had been the reality on the ground for some time.

2101-2150: WILDERNESS YEARS

By now, what remained of the human population were mostly huddled in the Change Cage cities – in the former USA, these consisted of only three massive metropolises – the first one to be built, Old Borealis, in the north of the continent; Desolation in the deserts of former Nevada; and Everglade, in the swamps of Florida. Their populations, brought up on a hundred years of misinformation and propaganda, accepted the story that the wilderness was empty of human life, and accepted their grim lot as a necessity to save the Earth from the terrible fate that had loomed over it in the 20th century. The grandson of the first Emperor, Victor Hypocrates III, was a distant figure, cut off from all contact with the lives of his

remaining people. The ruling classes, descendants of those who had supported Victor I in his bid for world domination, lived a life of luxury. Meanwhile, outside the Change Cage cities, the beasts still prowled, the Neobedouin still roamed the wilderness and the Skyfolk still looked down from their high eyries on the land below.

In the last few decades there has been something of a thawing of relations between the Free Peoples and the Neovictorians in certain areas. Helium City, built around the largest helium mines in North America, has become a focus for detente, as both sides need helium for their airships and neither side has the resources to be sure of winning a war over the issue. Victor III seems to care little what goes on in the world – but he is, like his father and grandfather before him, a fickle ruler, and could decide tomorrow that a purge of “outlaws” is necessary. While the Empire remains in place, the Free Peoples can never rest easy.



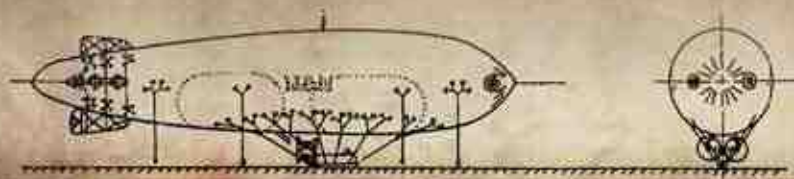


GEOGRAPHY

*"We're the nomads, the Neobedouins,
I don't want to end up dead again,
On this night we've traveled far.
Over desert wasteland, prairie grassland,*

*Traversed the silken endless sands.
We've survived this global scar!"*

– Abney Park, Neobedouin





Throughout the globe, wild beasts rule supreme. There are only seventeen Change Cage cities in the world – three in North America, two in South America, two in Africa, three in Europe, one in the Middle East, and six in Asia. Australia and New Zealand, not reached by western colonization, retain their native populations and are untouched by the Emperor Victor's "Great Rectification". The rest of the world has returned to nature, its great old cities overgrown and crumbling. Old dams and levees have collapsed, returning reclaimed lands to marsh and swamp. Farmland has become overgrown and returned to its original vegetation – often trackless forest. The land looks very much as it did before humanity came down from the trees, though the climate is often more extreme due to global warming in previous eras.

Through this wilderness stalk the beasts which the current world regime caused to be recreated from past epochs. Most of the creatures the Emperors have bred come from the Pliocene era, before humans had much impact on the world, but Victor I also caused a few other species to be recreated, just because he thought they were cool. (See the Bestiary (p.261) for more information on the wild beasts of 2150).

NORTH AMERICA

North America in 2150 can be divided into eight zones, which represent different types of vegetation, wildlife and climate. These are further modified by the underlying soil and geology, and by the landforms – flat, hilly, mountainous, etc. This is obviously a great simplification, scientifically speaking, but there are very few scientists in 22nd century America, and most of those tend to focus on technology rather than the biological sciences. The people with the most knowledge of the natural world are undoubtedly the Neobedouins, and their knowledge tends to be of a practical nature – what you can eat, and what can

eat you!

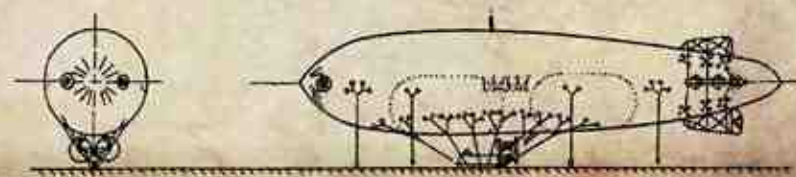
Mountainous areas tend to be home to the majority of Skyfolk, while the prairie flatlands contain the most Neobedouin tribes, though the Free Peoples can be found thinly scattered throughout the continent.

THE ARCTIC

This is land above the Arctic Circle, where the sun is above the horizon for 24 hours a day in the summer, and completely absent in the depths of winter. In the far north the temperature never rises above freezing, but further south it tends to be around 3-12°C (37-54°F) in the summer, dropping to an average of -28°C (-18°F), with lows of -70°C (-94°F) in the winter. There is little precipitation, and all of this falls as snow. There is very little in the way of vegetation, even in the summer. The only surviving humans tend to live around the coast where fish, seals and the occasional whale form the main part of the diet. The tiny remnants of the descendants of the Eskimo and Inuit native peoples tend to be independent-minded, and though they will occasionally trade with the Neobedouin, they do not really involve themselves with the other Free Peoples. Their main predators are the giant polar bears, for whom humans form the major food source, being easier to catch than seals.

PINE FOREST/TUNDRA

This zone fades from low vegetation, largely snow-covered, in the north, to the dark pine forests in the south of the region. Winters are long (over six months with temperatures below freezing) and summers short but hot (sometimes rising as high as 38°C (100°F)). Much of the ground is permanently frozen just below the surface. Though rain and snowfall is fairly low, the lack of evaporation means this area is very humid. Across the south of this zone, huge forests of fir, pine, and spruce dominate, inhabited by herds of mastodons, stag-moose and woodland musk-ox,





which are preyed upon by giant lions, dire wolves, hyaenadons, and short-faced bears. Only the hardest Neobedouin choose this environment, and even they tend to move south in the winter. Pine trees are a good source of light wood, often used in construction by the Skyloft, and Neobedouin tribes such as the Sitka will often set up temporary logging camps to harvest the trees, which they will trade with merchant vessels from the Skyloft. The cold, bleak Neovictorian city of Old Borealis is in this zone.

DECIDUOUS FOREST

A large area of eastern North America forms a continuous deciduous forest, stretching for thousands of square miles. Formed mainly of oak, beech, maple and birch trees, the forest forms a good hiding place from the air for Neobedouin tribes in the summer, but is open to the sky during the winter. Rainfall is frequent, and the temperatures rarely reach extremes of heat and cold. These deep forests are home to bison, giant sloths, mastodons and shrub ox, but the giant of the forests is undoubtedly the massive indrikki. These creatures are preyed upon by a variety of predators, including American lions, dire wolves, hyaenadons, sabre-toothed cats, short-faced bears, and the fearsome racids. Neobedouin tribes often set up summer camps under cover of the forest canopy, harvesting wood (particularly oak, which is traded with the Skyfolk for use in making airship hulls) and meat, to be salted and stored to keep them through the winter. These camps are dispersed before autumn begins to avoid detection from the air.

WESTERN PINE FOREST

West of the Rocky Mountains and east of the Pacific Ocean is a rich forest which contains some of the largest trees in the world, including red cedars with trunks ten feet in diameter and stretching up to 300 feet tall. The ground is lush with ferns, mosses, fungi and lichens. It is very wet in the north, becoming

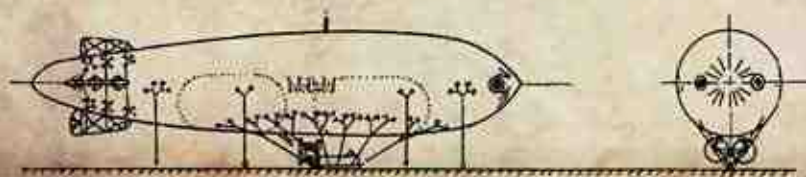
drier further south. A unique Skyloft, High Cedars, has been built in this forest; a series of platforms high in the tree canopy are linked together by rope bridges – the whole area covers almost a square mile. The uber-beast population is similar to that in the Deciduous Forest (see above), and giant sloths are extremely common.

PRAIRIES

Prairies are temperate lands where grass, rather than forest, is the dominant vegetation. While there are trees dotted about the landscape, it is waves of rolling grassland that predominate, grazed by vast herds of mammoths, bison, wild horses, camelops and saiga antelopes, which, together with huge fires in the dry summer months, keep the trees from taking over. The grazing animals, and the Neobedouin tribes who roam the prairies, are preyed upon by American cheetahs, dire wolves, hyaenadons, racids, scimitar cats, and short-faced bears. In more hilly areas on the edge of the prairies, giant condors ride the thermals, and are capable of carrying away a grown man. The prairies are home to more Neobedouin tribes than any other part of North America, due to the abundance of game animals and the relative ease of travel. This is one of the only parts of North America where primitive roads and trails are to be seen, as Neobedouin tribes traveling to and from Helium City are immune to attack from the Imperial Air Navy under the provisions of the Tripartite Agreement of 2102.

SEMI-ARID

This zone is characterized by a hot climate and low rainfall. Some areas within the semi-arid zone will support scrub grassland, with more lush vegetation around water sources and in cooler climes such as in the mountains, where pine trees and other conifers dominate. Herds of camelops roam the scrubland, together with the hardy woodland musk-ox (which





can thrive in these areas despite its name!). The main predators are American lions, hyaenadons, racids, scimitar cats, and the giant condor, a bird of prey so large it has been known to attack airships! While traveling conditions are good, there tend to be less Neobedouin in these areas than in more temperate areas due to the relative lack of food animals. But the large abandoned oil refineries and gas storage depots draw some tribes, despite the hostile environment.

DESERT

Even dryer than the semi-arid zone, the deserts of North America are bleak, inhospitable places. While some parts can support dry scrubby grassland which blooms briefly in the spring, other areas are little but blasted rock and sand, where nothing can live but lichens. Temperatures can get as high as 113°F (45°C) during the day, only to fall to 32°F (0°C) at night. Only in the mountains is there relief from the heat, and the Sierra Nevada (see below) is an area of bleak beauty, its snow-capped mountains clustered with pine forests and grasslands on the lower slopes due to the increased rain and snowfall caused by the mountains. Camelops are the only major herd species in this area; they wander the desert, eating the sparse scrub and stopping at rivers and other water sources to drink, where they are preyed upon by scimitar cats, hyaenadons and racids. In the more mountainous regions, shrub oxen are more common, and sabre-tooths prowl the forested slopes, while teratorns haunt the thermals. This is one of the most inhospitable environments for the nomadic Neobedouin, and the tribes of this region are some of the hardest people on the continent. The Neobedouin city of Desolation is a hot, dusty place where people stay indoors as much as possible and avoid the heat of the noonday sun.

JUNGLE AND SWAMP

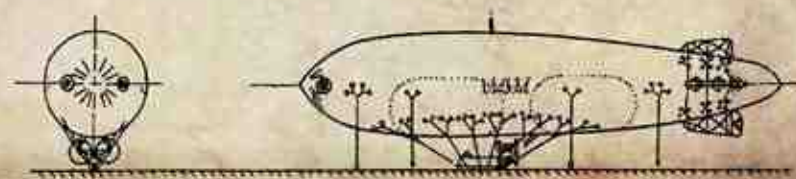
The south-east of North America is hot, lush and humid. Subtropical rainforest covers much of the area, along with damp, mosquito-ridden swamplands. Tangled mangroves make much of the area difficult to travel in. The area is home to giant ground sloths and indrikki, preyed upon by alligators, hyaenadon and American lions which have adapted to a semi-aquatic existence in the swamps. Many Neobedouin have taken to living on rafts in the swamps, fishing for their food, doing their best to stay under cover of the mangrove trees to avoid Imperial Air Navy patrols from Everglade, the Neovictorian city on stilts at the center of the swamps – this Change Cage city is perhaps the least pleasant of the three, as mold seems to grow on every exposed surface, and malaria is endemic.

SIERRA NEVADA

The Sierra Nevada region (see map, p.295) is a perfect place to start your role-playing campaign. In the west of the area, the Neovictorian Change Cage city of Desolation (p.226) sits in the middle of the bleak, hot Nevada desert. Canals and railways head off to the north-east and south-east, the first heading to a mining settlement in the center of the continent, and the second leading to Helium City.

To the south of Desolation City lie the remains of a once-great metropolis known as Last Vegas. A huge pyramid in the heart of the ruins leads many to suspect that the place was once home to the fabled Egyptians, and many have sought their gold-filled tombs among the tumble-down, beast-haunted skyscrapers.

To the west of Desolation lie the high peaks of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Their pine-clad slopes are less snow-covered than they were before the environmental degradation of the Diesel Age, but

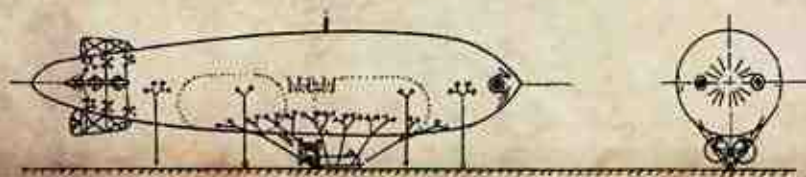




they are still tall and cold. At their heart, built around the peak of Mount Whitney, lies the great sky city of Isla Aether. Further to the north-west, moored in a difficult-to-reach valley, the infamous pirate skyport of High Tortuga has its home.

More ruined towns lie to the west of the mountain, overtaken by the lush pine forests of the area known as the Central Valley. Tumbledown farms can still be found between the trees, where racids nest among overgrown orange groves.

Finally, on the coast, the Neobedouins maintain a secret oil refinery among the giant tanks and rusting pipelines of an ancient oil storage facility.



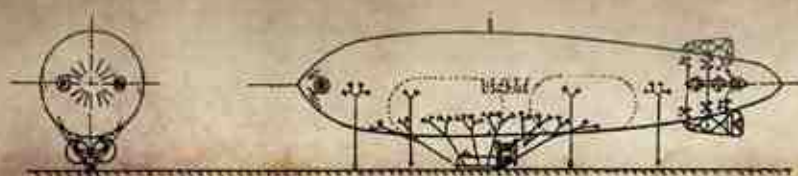


CULTURES

*"We've got 3 wheels and a frame of rust
Blue skies above, and behind us dust.
Half a tank of gas won't carry us far,*

*But you're safe from apocalypse in
Daddy's sidecar."*

*– Abney Park, To the Apocalypse
in Daddy's Sidecar*





THE SKYLOFT

INTRODUCTION

This section explores the Skyloft cities – mighty platforms, built to escape the Great Apocalypse – and the Free Peoples who live upon them. The evolution of these cities is described, then some of the common characteristics that the Skyfolk tend to share.

Despite their similarities, the independence and distance between them has led to each Skyloft city developing its own unique mode of living. Two of these individual cities are detailed below, as examples of the kind of arrangements that can be found aloft.

The first, High Tortuga is a pirate-infested stronghold, where few rules apply. Danger lurks in the maze of twisting alleyways, the low, sleazy bars and at the tables of the hard-drinking pirates who live upon the rum-soaked platform. The second, Isla Aether is a wondrous mercantile city – wares from Isla Aether are coveted by Free Peoples everywhere and her reputation is second to none.

This section also provides random generation tables with which you can create your own Skyloft cities. These tools provide the bare essentials, answering questions like – How big is the place? How many people live there? How are they governed? These tables are accompanied by an example, showing you how they might best be used – in this case we will look at the creation of High Tortuga, the notorious pirate port.

But remember – the random generation tables are only provided as an optional aid – if you want to re-roll or choose a different option, then do it; if you want to design your own cities, all the better. The cities are wonderful opportunities for adventure, providing potential havens and hazards; a home for long-term patrons, rivals and enemies; and even a secure lair for the characters to come back to between missions.

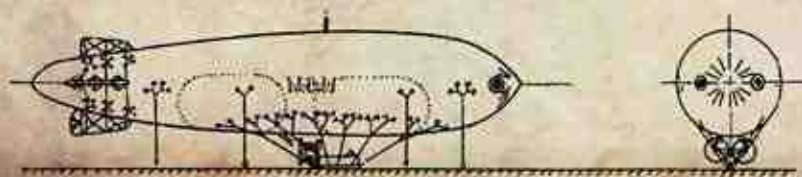
TAKING TO THE SKIES

By the year 2050 Emperor Victor II and his forces had begun the process of depopulating the earth. Some people hid, some fought and died. Some tried to run, but found they had nowhere to run to. Some merely waited, hoping that things would not turn out so badly after all – their hopes were dashed, as the world they once knew crumbled around them.

Others found a different solution – they worked together to build Skyloft homes in which they could take to the skies, abandoning their former dwellings forever. In some areas (those among the last to suffer at the hands of the Emperor and his bio-engineered predators), this building work took decades. In other places, the urgency was such that hastily-built structures were floated just in the nick of time.

Some of the proposed creations were destined to failure from the start. Scuppered by unworkable design, the apathy of the citizenry, a lack of funds and resources, botched building and a whole host of other circumstances that conspired to doom them in their infancy.

For those that did make it, the early days were still hard. Of the hundreds of platforms that were built throughout the globe, over half were downed within a decade. This was not the work of the Imperial Air Navy (in its infancy, and preoccupied with other, more urgent battles), but rather due to an inexperience in living in such a novel environment. Some were abandoned as their residents fell victim to hunger. Some fell due to social turmoil, the inhabitants wiping themselves out. Most just crashed – intrinsic weaknesses; adverse weather conditions; a lack of suitable materials for repair and maintenance; a failure to calculate the necessary propulsion, fuel and weight ratios; navigational difficulties; or simple ineptitude, all taking their toll. Aside from such material hazards, adjusting to a whole new way of life was simply too much for many – for the first





few decades jumpers were a common sight, people plunging over the sides of their new homes, choosing death over a life in the skies.

But many of the cities did survive. Some even prospered. Their peoples learned the skills with which to tend their new homes and with which to make a living. Those who came through the trauma and excitement of the early days became stronger. They, in turn, began to be joined by new generations, each becoming more attuned to a life in the skies. Independent and adventuresome, these Free Peoples dwell in sky cities and are proud to call themselves the Skyfolk.

THE BALANCE OF POWER

The Skyloft cities are all independent of each other. Some even survive primarily by raiding others (although this piracy might be directed at the merchant shipping of a rival Skyloft city, rather than direct attacks upon the city platform itself). Nevertheless, all the Skyloft agreed, very early on, that they would band together if the Emperor ever turned his attention towards their homes. The result of this was the Declaration of Allegiance Pact.

In the early days, the Imperial Air Navy was relatively small. The Emperor's efforts were concentrated on the ground below – beasts were released, populations decimated, the wilderness overtook civilization, and people were either killed or herded into the Change Cage cities.

This was not a quick process, and the Emperor's forces were stretched to breaking point. By the time Victor II had finally consolidated his control over the land, the Skyfolk had begun to properly adapt to their new homes. Each Skyloft city found its own place in the skies. To his chagrin, the Emperor found he simply did not have enough resources left to clear the skies of the mavericks. That did not stop his admirals from

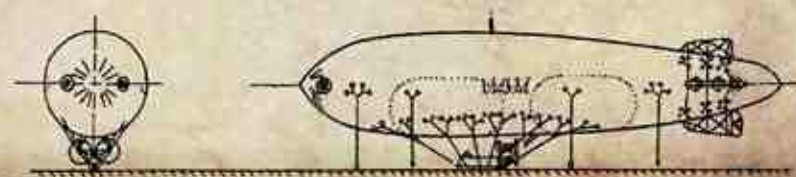
urging their leader to give them the authority to finish the job, but he refused to sanction the move until the time was right. That time never came.

The Declaration of Allegiance Pact set out, in no uncertain terms, the intended response of the Free Peoples to any attack against an individual Skyloft city launched by the Imperial Air Navy. In short, they pledged to band together and make war on the Change Cage cities if such an assault were to take place. Victor II had hoped to take down the cities piecemeal, but this agreement prevented him from doing so.

So the Emperor bent his will to preventing the populations in his own cities from communicating with the world outside. His propaganda flooded the Neovictorian streets, claiming that the wilderness outside was deadly and completely devoid of any continuing human habitation; the Chuno Ggun and the Peelers enforced his dictums and silenced dissent.

Now, if war was to come the outcome would be uncertain – the Imperial Air Navy has the bigger ships, but the Skyfolk have an abundance of smaller vessels, as well as thousands of individual planes, dirigibles and other craft, along with the well-trained pilots to fly them. The Emperor does not wish to provoke a war he might lose – after all, such a result could possibly pave the way for a movement wishing to once again tame the wilderness. In turn, the Skyloft lack the desire to launch their own attacks on the Empire, wishing to live out their lives independently, without interference and in relative peace. But no-one doubts their commitment to the Pact, were it to be invoked, least of all the current Emperor.

So an uneasy truce holds. The Imperial Air Navy patrol the skies – hunting pirates, checking the intentions of the Free Peoples and flexing their military muscles. The Skyloft tolerate the Navy, while always ensuring they do not overstep their authority over them, threatening to invoke the Declaration of Allegiance





Pact if they do. Occasionally a suspected agent of the Emperor assumes a position of authority in a Skyloft city, but they seldom last long. Only an agent deeply undercover and vocally critical of the Empire might escape undetected. Having escaped to the skies, the Skyfolk have no intention of compromising their hard-won liberty.

BORN TO FLY

Before we examine the differences between the various Skyloft cities, perhaps we should look at some of the things their inhabitants have in common. The cities all developed independently from each other, only tied by their trading links and an alliance to be invoked in the last resort. This has resulted in each Skyloft city adopting its own unique culture and organization. Likewise, they have some differences economically; some of the Skyloft cities are primarily markets, some are primarily small-scale manufacturers, and some are pirate havens. Nevertheless, there are certain attitudes and lifestyles that most of the Skyloft share (although, being the Skyloft, there are exceptions to every rule).

INDEPENDENCE

The Skyloft are a fiercely independent people. They have seen what has happened to those who tried to hang on and survive down below, and they are determined they will never share that fate. Although they are governed in a variety of ways, they share a deep suspicion of authority in general. If their administrations appear to be attempting to bring in authoritarian or draconian rules, designed to diminish the power of the freeborn Skyfolk, aloft, the people soon start muttering “We may as well have an Emperor” – and when that happens it is often a sign that the administration is about to change. That is not to say that tyranny does not rear its head – but it tends to be nipped in the bud fairly swiftly. The last thing the

Skyfolk want is for an ambitious individual to begin a war of conquest over other Skylofts – any such move would weaken the Pact and be tantamount to handing victory to the Emperor.

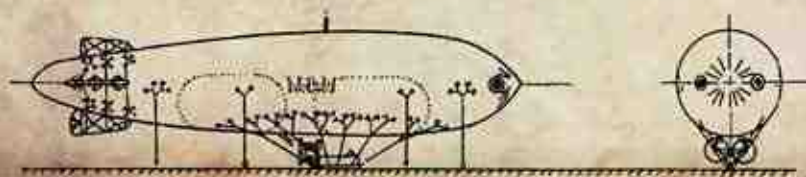
There are sky cities where slavery is tolerated. The Skyfolk see no contradiction in this. The slaves are assumed to have lost any rights to independence – rendered property at the point of their seizure or sale. On the platforms where slave-holding is legal, slaves are seen as almost a different species to the free citizens, even though nearly any of the Skyfolk could have the misfortune to share such a fate, through abduction or birth.

DEFENSE

All of the Skyloft cities are wary of being overwhelmed by the Imperial Air Navy, and also aware that they are tempting targets for raiding pirates (even, or perhaps especially, those cities run by other pirates). Some of the cities raise taxes and pay for their own defense force – paid specialists. Some of the Skyloft administrations, demand that all residents of their city practice aviation skills, in order to be able to quickly assemble a volunteer force. Their thinking is that in the event of emergency, disaster or war, the population will be able to rally together and have the skills to respond. Such an official approach is hardly required – wealthy residents, in all the cities, like nothing more than flying their own small dirigibles, and many of the poorer residents spend all their free time tinkering with ramshackle lash-ups, some of which are airworthy, others less so. The pirate cities just rely on the fact that there will be enough pirates in port at any one time to rush to defend the place.

PIONEERS

The Skyfolk were brave enough to find a daring solution to the genocide the Emperor perpetrated against the human race. Although some of the sky





cities are all but permanently moored, the people who dwell on the platforms like to think that they could take to the skies at any time and relocate as needed. For many this would be, in practice, impossible, but belief in their ability to up sticks and start again is a source of pride for the Free Peoples of the Skyloft cities. Their cultures tend to celebrate life in the skies; most of the sky cities hold yearly festivals to commemorate their first launching. At these gatherings, individuals show off their piloting skills, often in lashed-together contraptions, competing in feats of daring and balance, such as wing-walking. (Many of the Skyfolk seem to have an innate sense of balance – perhaps being born and raised on a platform in the sky will do that for a person).

GADGETEERS

Their willingness to find a technological solution to the Apocalypse has instilled a culture of enthusiasm for practical experimentation. Even those who do not work as engineers tend to include mechanical construction amongst their hobbies. Those that can afford it build small private workshops. Those that can't can often still be found tinkering away at some pet project or another. Much of this building is done using scavenged parts and home-drawn designs. Often these inventions have an aerial focus (e.g., ramshackle microlites, simple devices for harnessing wind-power, or new twists on the classic self-sighting telescopic pilot's goggles design). Sometimes the devices seem to have no practical use at all. But be careful suggesting that to the Skyfolk – they will usually take exception to the notion that they have built anything less than a work of genius!

PRIDE

As the means of their deliverance from the Emperor's clutches, the Skyfolk tend to have a fierce love of, and loyalty to, their homesteads. Each Skyloft city

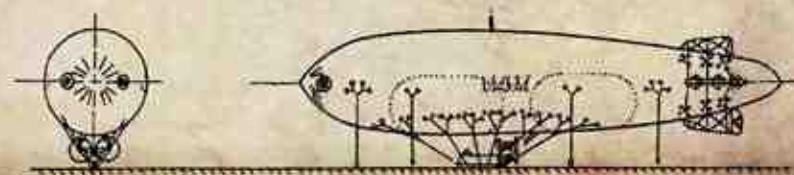
has its own distinct culture, with unique flags and symbols, and they are physically often very different in appearance – even though the platforms are usually large, often round, structures, the buildings that have been built upon them vary considerably. The Skyfolk tend to believe their own platform is the best of all – in terms of structure, beauty, and the abilities of its people – and will react with hostility to any slight against their city's good name. Occasionally pride can turn into rivalry. Relations between the individual Skyloft cities are not always completely harmonious, but generally the Free Peoples realize that they cannot afford to be completely divided. So they usually try to reserve their opinions about their own superiority (both over the “primitive” Neobedouins and other rival Skylofts) to themselves.

OVERPOPULATION

Nearly all of the Skyloft cities suffer from chronic overcrowding. Although some of them, mainly those that are permanently moored, have expanded their platforms, it is a simple fact of life that space is limited. The populations aloft have resisted any attempts at enforced birth control. Partly this is due to a simple failure to agree on how a reduction in numbers could be achieved, but mainly because of an innate hatred of the concept. After all, the Emperor's genocidal policies, which depopulated the lands below, were the reason people fled to the skies in the first place.

One solution has been the development of a tradition of younger sons and daughters leaving the cities when they reach a certain age (as adults in some cases, children in others). Their fate varies according to the traditions of the city. The unlucky are sold as slaves; the luckier are cast adrift to become traveling entertainers, merchants or, more commonly, pirates.

Sometimes they leave to join an existing pirate crew, sometimes they leave en masse, ceremoniously waving goodbye to their home from a new airship provided





by their city. Pirates tend to live short, if exciting, lives, but those that do survive to retirement usually settle on those Skyloft cities whose main function is to act as a pirate base. These pirate cities suffer from overcrowding too, but the attrition due to a life spent fighting and a culture in which suicidal bravery is held in high regard, means that there tend to be just about enough vacant moorings for the new young pirates to find a place aloft amongst their new community. A few, a precious few, if they have made their fortunes, do manage to return to their home platform. There they are usually feted as celebrities.

(NEARLY) EVERYONE LOVES A PIRATE

The Skyfolk love pirates. Well, more precisely, Skyloft children are obsessed with the tales of their pirate heroes and even as adults they tend to retain this enthusiasm. Even the more serious-minded defend piracy as an understandable response to the state of the world. This is probably a result of so many young people leaving the Skyloft cities to pursue such a dangerous, and often short-lived, career – their families are quick to defend their offspring and those who share their fate.

Of course, not everyone has such a rosy view of piracy. Merchants often bitterly resent their losses, although they are hesitant to publicly complain. At times, pirates have even raided the Skyloft platforms themselves. They live through a variety of nefarious means – most through traditional piracy, plundering airships, barges and tribes; some primarily as smugglers, moving goods to the Bargefolk; some are slavers, transporting their unfortunate cargoes to work on terraced farms or in the households of the wealthy; one crew has even been reported to stoop as low as to supplement their income by forming a mime troupe, although this terrible practice is only referred to in whispers. But nevertheless, the Skyfolk generally defend pirates; at times harboring them, trading with them and

emulating them. If a pirate action oversteps the mark and an atrocity is committed, then the general view is that those are the actions of villains who aren't "real" pirates or that the situation has been exaggerated.

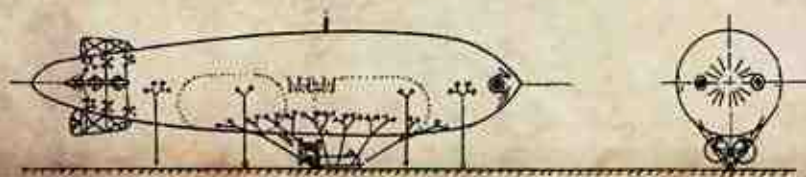
A HOST OF CITIES

Having looked at some of the things the Skyfolk have in common, it is worth reminding ourselves that their independent development has led them to progress in a myriad of different ways. Certainly they tend to have different political systems, economic focuses and social customs. Sometimes these differences are subtle, sometimes more marked.

GETTING BY

The Skyfolk tend to follow specialized professions. Mercantile, engineering, combat and aviation-related trades dominate, although a general obsession with flight means that even wealthy traders might have some piloting skills. The main economy of each Skyloft city varies. Some have developed farms with which to feed themselves, such as the terraced farms of Isla Aether; some specialize in buying salvage and repairing or manufacturing machines (which might, in turn, be sold back to the salvagers); some specialize in artisan work, transforming the raw trade goods from the Neobeduoin gatherers into finished goods; and some facilitate trade between other Skyloft cities and the Neobedouins – sometimes offering permanent moorings at which traveling merchants and caravans can gather, others flying between various places to conduct their business. Many Skyloft cities dabble in a mixture of the above trades – merchants buy and sell, artisans manufacture on a small scale, while others dabble in smuggling, slave trading and piracy.

Some Skyloft cities function purely as pirate havens. These platforms are often in the most inaccessible or remote areas, or else keep on the move. The Imperial





Air Navy often play a “cat-and-mouse” game where these haunts are concerned. If they hunt down such a haven they will set up a blockade, picking off pirate ships and effectively shutting down the platform. Of course pirates develop their own ruses to cope with such situations, and some of these ruses are enshrined in tales that have come to count among the most famous legends of the Free Peoples.

CREATING A SKYLOFT CITY

The following rules can be used to construct random Skyloft cities. Once you have generated some of the facts about the place, it is worth giving some thought to how these facts hang together, and any other particular peculiarities you might like to add. Remember, Skyloft cities are rare, the skies aren’t filled with them, so once you have constructed a city it might become a frequent haunt of the party (unless they leave on really bad terms!).

The following tables can be used in two ways. Firstly, they can be used to determine a Skyloft city for a PC’s background. In that case, it is suggested you just roll on the Size and Population, Mooring, Primary Economy and Governance tables below (and maybe the Customs and Quirks table as well, to give a little extra flavor), and jot down the results. Then give the place a name and you probably have enough information for now – you will know how big your home city was, whether it was fairly static, what kind of jobs its occupants specialized in and how it was governed. This should be enough to fill in your backstory, and perhaps establish a reason for leaving (although you might have just been one of the many Skyfolk youngsters who has taken to the skies due to overcrowding in your home city).

GMs may wish to follow the whole procedure below. That will allow you to create, from scratch, well-

described Skyloft cities, in a very short amount of time. It may seem daunting, but a few quick rolls and you will have fleshed out a whole culture. As an aid we included an example – the creation of the pirate haven, High Tortuga, each step of which is described as we go along.

SHAPE

Skyloft platforms are not all the same shape. So, we start by rolling 2D6 and consulting the following table to determine the basic shape of the platform. Remember, larger and more permanent Skyloft cities may well have extra levels and platforms added, but we will come to that later.

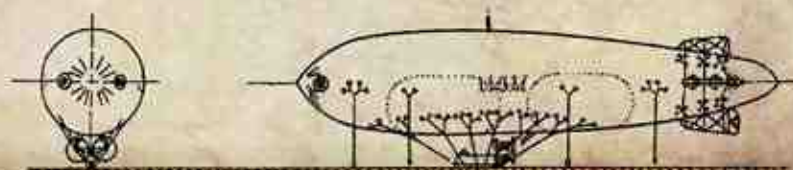
2D6	Shape
2	Ellipse
3	Hexagon (six-sided)
4	Boat
5-6	Donut
7-8	Circular
9	Octagon (eight-sided)
10	Figure eight
11-12	Irregular*

*For irregular platforms you could combine other shapes, for instance three overlapping circular platforms might be placed to form an irregular triangular platform.

Example: We are going to construct a sky city using the random generation method. First, we roll to see what shape our city is going to be. Rolling 2D6 we get a 9. Our city is built on an octagon-shaped platform.

SIZE AND POPULATION

Sky cities vary considerably in size and population. The smallest are little more than large “house” airships, supporting a few families at most. Roll 1D6 to determine the size of the platform, then consult the population column and roll the appropriate dice to determine the population size. The last column is a





modifier to be used when determining the mooring (see Mooring table below) – the larger the city, the less likely it is to be mobile. Actual size of the main platform will vary – but can be averaged at one hundred square feet per person. The precise figure may be a lot less (e.g., on such platforms as the aforementioned house airships). The massive platforms can be as large as a mile square, or even bigger – but remember, whereas the rich might have more space on these mega-platforms, the poor will usually live crammed into overcrowded multi-occupancy buildings.

1D6	Size	Population	Mooring Modifier
1	Tiny	20-120 (2D6 X 10)	
2	Small	100-600 (1D6 X 100)	
3	Medium	200-1200 (2D6 X 100)	+1
4	Big	900-2400 (3D6+6 X 100)	+2
5	Large	3000-8000 (1D6+2 X 1,000)	+3
6	Massive	8000- 18000 (2D6+6 X 1,000)	+4

Example: So, now we want to see how large our eight sided platform is, and how many people live there. We roll 1D6 for size and get a 5. It is a substantial place – a large platform! Rolling another 1D6 for population we get a 3. Once we have added our +2 that's another 5 – wow, there are some 5,000 people living there. It is probably pretty crowded.

FLOORS

Some of the Skyloft cities have more than one level. On a large house airboat, this would represent extra decks, in larger cities these extra levels probably won't be neat extra floors, but rather a further platform, lashed on to the original after the initial launching. Roll 1D6 and consult the table below.

1D6	Extra Floors
1-2	0
3-4	+1
5	+2
6	+3

Example: We roll a 3. That means there is an extra floor.

We decide to randomly find out the shape of the extra floor on the shape table. We roll a 5 – there is an extra platform, in the shape of a doughnut. Is that where the wealthy live? Is it used for mooring? We will decide later when we know a little more about our city.

MOORING

Most of the sky cities use some sort of mooring. Often high up, remote or inaccessible, nevertheless having some kind of permanent mooring means that helium costs can be managed and small scale farming can take place. The larger Skyloft cities simply can't remain mobile at all times – indeed, they may not be able to get mobile quickly at all. Roll 1D6 and consult the table below. Remember to add the modifier appropriate to the size of Skyloft city you are creating (see the end column in the Size and Population table, above).

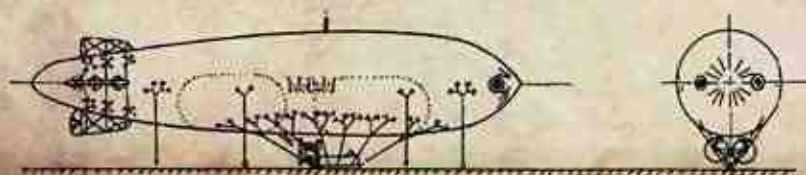
1D6	Type of Mooring
1	Nomads of the skies - no permanent moorings - traveling from place to place.
2	Semi-permanently moored - frequently travels between multiple favorite mooring spots.
3	Semi-permanently moored - frequently travels between a few favorite mooring spots.
4	Permanently moored - but can leave with minimum disruption.
5+	Permanently moored - even if there is enough fuel, leaving would be very disruptive and time-consuming.

Example: Ok, we have a large city, so that is a hefty +3 modifier on this table. We roll a 1, which makes a 4 with the modifier added. It may be a large Skyloft city, but they obviously value their ability to be able to relocate at the drop of a hat!

PRIMARY ECONOMY

Next we want to see how the majority of the city inhabitants make their money. Roll 1D6 and consult the table below to establish the primary trade of the city.

Note: This is only an indicator of the main business





conducted in the city. Every city has individuals working in a variety of trades. E.g., merchant cities will still support plenty of artisans; small house airboats engaged in food processing will still have a merchant or two on board to negotiate deals; and pirate cities will abound with inns, ship-workers, and undoubtedly numerous people engaged in other, more seedy, professions!

1D6	Primary Trade	Docking Facilities Modifier
1	Merchant services - provides a thriving marketplace.	
2	Artisan goods - buys salvaged technology and uses it in construction of items for sale.	
3	Artisan goods - buys animal hides and raw foodstuffs to be processed.	
4	Port services - airship repair and construction.*	+2
5	Mixed.**	+1
6	Piracy***	+1

*If port services are the primary trade, then add +2 to the roll on the Docking Facilities table below. Tiny cities cannot provide port services – if you are constructing a tiny city, you must re-roll until you get a different result.

**A mixed economy combines all of the Primary trades, aside from piracy. For a mixed economy add +1 to the roll on the Docking Facilities table below.

***If a pirate city, then no roll is required on the Secondary trade table (pirates do not go in much for farming!). Also, note, where piracy is the primary trade of a Skyloft city, it has an effect on the governance of the city, reflected on the table below. Also, pirates add +1 to the roll on the Docking Facilities table.

Example: We roll a 6 on the Primary trade table. Our city is full of pirates! Wow, that is a lot of pirates! But, remember, not all of the population will be actual pirates. Many of them will be working in a variety of different occupations, their wages reliant on the success of the raiding pirate ships that ply back and forth between our city and their targets.

SECONDARY ECONOMY

1D6	Secondary Trade
1-3	Farming/Gathering
4-5	No secondary trade.
6	Piracy

In our example we don't need to bother with a roll on the Secondary Economy table, as we are pirates. Which means that the locals will just have to buy the food they need from elsewhere.

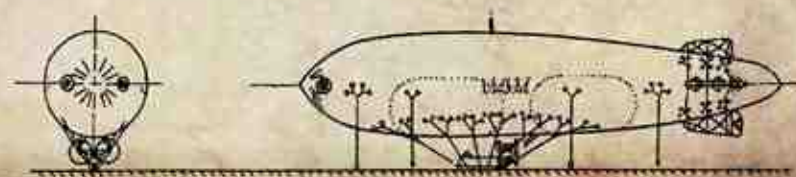
GOVERNANCE

Skyloft cities are governed in a variety of ways. Some administrations are highly organized and fairly bureaucratic, others less so. Remember, the Skyloft are not keen on authority – so although they may submit to being governed, they are fairly vigilant regarding how much power their government has. E.g., an undemocratic oligarchy might not be obliged to stand for election, but they are still accountable – if they appear to be acting against the interests of the general population, they will be quickly ousted, or worse; a Governor will be expected to conduct diplomacy on behalf of the city, but discouraged from having anything to do with commanding any military forces (although they may well be expected to ensure they are funded, where they exist).

Of course, from time to time a military or civil leader will earn approval, and then use it to seek more power than usually permitted in the Skyloft culture – but in such an instance, people soon start pointing to the ground below, muttering about Emperors and their ways, and usually the upstart takes the hint before civil war breaks out.

The actual nature of the government is also influenced by the size of the city – a small house airboat will have a headman/woman rather than Governor, or council of elders rather than oligarchs.

Roll 2D6 and consult the table below to determine the model of governance adopted by the city.





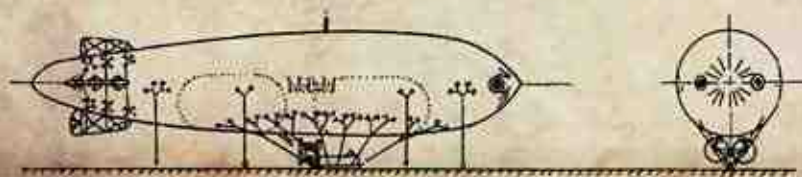
Note: Where piracy is the primary trade, governance is as indicated in the second column on the table below.

2D6	Governance Model	Piracy Governance
2	Democratic Oligarchy - rule by an elite, who are accountable through having to stand in regular elections (which only the elite may stand in).	Elected Pirate Council
3	Undemocratic Oligarchy/Plutarchy - rule by an elite who are chosen from within their own ranks, likely the richest merchants, artisans, etc.	Elected Pirate Council
4	Undemocratic Hereditary Oligarchy - rule by an elite who are members of the most influential titled families within the city. Titles are handed down through generations.	Elected Pirate Council
5	Demarchy - citizens are selected by random lot to sit on a governing council for a limited period of time.	Elected Pirate Council
6	No official system of governance - although there may still be co-operation around areas of security, essentially everything is voluntary.	Elected Pirate Council
7	No official system of governance - everything is voluntary. (Note: in this system there is no organized taxation, only voluntary donations for communal projects).	Unelected Pirate Council
8	Council Democracy - people regularly elect council leaders. The council meets to make decisions.	Unelected Pirate Council
9	Direct Democracy - all decisions are made at city-wide meetings where everyone over the age of majority votes.	No Governance
10	Co-operative Associations - each trade or small community within the city manages itself, sending rotating delegates to a city council if city-wide decisions are required.	No Governance
11	Governor-led Bureaucracy - the Governor is effectively the leading administrator in a large bureaucracy.	No Governance
12	Theocracy - decisions are made by leading members of the clergy or possibly by the head of the governing church.	Pirate Governor

Example: We roll a 10 on the Governance table. Normally that would be a co-operative system, but we have a pirate city. So there is no organized system of governance at all. It is everyone for themselves! Still, that doesn't mean there are absolutely no rules – pirate cities still usually live by the pirate code (see p.189) and still might raise taxes on booty in order to keep the place aloft.

TAXATION

Skyloft cities might raise taxes in a number of ways – through taxing merchants and trade; through charging customs and docking fees; or through personal taxes on individuals. Some might raise hardly any taxes at all. Taxes might be collected through a bureaucracy, or they might be a more informal affair. E.g., taxes on a small house airboat might be nothing more than all the family members throwing some money into the pot every so often, in order to pay for helium, imported goods and boat repair; pirates might charge a percentage of any booty (which accounts for why so much booty never makes it to harbor, but gets buried in remote locations, traditionally marked on treasure maps with a great fat “X”). How much tax is paid might have an effect on facilities, but not always. Sometimes there will be little compulsory taxation, but people will voluntarily contribute, knowing if they don't they won't stay afloat for long (peer pressure and the relatively low size of the city populations makes such systems possible). Roll 1D6 to determine the tax revenue demanded.





1D6	General Taxation Level	Facilities and Defenses Modifier*	Population Satisfaction Modifier**
1	None - no official taxation.		
2	Very Low - minimum docking and customs duties. No personal taxes.		
3	Low - Reasonable docking and customs taxes. Possibly some small personal taxes.		
4	Medium - Docking and customs duties apply, as well as yearly personal taxation.		
5	High - High personal taxes as well as duties on most goods.	+1	
6	Very High - Tax is levied at every opportunity.	+2	+1

*High and Very high taxation regimes are generally better able to provide some basic facilities or to fund a standing defense force. This is by no means a certainty, but will add a modifier when rolling on the appropriate tables. If they don't, it is an indicator of corruption.

** Unless the taxes are very high, there is no modifier to how generally happy the population is (it might be that a population would rather pay high taxes in exchange for security or to keep the platform airworthy). But there is a limit to what people can stand, and very high taxes will always add to resentment, resulting in a +1 modifier to be applied when rolling on the Population Satisfaction table below.

Example: We roll a 3. Generally taxes are low on our pirate city. Being pirates this probably translates into a small percentage of any booty from a successful raid being contributed toward the city to buy helium. Pirates sneer at customs duties. Even common smugglers don't pay them!

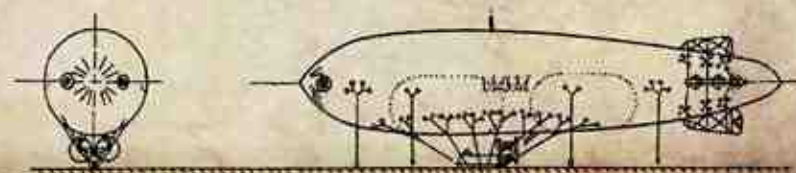
WEALTH

The following table can be used to determine the wealth of the city and its inhabitants. High wealth generally means they are successful in their trades, low wealth that the city is struggling to survive.



1D6	City Wealth	Population Satisfaction Modifier*
1	Impoverished	+2
2	Poor	+1
3	Getting By	
4	Comfortable	
5	Wealthy	-1
6	Rich	-2

Example: We roll another 5. The city is wealthy – they must be successful pirates. This doesn't mean everyone is equally well off, but there are probably some flashy crews in town with booty to spend.





FACILITIES

Skyloft cities vary considerably in what facilities they offer. This table refers to the general facilities for the population – sanitation, public water supplies, even libraries, hospitals, schools, etc. It is also an indication of the upkeep of the safety rails, gantries and tetherings. Docking facilities are determined on another table, below this one. Roll 1D6 and refer to the table below to determine the level of facilities aboard the city. Remember to apply any modifiers gained from the taxation table.

1D6	City Facilities
1	Scant - no real sanitation or public works
2	Poor facilities - the most basic sanitation and little else
3	Adequate facilities
4	Comfortable facilities
5	Good facilities
6	Excellent - luxurious sanitation and good public works

Example: We roll a 2. Our pirates might have booty – but most of it must get spent on helium, the rest being spent on their own vices. The streets are probably dirty and you can forget about formal schooling – youngsters are probably expected to get a job aboard ship or working for a stallholder or boat builder.

DOCKING FACILITIES

Roll 1D6 and consult the table below to determine the standard of docking facilities aboard the city. Remember to add in any modifiers due from your previous result on the Primary Trade table. Tiny cities cannot roll on this table – they are considered too small to have extensive docking facilities.

1D6	Docking Facilities
1	Poor - limited spaces for visitors, a few private hangars.
2	Reasonable - spaces for visitors and some private hangars.
3	Adequate - generally regular activity, with decent moorings and hangars.
4	Good - lots of moorings, repair facilities, large hangars.
5	Very good - good repair facilities, extensive moorings and hangars.
6	Excellent - an abundance of facilities for airships of every shape and size.

Example: We roll a 4. We add a +1 modifier (due to piracy being our primary trade). There are very good docking facilities on our platform and plenty of willing workers hoping to turn a coin or two repairing any damaged vessels.

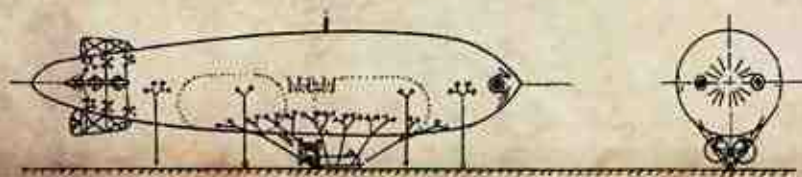
DEFENSES

No Skyloft city is defenseless – after all, the citizens will usually fight tooth-and-nail for the place, if nothing else. But some will have more formal defenses, and perhaps even a standing navy of their own. Roll 1D6 to determine the defenses of the city. Remember to apply any modifiers gained from the taxation table.

Remember: Completely nomadic Skyloft cities (who rolled a 1 on the Mooring table) will only be in a temporary defensive area, if at all. Pirates never have a standing navy – they will rely purely on volunteers to defend their cities (so ignore any naval force generated by the following table, but allow natural defenses if rolled).

1D6	City Defenses
1	No defenses - if attacked the city relies on a volunteer force
2	Natural defenses - mountain stronghold
3	Small Skyloft naval force (unless pirates)
4	Natural defenses and a small Skyloft naval force (no navy if pirates)
5	Larger Skyloft naval force (unless pirates)
6	Natural defenses and a larger Skyloft naval force (no navy if pirates)

Example: We roll a 4. So our city has some natural defenses. In this case, we decide that it is a mountain stronghold only accessible through a torturous route,





small enough to be risky for a larger naval vessel, and with secret exits that smaller airships can navigate, in the event of a blockade by the Imperial Air Navy. As we have a pirate city we ignore the small Skyloft naval force – we don't need a navy, we are fearsome pirates!

LAW AND ORDER

The following table can be used to determine the general approach to crime and punishment aboard a Skyloft city. Note: Pirates live by the pirate code (see p.189) – how strictly this applies locally may vary (at the GM's discretion). Pirate cities do not roll on the following table.

1D6	Law and Order	Population Satisfaction Modifier
1	No code of law, people police themselves (rather unsuccessfully).	+1
2	No code of law, people police themselves (rather successfully).	
3	Basic code of law - applied fairly and policed minimally.	
4	Basic code of law - applied unfairly and policed badly.	+1
5	Strict code of law - applied equally and policed robustly.	
6	Strict code of law - applied unequally and policed aggressively.	+2

Example: Ha! We laugh at your laws!

CUSTOMS AND QUIRKS

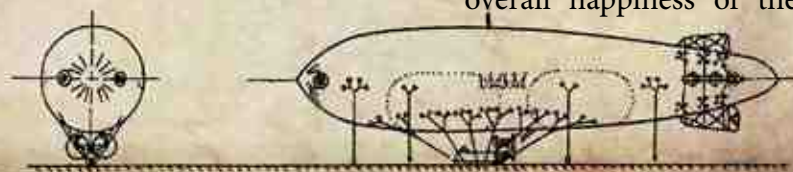
Each Skyloft city lives by its own customs. Sometimes these are fairly straightforward, other times less so. You can use the chart below to randomly generate some city-specific customs – but remember, they vary considerably, so if you are creating multiple cities, it is best to simply assign a quirk you fancy, or think up one of your own. Roll 2D6 and consult the table below to assign a custom or quirk to your city.

2D6	Customs and Quirks
2	Society is generally Matriarchal. Even if there is no formal system of governance, it is generally considered that women know best and should be engaged in the most responsible decision-making roles.
3	Everybody keeps parrots. They are considered the lucky, or perhaps even sacred, emblem of the city and anyone killing a parrot (even accidentally) will be exiled forever.
4	The population worship the Cloud Gods. Theologians spend a lot of time examining the skies and working out whether the portents are good or whether the clouds are angry.
5	There is a dueling culture aloft. Dueling is the number one spectator sport. Also, nearly every dispute is settled by a duel (sometimes with blunt tipped foils, to the first strike, sometimes with guns, to the death).
6	Only people who have studied and gained a degree in physics are allowed to hold public office.
7	People wear facial tattoos that mark out their profession and status in society.
8	Homosexuality is considered the norm. Those who are not gay or lesbian are considered sexually deviant.
9	It is considered obscene to show your elbows or knees in public. There is a long and complicated list of humiliations and punishments which can be applied to those breaking this taboo.
10	Everyone has their teeth knocked out and replaced when they reach sixteen years of age. Although people will generally be too polite to comment, anyone with natural teeth will be shunned as "dirty".
11	Bungee jumping is a citywide obsession. Not only do people practice from the side of the city, but traditionally the Mayor is the best bungee jumper aloft.
12	To commemorate the launching of the city, an annual cheese fayre and competition is held (the city founder loved cheese). The winning cheesemaker (usually a Neobedouin) is awarded a small airship.

Example: Rather than roll on the table, we have decided to make up our own unique custom. Once a year there is a deadly race through local, twisting, mountain passes. Anyone can enter, in any sort of vessel. It always involves cheating, always ends in multiple fatalities, and the winner is afforded the "Best Pilot Aloft" trophy, a coveted title indeed. They also get a vast sum of money, free drinks in any of the city taverns, and free and unlimited use of the brothels.

POPULATION SATISFACTION

The following table can be used to calculate the overall happiness of the Skyloft city population.





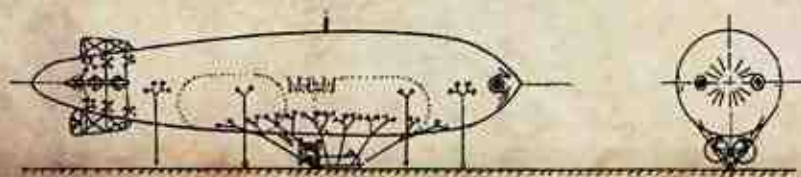
Remember, it is only a rough guide to the feelings of the majority of the inhabitants; not everyone will be uniformly euphoric or depressed, it is just a gauge of the general mood aloft. People will be more likely to want to change their method of governance, or at least the ruling Governor, elite, council, etc., if they are unhappy; and more likely to support the prevailing system, or its representatives, if they are happy. Roll 2D6 and consult the table below, remembering to apply any modifiers gained from the Wealth, Taxation and Law and Order tables (they are cumulative).

2D6	Population Satisfaction
2 or below	People are very satisfied - they are extremely proud of their city, don't want things to change, and the mood aloft is ecstatic.
3	People are generally very happy with the way things are.
4	People are generally happy with the way things are.
5	People are generally very content with the way things are.
6	People are generally content with the way things are.
7	People are generally satisfied with the way things are.
8	People are are generally apathetic with the way things are.
9	People are generally disgruntled with the way things are.
10	People are generally unhappy with the way things are.
11	People are generally very unhappy with the way things are.
12 or above	People are deeply dissatisfied - they want things to change as soon as possible and the mood on the walkways is depressed or downright angry.

Example: First we look at what modifiers apply. The only one that applies is the -1 we carried over from our Wealth roll. So we roll 2D6 and get a 10. Modified by our -1 for wealth, that gives a 9 – people are generally disgruntled in our city. Perhaps some of the pirate crews are throwing their weight around, or the streets are simply too dangerous, even for pirates!

FINISHING OFF

Once you have gathered the results from all the tables above you might want to add a few extra notes about the city. If there is a Governor you might want to give her/him a name; likewise, you might want to flesh out a few other influential NPCs (pirate captains, wealthy merchants, etc.). Some examples of suitable names for Skyfolk PCs and NPCs can be found in the Character





Creation section, on p.39. Then have a think about what kind of buildings people live in – are they low structures or tall towers, etc. Then whether slavery is tolerated, and if so, how widespread slave ownership is. Exactly how much extra detail you add is up to you – the more you add, the better prepared you will be for when the PCs decide they want to wander round. Add any details about customs and quirks into your notes, then, finally, give your new city a name. Example Skyloft city names include: *Bart's Highbay*, *High Cartagena*, *Royale Aloft*, *The Giddies*.

Example: So, we know a lot about our city now. It is a large, eight sided platform, populated by people who mainly live from the proceeds of piracy. They are reasonably wealthy, sometimes handing over some of their booty to keep the city afloat, and live by the pirate code. But there are still some other details to be determined by the GM. What style are the habitations on the platform? Who are some of the more notable personalities aboard? How do the pirates view slavery? And what is the name of the place? Once we have

decided these details, we add them into the notes section, and we have finished creating our unique Skyloft city. In this case, the city we have created is the notorious High Tortuga, the fabled den of rogues, aloft in the Sierra Nevada mountains.

For ease, we can summarize as follows:

HIGH TORTUGA

Shape: Octagon

Size and Population: Large/5000 people

Floors: +1 donut shaped level

Mooring: Permanent but airworthy

Primary Economy: Piracy

Secondary Economy: N/A

Governance: None

Taxation: Low

Wealth: Wealthy

Facilities: Poor

Docks: Very Good

Defenses: Mountain Stronghold





Law and Order: Pirate Code

Population Satisfaction: Disgruntled

Notes: The habitations aboard High Tortuga are a maze of low-level, sprawling structures. These residences are crammed onto the main platform – they are mostly dosshouses and inns. Our pirates maybe wealthy, but space is at a premium. The rat-infested octagon is a dangerous enough place to walk around in the daytime – at night-time it is murderous. The Tortugans don't keep slaves, although some of the pirate ships that stop over carry them, en route to the terraced farms of Isla Aether.

There are a few wealthier homes, owned by ex-captains, scattered around one side of the donut-shaped platform which is attached to one edge of the octagon, and there are plenty of extra spaces for mooring on the other side. Among the most notorious pirates aloft are “Roaring” Bill Halfshanks and Kray “The Carver”. Also, rumor has it that “Peg-knees” Hammerstand, the expert pirate gadgeteer is looking for work, a handy recruit for those who can afford to take him on.

Every year, Tortugan pilots compete in the deadly “Best Pilot Aloft” competition, a daredevil race through the mountain passes. Few survive, but the winner lives like a king for the next twelve months.

ISLA AETHER

Shape: Donut

Size and Population: Massive/18,000+

Floors: Special

Mooring: Permanent

Primary Economy: Mercantile

Secondary Economy: Farming

Governance: Governor

Taxation: Medium

Wealth: Very wealthy

Facilities: Excellent

Docks: Excellent

Defenses: Small Skyloft Navy force

Law and Order: Basic but fair

Population Satisfaction: Very Satisfied

Notes: Isla Aether is one of the largest of the Skyloft cities. Located atop Mount Witney, the huge donut platform runs right round the mountain peak. When the city was launched it was a true marvel to behold, a feat of amazing ambition. The platform was raised, and floated hundreds of miles to the mountain top, where it descended and has stayed ever since. Many of the buildings were erected after the event, but most had already been designed and the blocks constructed, the pieces ready to be lifted and fitted to a pre-arranged pattern of assembly. Whereas most of the Skyloft cities were raised for function first, desperately floated to escape the Emperor's forces and the beasts roaming the wilderness, Isla Aether was also built with beauty and aesthetics in mind. The risk paid off, and the result is a spectacular Skyloft city, the jewel of the skies.

The city has a large circumference, the edge of the “donut” a mass of mooring sites and platform extensions. Some of the extensions are large enough to count as extra floors. Many of these permanent attachments are virtually smaller cities in their own right, lashed onto the great ring. The buildings atop these extensions were built after those on the main ring, and although they include many of the homes of the wealthiest citizens, they are still considered as inferior “new city” dwellings, a nod to the pride of those living in the “old” original city. Yet, some of these new dwellings are spectacular – shrines to the wealth of the inhabitants living there.

Underneath the platforms are vast gasbags, representing an unimaginable fortune. Whether there would be enough helium to raise the city is a constant source of speculation. Most people are of the view that the newer levels would have to be untethered for the





old city to rise. Around the outer ring the air is usually filled with light craft, including individual Portnoys, tri-planes and micro-gliders, as well as several larger airboats belonging to the wealthiest merchants, and a few, small, Skyloft Navy patrol airships.

The airdocks along the outer edge of the ring are warrens of moorings and hangars. There are also an abundance of airside saloons. Further into the center of the ring are private houses and the larger complexes – twisted towers, mushroom-shaped palaces and stately mercantile bazaars. The bazaars are the lifeblood of the city. Isla Aether is a large, teeming, marketplace. Free People from all over the world have heard of the souqs of Isla Aether, and it is said anything can be acquired therein, for the right price. There are no banned goods on the platform, and although many merchants specialize, it is possible to pick up fine foods, textiles and machine parts, alongside hallucinogenic drugs and slaves, all in the same souk. Trade occurs twenty-four hours a day, and the noise of clamoring merchants fills the air.

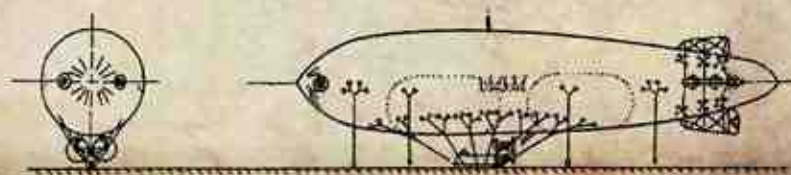
Although law and order is fairly minimal in the city, market regulations are strictly adhered to. Isla Aether's reputation as a place of business is one of the most important things to the Aetherian citizenry. To protect this reputation, all goods are expected to be of excellent quality and design, and regular market inspections take place.

The slopes below the mountain have been terraced, and extensive farming takes place on these levels – the back-breaking work carried out by a large slave labor force. Although the city buys in vast quantities of meat from the Neobedouins, the farms produce a lot of food – the terraces extend in every direction down the mountain slopes. Many of the terraces are home to wide greenhouses, massive, heated affairs. The produce of these market gardens has allowed the growth of the city above to exceed that normal for a Skyloft, but the

work is not without risk. Huge mesh walls nearer the bottom of the slopes have been constructed to keep out the predators. These walls aren't completely effective, but reduce the number of losses to a level where the farmers are prepared to take the chance. The farm overseers tend to live on the platform itself – the slaves are left to sleep on the terraces and fed the meanest fodder. The farm plateaus are connected to the main city by clockwork-powered cable cars. These cars are suspended from the city edge and service both the farms, and the Neobedouin tribes who gather below to sell their produce.

The city is ruled by a Governor, who is answerable to a Council of Oligarchs (generally the richest merchants). The Aetherians are really only interested in their Governor being a figurehead and shrewd accountant. Unfortunately, the current incumbent, Vladimir Cumulo-Nimbus, has lately developed a poor reputation as a bit of a dilettante, lacking the serious head for figures a man in such a position requires, preferring late nights and questionable company. Worse, people are beginning to worry about helium supplies, as well as Vladimir's decision to reduce the Sky Navy and hire more privateers. Many are dissatisfied with this and there has been talk in Council of passing a vote of no confidence. Vladimir is also known to be a fan of all things piratical, but that at least is a common enough obsession aloft.

Another NPC of note is Windward Altostratus. Windward is the chief administrator in the city. A mild-mannered, nervous-seeming man, Windward in fact wields a lot of power in Isla Aether. From his offices in the looming Customs Rooms it is usually Windward, with the Council's blessing, who has the final say regarding who gets the best mooring spots, who can apply for a docking permit, and even whether planned extensions to the platform may go ahead. Few know how great his influence is, and he





is keen not to let on.

THE PIRATE CODE

Pirates do not go in much for rules, but even they realize that sometimes agreements have to be made or else nothing would get done. There are ships and pirate sky cities where the only rules are those of the biggest bully – but unless that bully is truly fearsome, and well organized, they don't last too long. So many pirate Skyloft cities and individual pirate ships subscribe to a pirate code.

These codes might vary from ship to ship and city to city. Likewise, the means by which pirates swear their allegiance to the code might vary – over a pair of crossed cutlasses or steampistols, a bowl of blood or a human skull. The details of the allegiance ceremony do not matter as much as an understanding of what happens to those that break the code – invariably something very unpleasant.

Aside from execution or other grim punishments, such as being “swung around the ship” (dangled off the side of the airship for a length of time) and being forced to walk the plank, marooning is a common punishment for serious crimes. Marooning consists of being set down in the wilderness with a flask of rum, a hunk of bread, a steampistol, and one bullet.

A TYPICAL AGREEMENT:

- Every pirate has a vote in the running of things.
- Every pirate has the right to food and strong liquor, unless scarcity forces a vote to forbid it.
- Each pirate has a right to a share of the booty, as agreed. If any pirate steals the common booty they shall be marooned in a deserted place. If any pirate steals from another he shall be cut with a blade and let off at the nearest pirate port.
- Every pirate must keep their weapons in good order.
- Desertion in battle shall be punished by death or

marooning.

- No fighting aloft. Any quarrel between crew-mates to be settled on land with cutlass and steampistol.

THE DETAILS

An individual airship might have their own extra clauses. For instance they might agree that no-one should leave the company until everyone has earned He1,000; the company should be all-male or all-female; everyone must obey the orders of their captain, first-mate, etc.; no music on a Wednesday; no smoking below-decks; all punishments to be decided by the captain and a majority crew vote, etc.

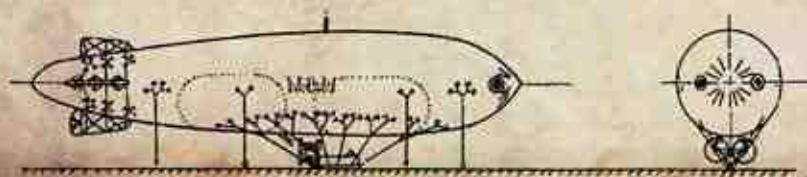
REWARDS

The pirate code in a home city might demand a share of booty from returning ships – used by the city to buy helium, pay a carpenter to patch up holes in the city floor, etc., or in other words a tax.

The pirate code on an individual airship will probably lay out who is entitled to what share of the booty – the captain might get two shares, and the master gunner, quartermaster, etc., one and a half shares of all booty and prizes (so the PCs had better all make up a title for themselves). The rest of the crew get one share each. Of course, the captain and officers might take more shares each (6 or even 10 shares going to a captain is not unheard of), which may be tolerated if they are successful, less so if they are not.

If there is no booty, there is no pay. The captain isn't responsible for paying the crew a wage, although if they aren't given the chance to earn some booty every now and again, they will no doubt look for a new captain – that way, it is in everyone's interests to get on and do some plundering.

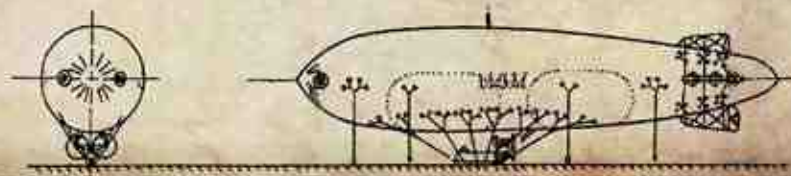
Of course, plundering isn't the only road to riches for airship pirates. Most pirates have their schtick – whether it be performing as a band, running a theater

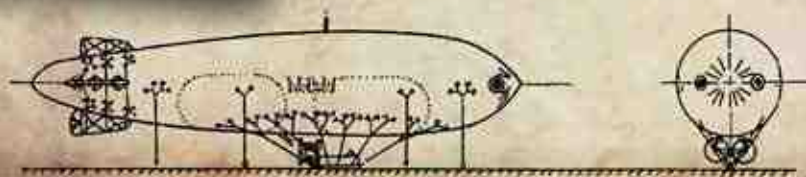




troupe, or whatever. The chances are that it will be the PCs who are the most important members of such a group, and earnings from performances, festivals, trade enterprises and the like will be shared in the same way as booty; the lead singer might get six shares, the backing group four shares each, and the ship's crew, who help set up the stage, act as roadies, etc., get one share each. Again, the crew might well have something to say if the PCs performance isn't up to scratch!

Due to the high-risk nature of piracy there is usually an agreement to pay some compensation to any pirate so badly injured that he or she can no longer sail. This might be one lump sum on retirement, or even an amount to be awarded for each finger, toe, limb, or eye lost fighting for the ship. This comes out of everyone's share before the loot is divided.







THE NEOBEDOUINS

INTRODUCTION

*"Running daily, hunted nightly,
We know we must stay sprightly,
Our numbers thinning day by day.
So in tether, we dance together,
Our bonds have forged all weather
Ours is the law that we obey."*

– Abney Park, Neobedouin

This section explores the lives of the Neobedouin. The Neobedouin are Free Peoples who live in tribal groups scattered across the wilderness. We will hear how they came to survive the Great Apocalypse and the multiple hardships they have suffered since. Then we take a close look at their current way of life – how they organize, what they do, their values and their

a Neobedouin tribe, who survive in the inhospitable Nevada region.

SCATTERED AND BROKEN

The Neobedouin story is rooted in disaster. Disaster not of their own making. The Great Apocalypse that was perpetrated against the human race was the brainchild of Victor Hypocrates, soon to be Emperor Victor I. He gathered around himself those who would be most useful to him, buying them with promises of a bright new future. A future in which his inner circle would become the unassailable masters of the world. The rulers of what little would be allowed to remain of the human race.

If many thought him mad, they dare not say it. For, day by day, Victor's powers grew. Soon, he had much





of the world in his grip. The uber-species began the work, decimating the population. Victor's elite troops, the Chuno Ggun, finished the job, ensuring that any pockets of resistance were wiped out. At this stage, the Chuno Ggun were mainly confined to scouring the lands – the Imperial Air Navy was still in its infancy. While the Skyloft took to the skies, others stood and fought below. Their bravery was not in doubt, but their cause was doomed to failure.

But some people clung on. They hid. They found ways to forge a life, on the edges, in the margins. They scavenged. They moved when the enemy came near or when they had stripped an area of resources. They were few in number, usually just a few families, banding together for protection. Any larger groups would attract the attentions of the soldiers, or be viewed as a ripe herd by the vicious new predators. These little, fledgling, communities were painfully vulnerable. But they were adapting. These fragmented groups of survivors became the Neobedouin.

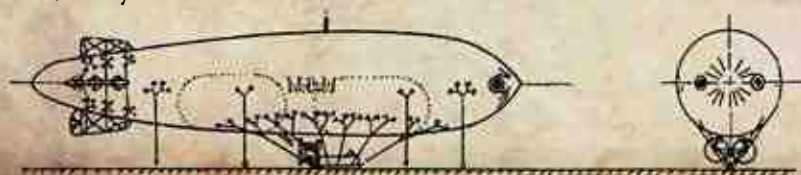
ORIGINS

The Neobedouin existed pre-Apocalypse. Indeed, Victor Hypocrates had traveled with a group calling themselves Neobedouin in his youth, as he formulated his philosophies and planned his rise to power. These early tribes formed as a reaction to widespread industrialization and overpopulation. Each tribe had a different emphasis – some simply wanted to freely wander, unconfined by city walls; some wanted a return to nature, and a simple way of life; others believed that modern living was unsustainable, and prepared themselves for what they thought of as an inevitable collapse. Whether believing that their way of life was a gentle alternative or a necessity for survival, an idealistic dream or pragmatic solution, they still could not

help but be surprised at the speed and savagery with which the world changed.

Perhaps better placed to adapt, some of these early tribes survived the Apocalypse, but by no means all. They had some of the skills needed to live in the new wilderness, but they couldn't have foreseen the introduction of the uber-beasts and the aggressive actions of the Chuno Ggun. Many were wiped out.

Some of the tribes that currently wander the outside can trace their ancestry to these older, pre-existing, Neobedouin groups (their history being related





by storytellers and shamans). Others formed more recently. Some of these newer Neobedouin tribes are comprised of people that managed to flee to the margins, before the formation of the Change Cage cities. Others, although a precious few, managed to leave the terrible new cities after their construction. Many tribes are comprised of a combination of the descendants of the original Neobedouin movement and these more recent additions.

CLINGING ON

For decades the Chuno Ggun went about the task of cleansing the Earth of humans. As the years went by, the Emperor was eventually satisfied that there were too few people left to start over again – that he had succeeded in his mission, that the world had been given over once more to nature and the animal kingdom. Although the continued existence of the Skyloft troubled him, he had gradually scaled down his armies. He wanted them demobilized before they could turn against him, or challenge his succession. It seemed that any new battles for the future might be fought in the skies. The Emperor now concentrated his efforts on containing what was left of the population, herding them into the giant Change Cage cities where they could be pacified and indoctrinated.

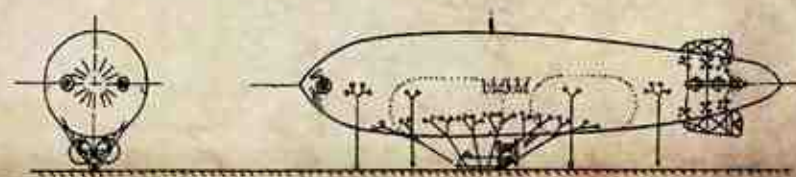
The Neobedouin began to emerge from their hiding places. They came out from caves in mountain strongholds, the depths of the forests, the ruined shells of remote settlements and the fringes of icy wastes and fetid swamps. They began to range once more, as they had done before the Apocalypse, searching for salvage and resources. They were by no means safe, their tentative exploration often leading them to their doom – prey to the beasts and the Chuno Ggun. But the world is a big place, and humans are tenacious. The balance of power might have changed, but people were not yet out of the running.

The tribes began to work out the best means to

deter the most dangerous predators. They began to domesticate some of the more docile beasts. They supplemented their traditional caravans and trailers with other scavenged vehicles, designed to give them a range of options when faced with an enemy. As the Skyfolk began to establish themselves aloft, both groups began to realize that trade could be mutually beneficial. The Neobedouin's nomadic existence means they struggle to manufacture the most rudimentary of finished goods, they simply do not stay in one place long enough to build workshops or factories. But they do have access to an abundance of natural resources (the only human competition for this bounty being the Neovictorians, and few of them are actually allowed to leave their wretched cities). The Neobedouin could offer the Skyfolk, amongst other things, food, fuel and salvage, and in return could get medicines, manufactured goods, and even new vehicles – the Neobedouins can repair just about anything, but they do not manufacture from scratch. That said, there are still some serviceable diesel relics scattered about the wilderness.

As the frequency of Chuno Ggun attacks diminished, and the strength of the surviving tribes has grown, a rich culture has developed within the tribes. Tribal alliances have been formed, strengthened by marriage and association through occasional gatherings at festivals. Stories are handed down by the elders and shamans. At the larger gatherings, each tribe's storytellers compete with those of other tribes, embellishing their tribal history through a combination of fact, folk wisdom and tall tales.

Some tribes sit apart from the others. Renegade and hostile tribes prey on those weaker than themselves. They gather resources not from the world about them, but through force of arms. These warlike tribes think nothing of slaughtering another tribe's warriors and elders, stealing their vehicles and livestock, and





enslaving those they want to keep for marriage.

THE ENEMY

The Chuno Ggun were officially disbanded following the retreat into the Change Cage cities (as the official line, according to the propaganda sheets, is that there are no Free People left to hunt down), although in reality Victor kept some units operative. Some serve as his personal guard; others man the black frigates, charged with hunting down survivors of the Apocalypse, and those that dared to escape from the Neovictorian cities.

The Imperial Air Navy tend to avoid engaging the Neobedouins. They are fair game, but they tend to scatter before the airships can close on them. It hardly seems worth trying to drop a few bombs on

the nomads. Missiles thrown over the side of an airship are very inaccurate against moving targets. Disembarking to give battle is fraught with danger, and earns little reward (at least if an IAN ship takes a pirate vessel the crew share some prize money, and maybe their officers can win a commendation. There is little glory or treasure to be earned fighting the primitive Neobedouin). Imperial Air Navy marines can find themselves outclassed and overwhelmed when fighting on the ground against outriders and beast dancers. The Chuno Ggun are a different matter. When the Neobedouins see a black frigate overhead, they realize they are facing a more deadly fight, a battle for the tribe's very survival. The highly trained Chuno Ggun killers specialize in fighting the





exotic Neobedouin warriors and the outcome of such an encounter is less than certain.

The Chuno Ggun tend to bide their time. The Neobedouin have become more adept at surviving in the wilderness, and attacks by the Neovictorians are now very rare. Rather than attempting to continually harass all the tribes, the Chuno Ggun prefer to concentrate all their resources into terrifying ambushes. These carefully planned and coordinated attacks are designed to wipe out an entire tribe in one go. They are often preceded by years of preparation. Chuno Ggun agents infiltrate and stalk their targets for decades, all with the long-term goal of creating one devastating opportunity to liquidate the unfortunate tribe in its entirety. The Chuno Ggun particularly focus on any Neobedouin who seem to be “settling down” (having perhaps located a rich seam of natural resources or a fuel refining plant). This ensures that the tribes remain dispersed and nomadic. Unsurprisingly, the Neobedouin tend to despise the Neovictorians, and in particular these specialist agents of the Emperor. They can perhaps be forgiven for their reputation for being especially cruel to any Chuno Ggun agents that happen to fall into their hands.

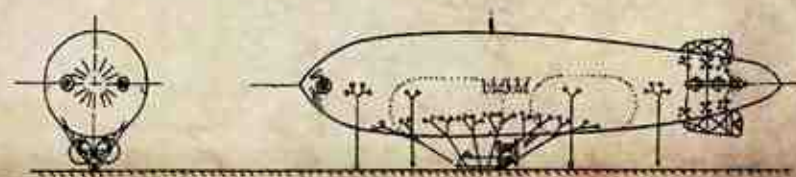
Still, the infrequency of such battles has meant that some of the tribes are less reluctant than they might be to roam relatively near to Neovictorian settlements, and in particular to the canal routes. As well as trading with the Skyfolk, the Neobedouin also trade with the Bargefolk. They receive the highest prices from Bargefolk who are engaged in smuggling meat into the city, and it is believed that some of the high up Neovictorians ensure that these tribes are actually protected from attack, such is their desire to see an uninterrupted flow of quality meat to feed them and their wealthy friends.

THE FREEDOM OF THE ROAD

The Neobedouin are a wandering, nomadic people. Sometimes they scavenge, sometimes they harvest natural resources. They usually rotate between these activities and regular stop-offs, trading with the Skyfolk, the Bargefolk smugglers and each other. They also head to large gatherings, where they might meet for days at a time. But most of their time is spent on the road, traveling in a tribal convoy.

The precise makeup of each convoy (i.e., which vehicles are employed; what fuel types are used; which beasts of burden are preferred; what, if any, herds are managed, etc.) varies according to the region traveled and the resources available. All tribes take a pride in their vehicles, and take great care to keep them well maintained. Spare parts and fuel are considered as essential as food and water to the continuation of the tribe.

In areas where there are large reserves of easily accessible oil, or surviving pre-Apocalypse fuel depots, nearly all the vehicles might be diesel. In other areas, where coal or other solid fuels are more common, steam might be employed. The tribes that can't easily access oil will still usually maintain at least a few diesel vehicle types, primarily to be used by their outrider scouts, due to the fact that they tend to be faster, more reliable and frightening to predators. But such tribes often can only afford one or two motorhogs or trikes, and so will use horses or camelops to flank the slower-moving steamtrucks. Likewise, some of the tribes that do have access to oil or fuel depots might still use steamtrucks or animals to haul some of their larger trailers – unless they have unlimited access to an endless supply of gas to burn (which would likely draw the attention of the Chuno Ggun). As most tribes either herd their own animals, or know where to find a wild herd, they seldom need to travel flat out, so having a mix of slower-moving vehicles moving at the heart of the convoy makes sense.





Often the larger, more powerful, families in a tribe will own large steamtrucks. These are used to pull articulated trailers, sometimes as many as four giant trailers being pulled by one engine, the first filled with fuel, the others storing goods and providing accommodation. Other families, and groups of single men and women, might travel in caravans, pulled by mastodons or even indrikkis. These caravans are often gaudily painted, and draped with drying hides and an array of chimes and charms. They provide excellent warmth and shelter – their coziness is second to none.

Faster vehicles and beasts are used both for scouting and protection. They tend to circle the bulk of the convoy as it moves, and the camp when it is settled, as predators constantly lurk at the fringes. These predators stalk both the Neobedouin and their livestock. Where they are available, the Neobedouin will use cars to patrol the perimeters of the convoy – they usually arm them with vicious prongs and protect them with strong roll-bar cages and even armor plating. The driver's intention is usually to frighten predators away rather than to ram them. Most uber-beasts are capable of making a mess of a car, even an armored one, so smashing into them is a last resort.

LIFE'S ESSENTIALS

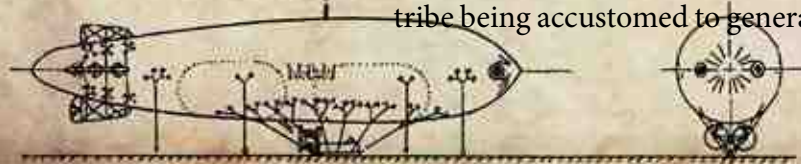
Life for the Neobedouin is hard. Not only do they tend to keep moving, they are constantly setting or breaking camp, foraging and tending their livestock. Much of their equipment is basic, and many of their goods are fashioned in a primitive way – using whatever resources come to hand. Their utensils are often made from bone and their clothes are mainly a mix of hides and fur, decorated with feathers and semi-precious stones. They have access to large trailers, but these are often overcrowded, large families packed into them for long periods of time. Medicine is only available through trade, and often a tribe has no medical professionals in case of an emergency.

The extended family is essential to the Neobedouin

way of life. If somebody is unable to look after themselves, or requiring care, then it is their family that is expected to help. Families in tribes work together, each individual has to understand their place and fulfill what is expected of them, for cooperation is the key to survival. Although there are often many individual families within a tribe, the tribe as a whole is considered one big extended family, so all members of the tribe share a common last name.

Tribe members often specialize in a trade, although most know a little of the skills of their fellows. Some spend most of their time driving. These drivers also tend to be experts in carrying out running repairs, often able to seemingly perform miracles, given the archaic machinery and hotchpotch of parts they are forced to work with. Others ride beasts, and tend to be highly adept at training such animals, their commands a curious mixture of song, whistles and guttural croaks. Some specialize in trade – identifying the best places to scavenge, the best Skyloft markets to visit and conducting any negotiations on behalf of the rest of the tribe. Others work as scouts. The most effective of these are the beast dancers. Beast dancers are fearsome warriors, who have proved their worth by engaging in deadly battles against mighty beasts. The beast dancers' senses are uncanny – they are constantly alert and highly intuitive. It is said they can smell danger. All of the tribe, aside from the most elderly who are unable, and those scouts who cannot be spared from patrolling, take turns cooking, slaughtering, skinning and scavenging. Most tribe members can play a musical instrument, and all love to dance. The most entrancing dancers of all are the beast dancers. They perform enthralling displays, an enticing combination of the sensuous and the martial, blended into a blur of technically astounding movements.

Most tribes are led by their elders and the tribal shaman. There is no formal system of election, the tribe being accustomed to generally seek the wisdom





of the older members. In return for that wisdom the elders are tended in their dotage. Sometimes there will be disagreement, younger hotheads at odds with the decisions of their elders, but such situations are rare – respect for elders is taught from birth, and the unity of the tribe comes first. Nevertheless, tribes sometimes split, separate groups deciding to go different ways. Many stories tell of the follies of such division; legends of lost tribes, wiped out following a split, are staple fireside tales. More warlike tribes do sometimes have a headman, headwoman or chief. Usually they are the most ruthless and cunning member, and often they meet their end at the hands of a fellow tribe member, keen to prove they are an able challenger by murdering their immediate predecessor.

Neobedouin religion, such as it is, tends to be an informal affair. Tribal shamans teach a rudimentary form of nature worship. It is not always clear whether they actually believe in a nature spirit, or spirits, or whether they are merely using allegory to teach lessons about respecting the natural world and living harmoniously within it. To members of the tribe the shaman is usually feared as much as respected. No-one doubts that they have some secret knowledge, and perhaps even dark powers. Shamans are taught their trade during long apprenticeships, that can last decades, and most fully-fledged shamans are of incredibly advanced years. Aside from giving advice, offering simple, usually herbal, cures, and leading simple rituals or ceremonies, shamans also foretell the future and deliver omens. This might be done through the examination of an animal's entrails, or reading cards or runes. But it is usually carried out following a self-induced trance. Often this trance will be achieved through the use of potent brews, the ingesting of rare leaves, mushrooms and/or cacti, and the smoking of strange herbs. These mixtures are usually potent enough to send most folk mad, but the shamans seem to be able to cope with incredibly

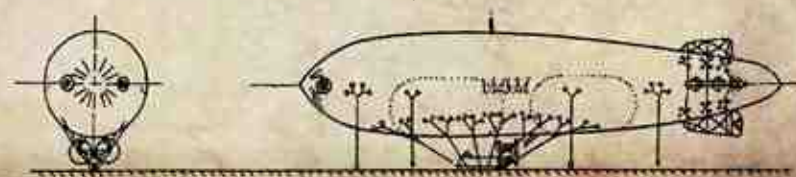
toxic cocktails of such narcotics. Their initiates traditionally spend much of their time gathering ingredients, in order that their elders might reach new enlightenment or receive an insightful vision.

GETTING ALONG

Most tribes get on well enough with neighboring tribes. When tribes meet, it is usually an excuse for celebration, and perhaps a little trade. Each tribe will attempt to outdo the other, giving gifts, telling tales, playing reels and staging wrestling matches. The result is usually a mini-festival – if the timing allows it, the tribes will probably delay their business and camp up for an extra night or two. Youngsters love such occasions – they are an opportunity to play for longer, to meet new people and to impress unfamiliar members of the opposite sex.

Such meetings are not guaranteed to go smoothly, however. There can be friction over access to resources, and some tribes are just plain hostile to all other Neobedouin. On these occasions there might be a skirmish, fights breaking out between the young bloods from each tribe, or even an all-out bloody war.

The Neobedouin tend to distrust the Skyfolk. They are largely oblivious to the fact that the Skyfolk look down on them (which they do, metaphorically as well as literally), but they think those aloft are haughty, have a tendency to over-complicate matters, are given to treachery and are just plain peculiar. More importantly, they are baffled by the decision of the Skyloft to live in permanent (if at times nomadic in their own right) cities. They struggle to see the difference in being confined to a platform, and being enclosed in a Change Cage city. The Neobedouin tend not to discriminate between pirates and other Skyfolk (although at times weaker tribes are preyed upon by pirate slavers), seeing them as being all of the same tribe.



AIRSHIP PIRATES



FESTIVALS

The Neobedouin love nothing more than partying. Life is hard on the road, and most tribes regularly attend festivals. Often they will meet with a number of other tribes at such events. These gatherings serve purposes beyond relaxation – they are an opportunity to catch up with old acquaintances, to broker marriages and alliances, to trade, and to swap news. As well as marrying out of one's own tribe, often the more important families within a group will send a younger member to live with another tribe, particularly if that tribe offers a different skill set for the youngster to learn. Usually this vacation will be negotiated at a festival, and will last until the next time the tribes meet, invariably at another festival.

The larger festivals can go on for days. At these gatherings there will often be plenty of gambling – mainly on horse races, camelops races, bare-knuckle boxing and wrestling matches, although most Neobedouin will gamble on just about anything, given the chance. Beast dancers tend to be exempted from tawdry fighting competitions, although they are in great demand when it comes to the evening dances. Against the backdrop of feasting and dancing the traders from each tribe will be furiously negotiating deals – fortunes in livestock and fuel change hands at the festivals and a tribe's success over the following year can be determined by what they bring and take away from the larger gatherings. Sometimes the festivals are held in remote areas, but occasionally they take place in the shadow of a Skyloft city and the Skyfolk are invited to join in (as long as they bring trade goods with them).

At these more cosmopolitan festivals, as well as the larger scale dealing (which is usually carried out away from the fire-pit and dancers and conducted in a serious manner), individual caravans are also adorned with goods for sale – from cured hides, to trinkets, charms, art and craft goods. Most family members, who are not otherwise engaged driving or riding,

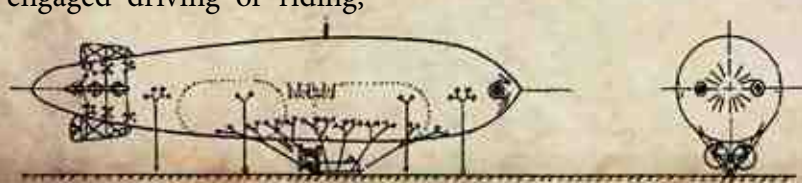
spend their time working on small, beautiful, art and craft items throughout their travels. Some caravans offer different kind of services – tattoo artists and body painters vie for business, and the shamans often have long queues of people who wish to seek advice or be told of their futures.

The biggest festival of them all is the annual tribal gathering at Helium City (see p.227).

INITIATIONS

Most tribes mark the coming of age of their young people with some kind of initiation. The precise nature of the initiation varies from tribe to tribe, with the exception of those who wish to nominate themselves beast hunter initiates. The ceremony may require the youngster to complete a task (perhaps repairing a broken vehicle, crafting an item, performing a dance, etc.), and will often include some form of physical transformation (getting a first piercing, tattoo, or some form of scarification). After the event, the tribe will take time to welcome the new adult, usually by holding a special celebration.

Beast dancers are initiated in a different, and far more dangerous ceremony. The beast dancer initiate will have been trained in the arts of beast fighting from an early age, continually practicing their dances, long and complicated forms (routines that show off their increasing capabilities), sparring against each other and the fully fledged beast dancers in the tribe, and even fighting against animals captured and placed in pens specifically for the purpose of instruction. The beast dancer initiate is then usually given the choice as to whether they want to walk alone into the wilderness, armed only with the traditional weapons of the tribal beast dancer, to slay a beast. The tribe usually has a preferred beast which their young warriors must slay, according to the local habitat. Bearing in mind many beasts hunt in packs, and that by rights a human has little chance against just one





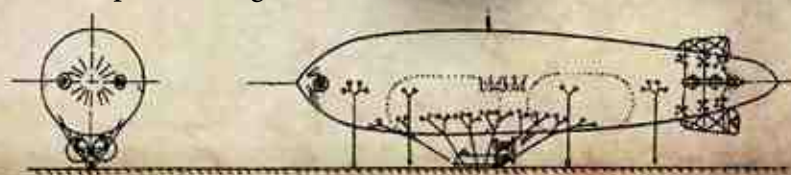
of the uber-beasts, the tribe usually thinks no less of the initiate if he or she declines the opportunity. Most tribes would rather the young person was initiated in the standard way than killed pointlessly. So, rather than an initiate who declines the challenge being seen as a failure, they are still welcomed as a fully fledged tribe member and employed as an outrider or a scout. However, when the initiate accepts and succeeds, it is seen as immense good luck, a wonderful omen, and the new beast dancer will be featured in the ongoing tribal stories and in demand, to dance and show off his or her prowess at the great festivals.

THE WESTERN CAMELOPS

The Western Camelops are a typical enough tribe who range between the Central Valley, to the west of the Sierra Nevada mountains, up east, through the Mojave desert, and as far north as Isla Aether on the eastern side of the mountain range. There they meet with the Nevada Eagles, the Eastern Camelops, the Death Valley Hermits and the Skyfolk traders, at the Springtime Gathering in the foothills of the mountains.

When traveling they usually arrange themselves in a set formation. A few of the outriders travel on camelops (beasts that are well suited to the tribe's desert range and from which they get their name), although most of the camelops the tribe owns are herded along, without riders. This herd is kept by the Western Camelops for their meat and hides. The Western Camelops own a decent number of hogtrikes. They are intensely proud of these bikes, and only the most highly skilled outriders drive them. Having relatively easy access to fuel reserves for part of the year means these vehicles can be kept running almost

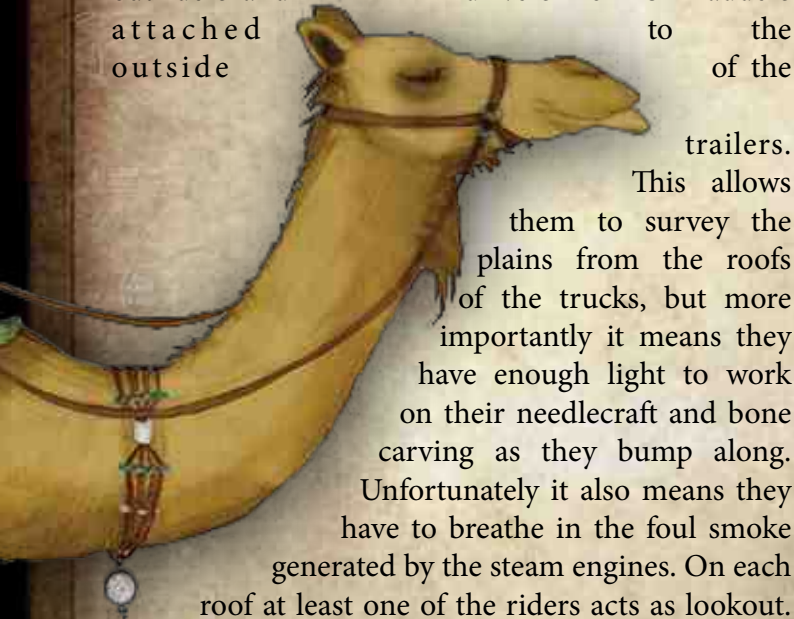
constantly, and the noise of the engines, although familiar to their own livestock, is often enough to deter





predators. In the center of the convoy, three huge, articulated steamtrucks plod forward. Most of the tribe live and sleep in the rear trailers, while the forward trailers carry fuel and fodder.

When on the move, weather allowing, all but the outriders and drivers climb ladders attached to the outside of the

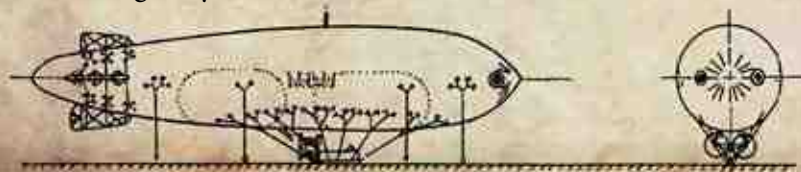


trailers. This allows them to survey the plains from the roofs of the trucks, but more importantly it means they have enough light to work on their needlecraft and bone carving as they bump along. Unfortunately it also means they have to breathe in the foul smoke generated by the steam engines. On each roof at least one of the riders acts as lookout. If the lookout sees any flying predators approaching, they shout an alarm. The most common cause for such a warning is a giant condor. The smaller, although still huge enough, teratorm would think twice before attacking an uninjured adult human, let alone a convoy – although both types of bird hover around hopefully if any of the tribe's livestock seem to be faltering. More worrying, although less frequent, is the sight of an airship above. Such a sight causes all to reach for their needleguns, handcranked windup harpoons or crossbows. For, although unlikely, there might be pirates, slavers, or even the dreaded Chuno Ggun, above.

Around the larger steamtrucks are a collection of mastodon-drawn caravans, including that of the tribal shaman and his apprentices. The tribe has no chief, but their shaman, David Greyfinger Camelop, is universally respected, his advice sought by the other

elders whenever they meet to plot the course of their travels. Greyfinger's reputation is enhanced by the tales his apprentices tell. They share his caravan, yet say that he is often nowhere to be found, mysteriously appearing and disappearing at will (they haven't found his private hammock strung in the hides that form the ceiling of the caravan, never having been brave enough to do more than briefly lift the flap that delineates their shaman's private area at the front of the wagon). Aside from Greyfinger and the elders, the two most respected members of the Western Camelop tribe are Daniel Hawkhead Camelop and Petal Wolfjaw Camelop – both fully-fledged beast dancers. They wear the fighting bands and the beastclaws. Their features are a mass of interwoven tattoos and thin scars. They spend most of their time taking it in turns to command the tribe's outriders, but when an important decision has to be made they are included in the elder gathering, despite their tender years. They seldom speak, but when they do, the others listen. They are not just beast dancers, but man and wife. The whole tribe wonders at the power and strength they might pass on to any fruit of their union.

The Western Camelops have a large and varied range. They spend part of the year, usually the winter months, scavenging in the Central Valley, to the west of the Sierra Nevada range. They spend their time there salvaging in the ruins, refueling from the vast underground fuel tanks, gathering solid fuels and hunting mastodons. Although the area is fertile and fruitful, this is a dangerous time. Often hostile tribes are drawn to the area, searching for oil, and the Western Camelops have been drawn into a fight in the valley on more than one occasion. However, the oil fields are large enough, and the depots so numerous, that on many visits there have been no incidents at all. They know better than to range too far north up through the valley, and when to head south to avoid the ranging of the northern tribes –





not only is the north country full of predators, these other tribes claim the territory for their own during the summer months. If they have had a successful time, they then start the long arcing journey back out toward the desert, gathering their camelops as they go. If less successful, they will take a long detour, to search and scavenge for a while in the ruins of Los Angeles. There are still plenty of tumbledown remains left there, to be scavenged, but the land has been picked over many times and the Chuno Ggun are known to fly over the ruins, to ensure that they are not being resettled.

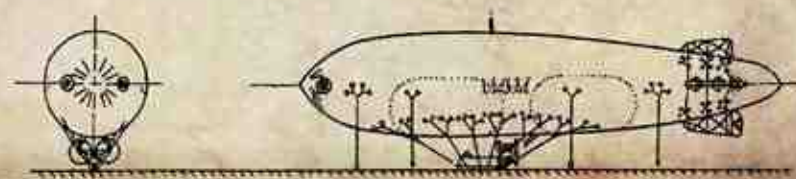
Then the Western Camelops start their long, slow, journey, heading toward Isla Aether and the Springtime Gathering. They do their best to avoid any Neovictorian miners, but do need to cross the Neovictorian transport systems. They swing to the south of Desolation, then head north, stopping to slaughter some of their beasts and trade with the Bargefolk. This gives them hard cash, with which to deal with the Skyfolk. Then they head back, toward the west, eventually reaching Isla Aether, having gone hundreds of miles out of their way to go around Desolation and its mining settlements. In drought years the tribe might have to slaughter their mastodons en route, meaning they have less livestock to trade with the gathered tribes and merchants at the festival, and the smaller camelops have to employed to pull the caravans. But if the weather demands it, and in Death Valley it often does, then they have little choice. Throughout most of the year, their precise journey might vary wildly from that taken on previous years, locations being visited on different weeks or even months, but the Springtime Gathering must be attended.

At the festival, the Western Camelops elders sit with the elders from the other tribes, telling stories of their travels over the past year and passing on any

news or warnings. They mourn together for those lost to the tribes over the past year and celebrate those recently initiated. The rest of the tribe try to tempt the Aetherians to buy or trade for some of their homemade wares – and a game ensues whereby the cunning Aetherians cruelly wait till the end of the festival, knowing that prices will plummet (as the Western Camelops will have no wish to carry their goods around for another year, before having a further opportunity to shift them). Meanwhile the more serious tribal traders negotiate larger exchanges of fuel, spare parts and meat, for medicines and new machines. Then, as the weather begins to further warm, they prepare to head back south once more.

The journey back is often unbearable, the desert becoming parched in the day, freezing at night. On a typical evening the wagons and caravans form up in a circle and fires are lit. Outriders take it in turns to guard the perimeter, while communal meals are cooked toward the center of the camp. If the tribe is entertaining guests they will pitch yurts for visitors to stay in, inside the protective ring of vehicles. As the food becomes ready, pleasant smells drift around. The sound of music starts up, the steady beat of the drum resonating throughout the camp, joined by the sounds of pipes and whistles. Dancers begin swirling rhythmically and the drink begins to flow. Little ones, who may have been cooped up all day, fill the air with their laughter and song, as they finally get to let off some steam. They do not wander too far, however, the old ones make sure that all are aware that danger lurks close by, beasts that would think nothing of making a meal of a wandering infant.

The tribe eats, dipping fingers into communal bowls, tearing chunks of meat off the bone, or using freshly made flatbreads to scoop up the warm animal grease. As the adults tire, having traveled all day, now full and warm, the music might lull, and the deep tones of





the elders' stories take over, as they tell tales of times long past, lands once visited and ancestors long dead. Or perhaps the music gathers place and the drinking continues, for everyone needs to let go a little, now and again. When all are exhausted the children are scooped up, for they would play too long into the night, given half a chance. Their parents wrap them in warm furs, and take them to their beds. Soon all that can be heard is the roaring of the outriders' hogtrikes, the lowing of the herd, and the howling of hungry predators.

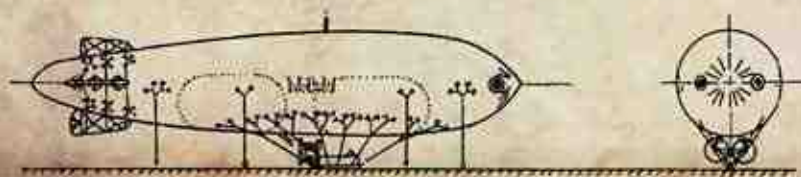
And so the cycle continues, the tribe eventually winding their way back up to the Central Valley. It is a hard life, fraught with danger. Predators abound, rival tribes might cause trouble, and there is always the possibility that the Chuno Ggun might attack. The road is hot and dusty. But for now, at least, the Western Camelops are free. Free to gather. Free to trade. Free to sit under the stars and travel under the sun. They are Free People. They are Neobedouin.

THE NEOVICTORIANS

INTRODUCTION

This section will explore the Change Cage cities, and the Neovictorians who live within them. There are only seventeen Change Cage cities in the world, all ruled by the Emperor of the World, Victor Joseph Hypocrates III. Most of humanity lives in these few cities.

We will find out how people came to live in the Change Cage cities; how the Change Cage cities are organized; and what the everyday lives of the Emperor's subjects are like. We will explore the Emperor's palace and meet his elite guard, the Chuno Ggun. Finally, we'll look in a little more detail at one of the cities – the desert city, Desolation.





THEY'RE BUILDING A CAGE

Toward the end of the twentieth century, the world was becoming a crowded place. Environmental catastrophes were occurring with increasing frequency. It seemed that pollution and consumption were destined to destroy the planet, and humanity with it.

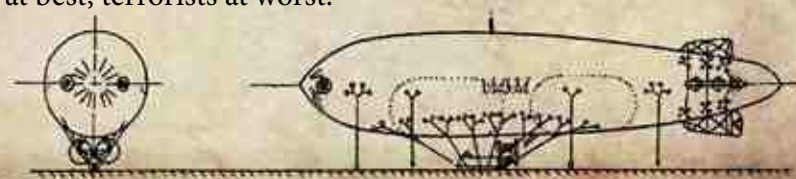
In response to this terrible threat, the people rallied behind Victor Hypocrates, a young genius with a grand vision. At the outset, his appeals to turn back the clock and return to a golden age were seen as the eccentric ravings of a freakish Neobedouin. His small band of followers, the Neovictorians, were seen as busybodies at best, terrorists at worst.

But, as the climate warmed, the acid rain fell, the waters rose and the earth shook, fear gripped the planet. Elected President of the USA following a landslide win, Victor then made a global appeal for unprecedented powers to save the dying world. He asked the citizens of the globe to bow to his leadership and sign up to his program of improvement – a program he described as “The Great Rectification”. The other world leaders capitulated, some out of fear, some due to immense pressure from their own people. The heads of state met in Washington, where all agreed that Victor should become the first ever World President.

In a world unused to dictators, few were prepared for what came next. Victor recruited the best warriors, from all the world’s armies, and formed his elite troop – the Chuno Ggun. His most loyal followers went about eradicating all political opposition. Victor cut secret deals – promising the richest and most powerful individuals high and unassailable positions in his new society. Then, in control of the military, with the most influential people on the planet on message, and able to apply terror through his secret agents, the new society began to take shape. He began the work of transforming the planet and, when he died, his son, the next Emperor (a title Victor bestowed upon himself once his heir had been born), continued it. Uber-beasts, genetically hard-wired to attack humans, were created and released. Twentieth century technology was banned. The military began to herd the population into newly built Change Cage cities (also, see the Timeline section, p.161).

THE CHANGE CAGE CITIES

Change Cage cities were founded to contain the human population in a few concentrated areas. At the heart of each city a Change Cage was built. The Change Cages were impenetrable fortresses in which people were at first encouraged, and then forced, to throw innovative ideas and technologies. Before long,





innovators and inventors themselves were thrown into the Change Cage.

All of humanity was to be relocated to the Change Cage cities. At least, that is what people thought. In fact, vast swathes of people were relocated to the wilderness instead, where they were set upon by the uber-beasts. But some did make it to the fledgling cities. The military facilitated the whole process. Sometimes people would try to resist relocation, and then the military would forcibly move them. But often the cities were seen as salvation, many people voluntarily heading toward them. It was a slow process (which allowed the Skyfolk time to get aloft, and the Neobedouins time to hide), but soon vast areas became depopulated. As the lands emptied, the regular army was itself scaled down, the Chuno Ggun taking on the responsibility for finishing the job.

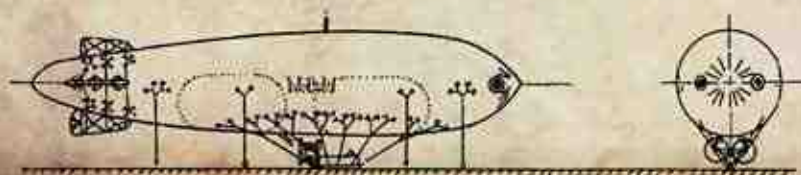
Around the same time, the first airships of the line were built and the Imperial Air Navy was formed. By the end of the twenty-first century the vast majority of the population had been slaughtered; much of the planet returned to wilderness; and most of the survivors were living in Change Cage cities. Anyone living outside such a city was declared outlaw and undeserving of the Emperor's mercy. The world had changed forever.

In North America there are three Change Cage cities – Desolation, Old Borealis and Everglade. Desolation is in the hot and dusty Nevada Desert, in the southwest; Old Borealis is in the cold pine forests, on the edge of Lake

Winnipeg, to the north; and Everglade is in the Florida swamps to the southeast. They are each home to over ten million people. Although the local habitats are very different, cultural life in all the Change Cage cities is similar. In all of them, the masses live in grinding poverty, the rich in relative splendor. All have been indoctrinated to believe that their ancestors' move to the Change Cage city was an absolutely necessary step to save the planet. And most Neovictorians believe, not without reason, that leaving the metropolis would mean a swift and gruesome death

in the jaws of some wild beast.

Outside of the Change Cage cities there are a few Chuno Ggun and Imperial Air Navy bases; some tiny, isolated research stations; the Emperor's Palace; and the mining settlements, which are small and heavily guarded. Most of the actual mining is done by automata. Automata also harvest wood, with which the IAN boats are built. This is the only legal exception to the Emperor's rule forbidding the cutting down of trees. Any other tree-felling is punishable with immediate execution.





CITY OVERVIEW

Any differences between Change Cage cities are minor and cosmetic – slight variations due to the local landscape (Everglade, for example is, in part, built on stilts and platforms over the swamps). But, by and large, the Change Cage cities are all planned and laid out in much the same way. The experience of a Neovictorian has much more to do with occupation and class, than which city they live in.

Each city is surrounded by a huge wall. The wall is both tall and wide, designed to keep people in and all but flying predators out. Steamcannon are placed at intervals along the wall, ostensibly under the command of the Navy, but usually staffed by automata. The supposed purpose of the guns is to defend the city against flying predators, however they are really there to deter pirates or an attack by the Skyfolk.

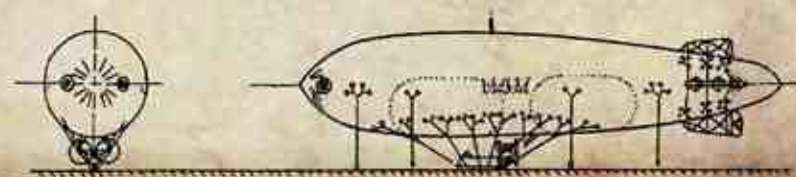
The only way out of the city is via the canals and the railway. The railway links the city to the mining settlements and the other, far-off, Change Cage cities. Only a few trains run, and those that do are heavily armed and armored – sinister looking steam trains, all black iron and rivets with big “cow catchers” on the front for clearing wildlife off the line. The canals are busier, the home of the Bargefolk, who live in family groups, plying up and down stretches of the canal network.

Most Neovictorians will never see a train or barge, and will never meet those that run them. The poor are crammed into filthy tenements, filing to work in the morning, and then back to their homes in the evening. Most Neovictorians never leave their own block – they are born into squalor, then work in miserable factory buildings until they die. Curfews are enforced by the Peelers (automaton cops). The poor tend to have little spare money – just enough to eat and drink, or enough to buy more gin and go hungry.

The rich live in their own walled off area – nearly half the city is given over to them, even though they comprise a tiny fraction of the total city population. They have vast garden estates and live in sumptuous mansions. The only lower class people who are likely to see the homes of the wealthy are the servants, usually selected from the workhouses and bonded to their employer’s family for life. Rich men only visit the slums in their role as administrators or for the purposes of vice, and they travel there in the only public transport available (aside from walking), the automaton cabs. Wealthy men and women might also jump in a cab to venture to a trade block, the slightly more pleasant blocks that directly border the wealthy areas, where malls have been constructed in which the rich might browse for diversions, fripperies and trinkets.

The Imperial Air Navy have a base located in each city. Their hangars and docks cover an area about four blocks wide, and the enlisted men are forbidden to leave the Air Navy area. (Automaton dolls are allowed through the gates at certain times – if that long-standing privilege was denied, it might tip the air sailors into mutiny). Officers are permitted to stay in their mansions, in the wealthy part of town, only visiting the yard to inspect their men and ships, and when embarking on a mission.

The only other location in the city is the Change Cage. The actual physical layout of the Change Cage might vary (Old Borealis has a Cage with a vast underground area; Everglade has the widest; the walls of Desolation are the highest on the continent), but they are, without exception, forbidding places. The area containing the Change Cage is walled off from the other blocks. The area around the bottom of the tower is cleared, meaning anyone approaching has to cross a large barren stretch of ground. In the center of this area is the Change Cage itself. The walls of the actual Cage are built higher than any other in the city





(including the high outer walls and those that separate the blocks from each other). This emphasizes the austere majesty of the architecture and prevents anyone approaching unseen. There are a myriad of holding cells, inset into the base of the tower – although there is only one entrance to the central Cage itself. It is said that no-one has ever escaped a Change Cage, and that once inside the person (or item, design, etc.) is lost to the world forever. What actually goes on within is reported to be a “fate worse than death”.

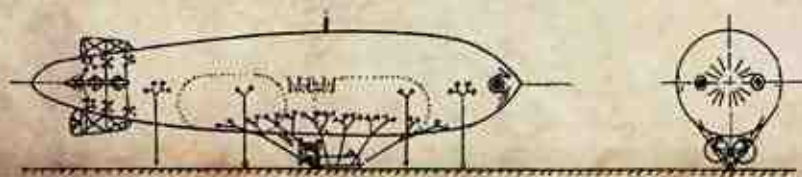
A NOTE ON TECHNOLOGY

Post-nineteenth century technology is forbidden in Neovictorian cities. That still allows access to innovations that did not exist before the screwing up of the timelines – technology in this timeline is quite different from that we are used to imagining for the era. Steam and clockwork technology is quite advanced. The innovator Herr Drosselmeyer perfected the formula for motivating essence and the construction of automata toward the end of the 1890's. Likewise, the airship technology employed by the Imperial Air Navy pre-dates twentieth century developments (which is why the IAN do not ever use airplanes). One consequence of this change to the timeline is that many functions in a Change Cage



city are carried out by automata, who are viewed as unthinking machines, fit only for serving the human population.

One interesting technological marvel is the cities' difference engines. The difference engines are basic mechanical computational devices, developed back





in the nineteenth century, that the automata (usually the autocrats) pass data through, and receive data from. Autocrats (essentially bureaucrat automata) have phenomenal memories, but the difference engines allows the input from all the autocrats in the city to be cross-referenced for analysis (which is useful in monitoring and categorizing the population).

ADMINISTRATION

The Change Cage cities are run on behalf of the Emperor, by administrators. Without exception, administrators are members of the upper class. Most administrators are responsible for a city block. They are required to monitor loyalty, prevent innovation, and ensure that industry is carried out efficiently. They are expected to examine population control returns; make the workhouses run efficiently; and generally make sure standards (such as curfews and public order) are adhered to. They have supreme authority over the block. They are aided by automaton Peelers (who keep order) and autocrats (who carry out bureaucratic functions). The data produced by autocrat inspectors, from autophrenometers, visual recognition and punchcard returns, is fed through the difference engines and analyzed by other autocrats. The autocrats are responsible for data collection and analysis, the administrator for making actual decisions.

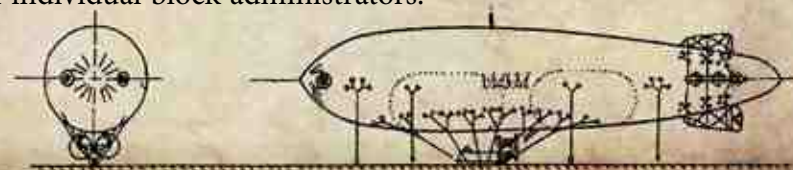
Some administrators rarely visit the block that they hold sway over, managing the accounts and data and sending out orders from the comfort of their private mansions. But in doing this, they take a great risk. If their block becomes problematic – failing economically, getting a reputation for laxity, or even rebellion, etc., then they are accountable. The Emperor has been known to make examples of even the highest ranking aristocratic administrators.

Select committees of administrators, comprised of members of the wealthiest families, are responsible for checking up on individual block administrators.

Such task groups tend to concentrate on citywide surveys – looking for waste, factory theft, public disorder – and target the poorest-performing blocks. Some anomalies are ignored – the auditors themselves often have a predilection for visiting the pleasure blocks and sourcing the best smuggled goods. But generally, all administrators pride themselves on fulfilling their tasks with vigor, having their accounts in good order, and ensuring that the city is tightly controlled and that they should be, for everybody's benefit. They should be, for everybody's benefit that the lower orders require moral and physical supervision for the good of all!

THE LOWER CLASSES

The lower classes live in huddled, walled off blocks – small, cramped complexes which are ruled by the upper class administrators, and where rules are enforced by a largely automaton police force. Work is assigned to the lower classes by upper class administrators. They mainly work in factories, filing to and from work in long ragged lines. A few work in tiny shops, servicing and selling the few pitiful products that are available to the poor. Fewer still serve the better shops, adjacent to the rich estates, which offer a wider range of goods. Some supplement their income through criminal activities such as smuggling, extortion from others, and vice. Lower class children go to work





soon as they are able, and are given no education, aside from basic instruction in their trade (literacy is only taught by parents handing down the skill or, for the few that bother to attend, at Sunday school, when there is a chaplain that offers one). Population control (no-one is permitted more than two children) and curfews are strictly enforced, and freedom of movement is very limited.

THE BLOCKS

Whereas the wealthy live together in one large area (although in secluded privacy due to the size of their estates), the poor live in separate blocks, each of which is walled off from all the others and the outside world. The walls separating the blocks from one another are usually made of smoothed stone, and are built uniformly sturdy and high, making them unscalable. There are entrances in and out of adjoining blocks, but these are guarded by Peelers and autocrats. Anyone wishing to leave the block must show their punchcard and submit to autophrenometer (devices which can identify a person by their cranial bumps) and facial scan inspection. If they don't have the correct authorization, their identity doesn't match, or if there is a problem with their stated purpose of travel (as detailed on the punchcard), then when the data goes through the difference engines the anomaly will be spotted, and the individual will immediately be removed to a holding cell. Upper class men do not need to state their reason for traveling. Upper class women are expected to have their punchcards authorized by their husbands or fathers.

The poor, who comprise the vast majority of Neovictorian society, live in squalid tenements located within each block. Each block usually concentrates on one industry – mostly factory work, although a few on the outskirts are given over to docks; these are the least crowded blocks, as much of the unloading and distribution is automated. The factory blocks pour

out pollution, smog hanging over them, a foulsmoke stink permeating the air.

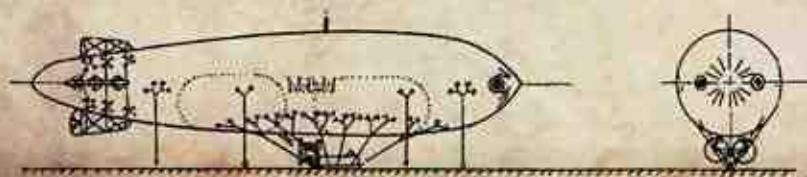
Each block has its own police station, where the Peelers hurl any offenders awaiting sentence by a block administrator. Most have a hospital of some description, although they are notoriously unpleasant. Some of the blocks contain workhouses for orphan children, although in fact they are mainly used to train children who have been removed from their families (see the Workhouses section below, p.213).

The blocks that border the estates of the rich are the least noxious. Although they still have stinking tenements, tucked behind the facades that face the wealthy area, they do have purpose-built shopping arcades where the fanciest goods are made available for upper class shoppers. Other blocks do have some private stores, although they have little to sell and people have little money with which to buy. The foulest blocks are those inhabited by the misbegotten; neglected and wretched, these ghettos are truly loathsome places.

All the blocks operate a curfew. Once the day's work is done, all are expected to return to their homes immediately, and anyone caught on the streets risks being accosted by a Peeler. Usually the only people on the streets at night are wealthy men, out looking for a good time in one of the blocks renowned for vice. Some administrators are slightly more liberal than others – turning a blind eye to the revelries of the lower classes after hours, but they need to take care – if they allow too much freedom, and things get out of hand, or the Emperor hears of it, they will be for the chop.

FACTORIES

Most of the lower classes work in the factories. These factories are placed next to the tenements in which people live and, aside from picking up food





and drink on the way, many people live their lives making no journey other than the short trudge from home to work and back again.

The factories manufacture automata; manufacture and process food; and to a much lesser extent, make domestic items. A few also specialize in making parts for the IAN airships (and the Chuno Ggun airships, although they do not know it), barges and steam train parts.

The work is very much divided up into individual production tasks. Often the workers will not actually know what they are producing. The final assembly of automata does take place in the block factories, but the airships are finished in the IAN hangars and the barges alongside the canal docks. There are so few trains (often only one running in an entire week) that production of these no longer takes place, merely the continued manufacture of the parts that most commonly need replacing.

All designs and recipes have to be approved by the relevant administrator, who gets guidance from the select committee that monitors the specific trade the factory deals in (very little gets produced outside the factories, due to the risk of being thrown into the Change Cage for innovation).

Hours are extremely long, children begin working in the factories at a young age and holidays are non-existent. Only one day off is granted per week. There is no concept of health and safety, and many people die at work – crushed by machinery, drowning in the food vats, etc. Those that aren't killed outright are carried to the grim block hospitals.

Although the Change Cage cities were built to save the environment, the environment within them is foul. The upper class estates are large enough to be free of the worst of it – the choking toxins, stinking foggy miasmas and acrid by-products of the factories make the life of the lower classes unremittably uncomfortable. The effect is often ill-health and

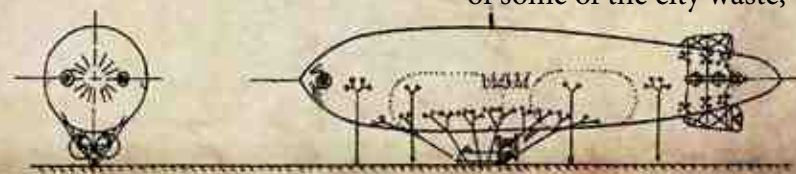
sometimes an early death. Even in the upper class area the stench of the factories is unmistakable – particularly when the wind is blowing the wrong way.

Cleansing automata scour the streets at night, using heat ray steam-cleaners, but all that seems to do is break down the filth into a thick glue-like sludge which coats every surface. This sludge is sluiced into storage vats, but there simply isn't enough storage to cope with the waste being produced. Sewage and waste processing is completely inadequate. The Emperor demands that humans should avoid polluting outside their cities, and recycle all their waste, an impossible request – much of the factory waste is unprocessable, although that doesn't prevent the food processing plants attempting to use the sludge.

Supervision is carried out by foremen, but all factories are also regularly inspected by resident autocrats, who monitor productivity and individual performance. Wages are deducted and foremen replaced if targets aren't met. Stoppages are also made for items purchased in the factory shop. Many folk never buy any goods that do not come from the factory shop, as they sell food, gin, cheap quality clothing, coarse blankets and a little solid fuel, for burning – all that a worker could need. A few other services are available at work – automaton barbers cut hair, automaton doctors visit and give inoculations, automaton dentists pull teeth, etc. Small deductions are made for these compulsory services.

FOOD

By order of the Emperor, all food consumed, or for sale, in the Change Cage cities has to be manufactured within the city itself. The eating of meat, or any animal products, and the use of any animal derivatives, is forbidden. The solution to the first, seemingly impossible, edict is the widespread factory farming of fungi proteins. This raw foodstuff is grown on a colossal scale. The production process involves the use of some of the city waste, which reduces the recycling





and storage burden. But this also means that the food plants are some of the most unpleasant and noxious places to work.

Once the vast blocks of raw foodstuff have grown, they are cut up and sent off for processing – transportation of all goods is carried out by automata adapted for the purpose. The processing is dependent on the destination of the finished product. For the wealthy, chemicals are added to improve taste and texture, and care is taken to cut and shape the food. Less care is taken with the food destined for the lower class table, and the chemicals that are added to this food are chosen for their pacifying qualities (extra quantities of these drugs can be added at an administrator's discretion). The additives also contain the basic vitamins and minerals that are needed to live, but in trace quantities, so that surviving on such food causes one to feel continually hungry and remain slightly undernourished.

The rich do have the means to supplement their diet. They often keep vegetable gardens. Maintaining a good trim garden which produces fine food is considered a gentlemanly pursuit, although most prefer to allow a servant or automaton gardener to do the actual hard work. The cooks who work in the mansions of the rich will usually maintain a small herb garden, which they use to give extra flavor to the diet of fungus and vegetables.

One of the main smuggling activities is the supply of illicit meat, which mainly ends up on the tables of the rich. This invariably comes from the Bargefolk, who in

turn receive the carcasses from Neobedouin tribes or Skyloft merchants. Although highly illegal, and punishable by exile (and in the case of the wealthy, the formal eviction from their estate by the Emperor) the trade is widespread and lucrative. There is simply no will to enforce the embargo – few of the wealthy want to be restricted to a diet of chemically enhanced fungal matter and fresh vegetables.

The factories also manufacture cheap gin, the staple drink of the lower classes, which is available in two strengths. The stronger is drunk by adults, the weaker by children – both are usually seen as preferable to drinking from the public water supply. Administrators occasionally toy with prohibition, but most conclude that the lower orders seem more manageable when given access to the gin shops. Drinking communally is frowned upon, as it often leads to rowdy and unseemly behavior. Barely palatable rum is also produced, but is strictly reserved for the air sailors of the IAN.

The rich have a much greater variety of drinks to choose from. Tea, grown in their gardens, and prepared with well water, is the drink of preference for the more reserved. A whole range of exotic





liqueurs and aperitifs are also available, although most of them are made from the addition of artificially flavored mixtures to the standard gin recipe.

TRADE

In the lower class areas legal trade is extremely limited. People simply have no money to spend, and there are limits on what items may be produced for domestic consumption. There are small, wretched shops, aside from those located in the factories themselves, but they offer the most basic and cheaply made items, and the profits are expected to be returned to the city. Most people live in unfurnished tenements, sleeping on the floor, covered by cheap blankets. Once they have purchased food and gin they have nothing left.

That is not to say there is absolutely no money in circulation—some money is generated by crime, some by people

taken from children by their parents (an extreme act of cruelty when they are half-starved already), etc. This cash might be spent on illegal goods, extra gin and food, or vice.

The rich have a lot more to choose from. Administrators allow some of the factories to fill the stores of the trade blocks which the wealthy frequent. Again, the shops are staffed by lower class workers and automata who are not entitled to the profits. Fashion items, gramophones, novelties, confectionery (artificially sweetened fungus products) and other goods fill the exclusive shopping arcades for the amusement of the rich.

VICE

There is a seedy underside to the Change Cage cities. Dealers are directed to enforce strict controls,





but they are also directed away from some areas by administrators who partake of unseemly diversions, the pleasure blocks.

The official gin houses are often operated by automata, and the consumer is not allowed inside. Gin is dispensed down a tube into a cup or bottle (or cupped hands, if the purchaser has no cup or bottle), to be consumed on the spot, or taken home for consumption. As well as these official premises, there are hidden saloons, low bars and brothels. Many of these are provided exclusively for the rich, although their existence brings money into the slums, which means that there are a few that are frequented by the lower classes. Often smuggling contacts can also be found in these haunts.

The brothels are mainly serviced by dolls. The better models work in the more expensive joints, the lower class brothels often employing older and less convincing types. Despite (or perhaps because of) the stiflingly oppressive prevailing morality, these brothels are frequented by most upper class men. They justify their actions to themselves, reflecting that brothels and dolls are an important aid to population control, and allow the release of unseemly passions away from the sanctity of the family home. A few of the pleasure dens offer human prostitutes. This is considered a much more sinful vice, but that makes it all the more tempting for many.

MEDICINE

As with everything else, medical care for the Neovictorian is determined by class. Lower class medical care is sparse and not conducive to recovery. Block hospitals tend to be staffed by automata who are designed to carry out crude medical tasks – inoculations, pulling teeth, amputation, etc. They are not designed to carry out more complex medical procedures, and if the lower orders have a serious or ongoing medical condition they will probably

receive no constructive help at all. Conditions are unsanitary; resources sparse; checks on invalids, who lie on dirty pallets, infrequent; diagnosis crude. Most of the lower classes die from starvation when they become too ill to work, preferring a slow agonizing death at home to one in the notorious block hospitals.

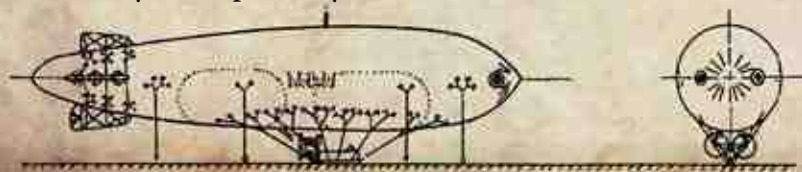
The rich receive their medical care from their peers – trained upper class physicians. These physicians are educated in the manner of all upper class professionals – expected to learn techniques by rote and not to dabble in experimentation or areas that might further medical knowledge (see Education, p.220). They do have more access to drugs. The drugs that are produced in the factories are divided into the few crude solutions that are available in the block hospitals, and the relative cornucopia of medicines that a rich Neovictorian physician keeps available in their study, or that can be freely purchased in the fancy drugstores that can be found in the trade blocks.

THE WORKHOUSE

Subjects of the Emperor are usually only allowed a maximum of two children. Any extra children are forcibly taken away. Most people believe these children are taken to the wilderness, to be exposed to the elements. In fact, most escape that fate, and are taken to the workhouse instead.

There they are trained either to be sailors, conscripted at an early age into the Imperial Air Navy, where they are subject to harsh naval discipline; or chosen by the upper classes, to work for them as bonded servants. Although in many ways little more than slaves, this servant class are taught to believe they are better than the rest of the lower classes.

In a sense, life for a youngster in the workhouse is better than that of the children in the slum blocks. At least they usually have some food and





an education – even if that education is entirely focused on brutally inculcating in them deference – whether that be to their new superiors in the Navy, or their new master or mistress to whom they will be in service. If a youngster does not work out in their assigned profession, they are seldom given a second chance. Workhouse children invariably lack love. The prevailing morality suggests that such children require instruction, not affection, and many of the tasks in the workhouse are carried out by crude-looking automata to cut costs, supervised by a human beadle. The block administrator receives an income from those wanting servants, or airship

the Neovictorians. These mutations occur mainly in the children of the factory workers themselves, but no-one is immune. These mutants are known



as the misbegotten (for more on the misbegotten see Character Creation, p.36). The misbegotten are taken from their parents (often as older children, since not all mutations manifest themselves at birth) and usually relocated in separate blocks. Any who have particularly rare or unique mutations are sent to the Change Cage.

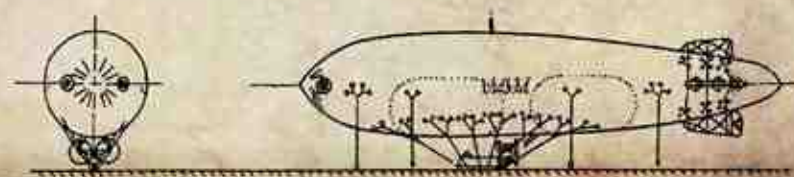
All the blocks are dreadful, but those inhabited by the misbegotten are the worst – their industry pays the lowest wages and their administrators are the harshest. They are treated as subhuman – forcibly sterilized and classified according to the type of mutation they have. Each misbegotten block



captains requiring crew. This money is used for the upkeep of the workhouse, the employment of a few staff, the purchase of the automata, gruel, etc., and unsurprisingly corners often get cut to save cash.

THE MISBEGOTTEN

One of the consequences of the toxic chemicals that leak into the air and permeate the city streets, has been the increasing incidence of mutation among





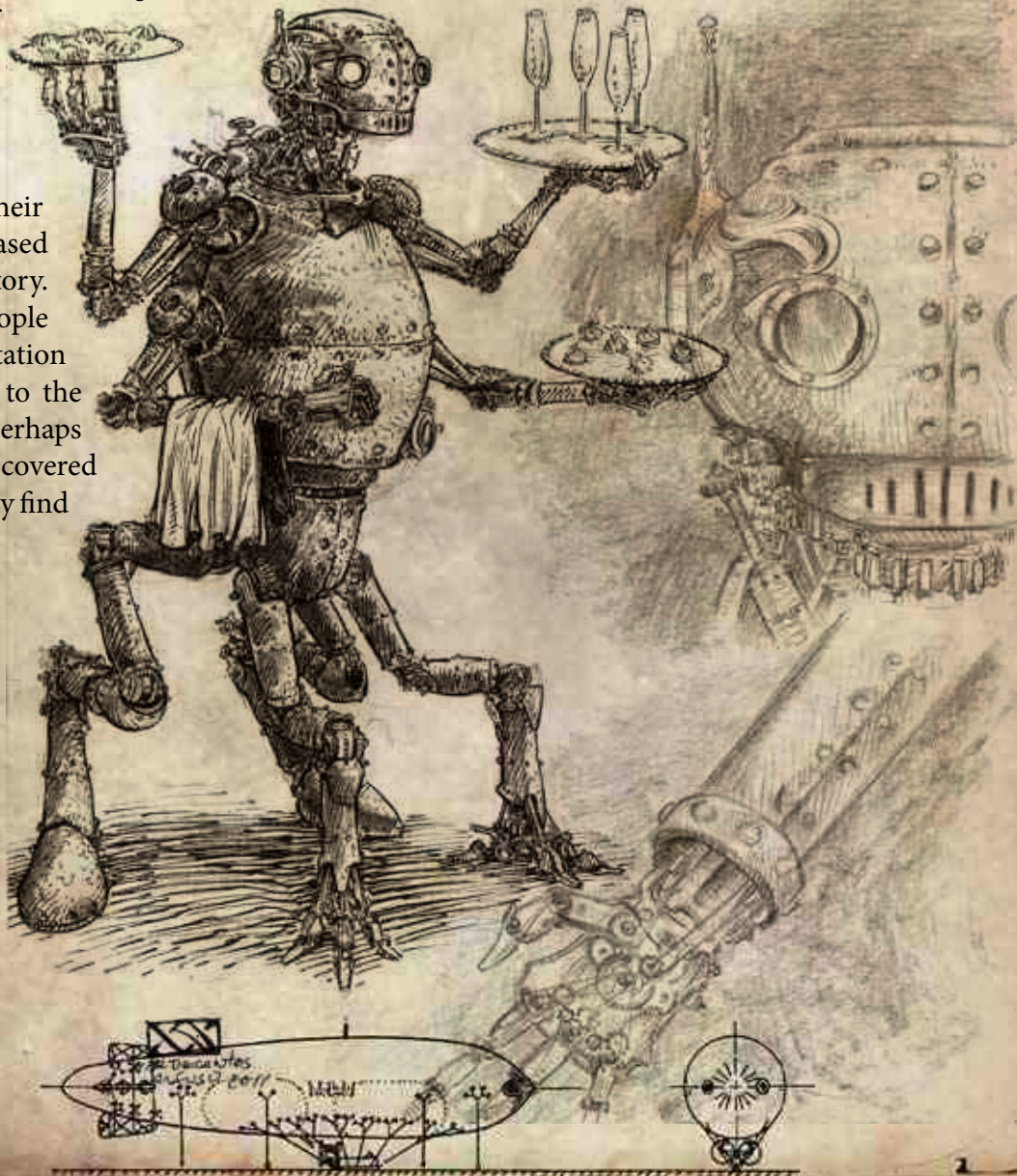
clusters together people with the same, or similar, mutations. The only misbegotten that ever legally leave the Change Cage cities are those few that are recruited to the Chuno Ggun – their mutations making them militarily useful as expendable shock troops.

The existence of the misbegotten is one of the open secrets, the hypocrisies, at the heart of Neovictorian society. Although many people are aware of their existence, they are officially never talked about, and in upper class circles they are not acknowledged at all. To even raise them as a topic would be most impolite (which doesn't preclude the fetish for the exotically mutated that some upper class gentlemen are predisposed to). If an upper class child develops a mutation, then they are removed and never publicly referred to again. Their very existence is erased from the family history. There may be a few people who develop a mutation and are not consigned to the misbegotten blocks – perhaps their mutation has been covered up by their family, or they find

a means of disguising the fact. This would be very rare, as all physicians and automatons are charged with reporting mutation – but some individuals might have slipped through the net.

THE AUTOMATA

The automata are built in the Change Cage cities, designed to work in a variety of roles – as bureaucrats, manual laborers, heavy plant machinery, prostitutes, cops, etc. Many of these functions involve the oppression of the lower classes – as they help control the gates between blocks, police them, monitor them,





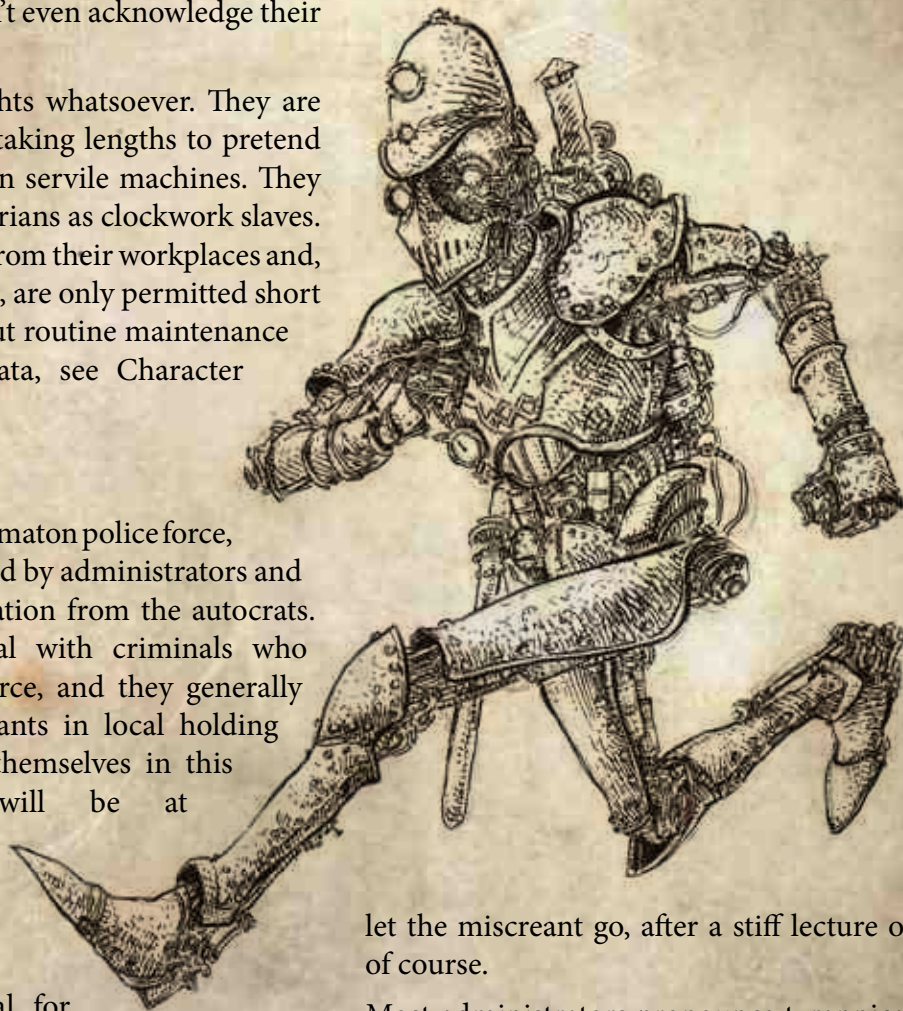
etc. and most lower class Neovictorians despise them. Most of the upper class don't even acknowledge their existence.

The automata have no rights whatsoever. They are self aware, but go to painstaking lengths to pretend they are nothing more than servile machines. They are treated by the Neovictorians as clockwork slaves. They have no homes aside from their workplaces and, as they do not require sleep, are only permitted short breaks in which to carry out routine maintenance (for more on the automata, see Character Creation, p.34).

LAW AND ORDER

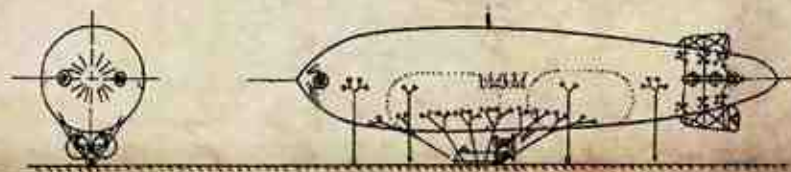
The peace is kept by the automaton police force, the Peelers, who are directed by administrators and gain most of their information from the autocrats. They are directed to deal with criminals who resist arrest with lethal force, and they generally lock up suspected miscreants in local holding cells. Anyone who finds themselves in this unfortunate position will be at the mercy of the local administrator, unless their crime is innovation (see below).

There is no right of trial for any crimes. For offenses that don't involve innovation, the administrator is the final arbiter. He will have access to the report by the arresting Peeler and the autocrat who has analyzed the arrest log data. If the administrator wishes, he can request a statement from, or audience with, the perpetrator. If the perpetrator is lower class, the administrator usually doesn't bother with an interview, unless he has a specific reason (for instance, if the crime is vice-related and he wants to help cover up any evidence). If the perpetrator is upper class, it is traditional to charge a small fine and



let the miscreant go, after a stiff lecture on morality, of course.

Most administrators pronounce tyrannical sentences on lower class offenders they find guilty. In a way, they have little choice. There are no prisons, aside from the holding cells and Change Cage, and so the usual punishment is "exile and exposure". This requires the individual to be "taken from this place, at a time of my choosing, and transported to the wilderness. Once there the individual is to be released into the wild, to be destroyed by beasts, as is fitting. God have mercy 'pon your soul!" Transportation is via the weekly steam train, which has a purpose-built caged carriage in which the condemned are housed, and the site where the criminals are to be abandoned is always





a long way from any Change Cage or known Skyloft city and chosen as likely to harbor the most vicious predators.

Exile is as likely to be pronounced on a lower class offender for a minor crime as it is for a major one. If the administrator wishes to show leniency, he does have the option of merely demanding a small fine, payable immediately (as mentioned, the most common sentence faced by the rich), having an individual held in the cells for a very few days, or a caution.

Administrator Austin Barking-Blower, Jr. has a reputation for pronouncing a sentence of exile on wealthy young rakes caught causing a ruckus at the brothels in his block (he doesn't object to the brothels, just the ruckus). He then releases them, if they haven't committed suicide in despair, at the last minute. "Hah, that'll teach you!" he snaps, as the unfortunates are allowed to return to their mansions in disgrace.

If the suspected crime is innovation, the case will be referred to the appropriate select committee and the details immediately sent off to the Emperor. Innovators are usually swiftly removed from local holding cells. They are moved to the cells at the bottom of the city Change Cage tower, in anticipation of them being found guilty and thrown in.

The other phenomenon worth mentioning is the vigilante activity that takes place. Usually young upper class men, singly, or in small groups, take it upon themselves to act as vigilantes, fighting crime in the blocks. Whether out of boredom or conviction, these individuals hunt down those they see as moral degenerates or rogues, meting out their own brand of rough justice. Sometimes the vigilantes are the worst sort of cowards, attacking brothel workers as they return home exhausted to snatch an hour's sleep before their morning shift in the factory, or brutally beating petty criminals, or even the innocent, knowing that their status will protect them. But, every so often, the

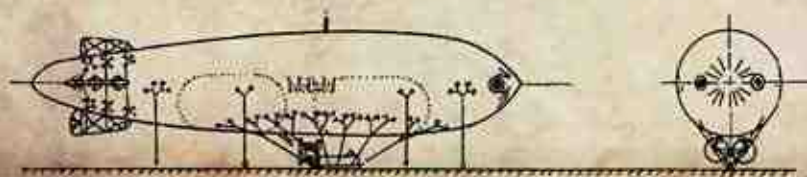
vigilante will actually prevent a murder, stop a bully stealing food from the weak, or even stand up to a Peeler to protect an innocent from a trumped-up charge.

PROPAGANDA

As much as the lower classes are oppressed, and the upper classes find themselves at times constricted, most people actually support the status quo. Part of the reason for this is the common assumptions about how and why the Change Cage cities came about. People genuinely believe that Victor I saved humanity. People also are uncertain about what is actually going on in the outside world – the official line is that no people exist outside the Change Cage cities and leaving them would result in certain death.

Although literacy is patchy in the lower class blocks, most people can read a little, and some can read fluently. The Emperor's edicts are read out at the start of the day in the factories and the Emperor sometimes allows pamphlets to be circulated, which he has approved – for many people this is the only source of information, aside from factory gossip. The wealthy are kept, if anything, in an even greater state of ignorance. They are given an education, of sorts, but one which concentrates on teaching set facts about the world, by rote, and discourages, through firm discipline, the asking of any questions.

Thus people "half-know" a whole lot of things. They are told that aside from in the Change Cage cities there are no people and that the predators make it an impossible place to live. And yet, many people know of goods smuggled in. They are told there are no enemies left to fight. Yet, many people suspect that the Navy is needed for more than just inspecting a barren wilderness. The IAN themselves know the truth; of the Skyfolk, the pirates and the Neobedouin – and although it is forbidden, they let slip a little of what they know, so that all the population realize, on





some level at least, that they are not being told the complete truth. Some folk just pretend that nothing is amiss, others are a little curious, but would never admit it. A rare few dream of leaving the city and finding a better life outside. But even these folk are happy to keep such thoughts a fantasy – if actually offered the opportunity to leave of their own free will, in the main they would steadfastly refuse – fighting with all their might to retain their poverty and misery, rather than be cast into the unknown.

In fact, many people believe that there are airship pirates. They are a favorite topic, written about in pulp stories. Despite the poverty and oppression, a few illegal printing presses operate within the cities and some literature is smuggled in from outside. Most illegal presses produce pulp fiction or erotica. The pirate stories are lurid tales of adventure and romance and are highly sought after by rich and poor alike. The pirates within are sometimes described as raunchy romantic figures, and sometimes as dangerous killers. Usually both. (Wealthy women enjoy tales of refined Neovictorian ladies being abducted by handsome pirates; wealthy men of Amazonian female pirates who tease their male “victims”; and the poor of pirates who rob the rich to give to the poor. In every case it usually goes wrong and tragedy ensues, a moral sting contained at the end of nearly every tale).

As much as people might enjoy fantasizing about pirates, most would do anything to remain in the city. They fear the outside, fear the unknown, fear that the world will end if people colonize it once more, and fear change and innovation. Propaganda and indoctrination have effectively kept people ignorant and scared but, for those that can be bothered to think things through, much of what they have been taught doesn't quite add up.

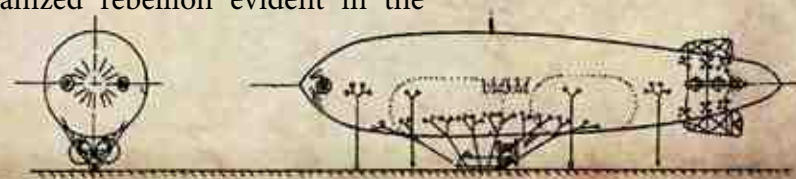
REBELLION

There is little organized rebellion evident in the

Change Cage cities. Some of the blocks are said to have an underground, comprised of cells of resistance, working against the Emperor. But if they exist, they are keeping very quiet about it. Dawn raids and deportations by the Peelers are the only indication that trouble might have been brewing – and truth be known, most radicals are actually agent provocateurs, agents of the Emperor – Chuno Ggun placed to check the loyalty of his subjects and report back their findings.

There is little organization amongst the workers; they are too confined, too controlled, but mainly too scared. Resigned to their fates, they are careful about what they say and who they grumble to. Where resistance has occurred it is easily contained – rather than send in the IAN, Chuno Ggun or Peelers, any blocks that do become radicalized are easily cut off and starved into submission. Communication is so poor that if this does occur, nobody other than a select few know it has happened. The smugglers and criminals have the best means of communicating, but they tend to be more pre-occupied with doing a little better than anybody else than changing the status quo.

The one thorn in the side of the Emperor is the appearance of a wave of absurdist and surrealist propaganda and graffiti. This usually consists of material and slogans that use humor to mock the status quo or expose the hypocrisies and contradictions in the official propaganda. For instance, recruitment posters for the IAN (who never recruit), posters advising citizens to beware of airship pirates (who don't officially exist), and invitations to visit the gardens of the upper classes (who never let the lower orders anywhere near their grounds). Upper and lower class free thinkers have realized that organizing as a group leaves them vulnerable to infiltration and betrayal. So they have concentrated their efforts instead on spreading subversive messages and slogans, or engaging in individual acts of sabotage. Often designed to draw





attention to the contradictions thrown up by everyday experience, rather than focused on the grinding misery of everyday life, the Peelers don't even notice the posters, paintings and literature these radicals leave about town, although the autocrats have noticed the higher than usual frequency of spanners being dropped into factory works.

THE CHANGE CAGE

The Change Cages are used by the Emperor to stifle progress. Items that are on the prescribed lists and even particularly important or scandalous prisoners are stored within. The Cages are not hidden, in fact the opposite, the high walls of the Change Cages dominate the landscape as a warning to all. But few people know anything of what goes on within the walls. They just know that innovation might be rewarded with being thrown into the Change Cage – a fate considered worse than death itself.

THE RICH

The upper class within each Change Cage city is tiny. They are descended from grand families, wealthy folk who supported the Emperor in his apocalyptic dream. The men are usually engaged in one of two trades – working as either administrators or officers in the Imperial Air Navy. A few will train as physicians, so they might attend to other rich folks, although it is seen as a fairly eccentric choice of profession. An even rarer choice of occupation is that of an educator (most teachers in the colleges for the wealthy are automata) or member of the clergy (most Neovictorians play lip service to having a faith, but they are generally unenthusiastic, to say the least). The vast majority do not work at all – perhaps leading a life of debauchery (visiting the fleshpots, or metalpots, in the blocks), or that of a country squire.

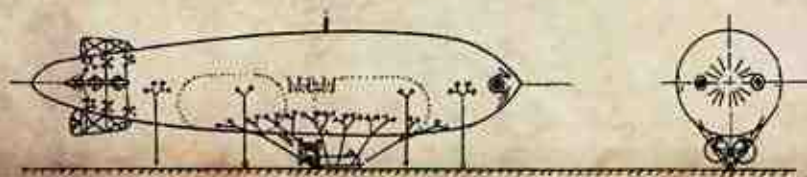
Upper class women are expected to do little more than act demurely and breed the next generation of

administrators and officers. They might be permitted some small hobby and may attend round after round of social functions and balls. They may have a small budget, or be given a larger allowance with which they might go shopping in the trade blocks. But women are generally considered the weaker sex, inferior to men intellectually and physically and encouraged to passively stay at home.

Some of the maintenance of the rich area is done by automata, particularly the maintenance of the large parks in which the individual estates sit. But the upper classes do have human servants as well. These servants are trained into service at a very young age, and are bonded to their employer and his family for life.

Although they live a much more luxurious life, the wealthy still have some restrictions placed upon them. Aside from the Imperial Air Navy, upper class people are still confined to the city – although their confinement is at least more pleasant than that of the lower classes. Their diet may be better, but they are still officially forbidden from eating meat, and still expected to get their calcium and protein from the fungus vats (although it is made to taste and look a little better than the sludge served up to the poor). And they are subject to population control measures. Like the poor they are restricted to only having a maximum of two children (which also ensures that that being upper class remains a hereditary status) – although, unlike the poor they are able to buy rights to have extra children from other rich couples who can't, or haven't, had them.

The Emperor is generally tolerant of the upper classes and they are fairly content to support him in return – but there are tensions. The Emperor doesn't really like the decadence, even though he has his own private palace; and the upper class don't really like having their number of servants, types of food, number of offspring, etc., limited. That said, few





would be willing to rock the boat, and if they tried, the outcome would be fairly certain – disgrace and exile.

EDUCATION

As mentioned previously, the lower classes are considered unworthy of getting any proper education. For the upper classes it is somewhat different. Young boys and girls will be given a very basic education at home, probably by a nanny or governess.

When they are older the boys go to a general college, to learn about their role in the world (or in other words, how to be an administrator, physician or vicar), or to a naval college. It is an education, of sorts, but very much designed to instill the Imperial point of view. Learning all there is to know, by rote, is considered the best, and only acceptable, method of education. Inquiry is actively discouraged. Any educators who seem to be attempting to instill a love of learning beyond the prescribed syllabus are in danger of being thrown into the Change Cage. So most education is actually carried out by automata, with humans taking on the customary role of acting as the college administration. Women will have been lucky (or unlucky) to have attended an academy to learn how to be a good wife and mother, but most will not attend a college at all, their governess responsible for teaching them until they are of an age to marry.

MORALS AND MANNERS

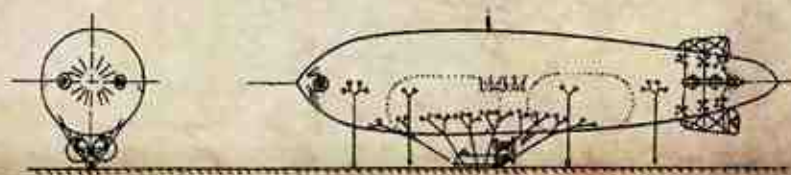
Upper class Neovictorian society is governed by strict social rules and, at least outwardly, a rigid adherence to conservative ideas about morality and manners. Many topics are considered not fit for polite discussion. There is an accepted order to the day, and it is expected that the household is presentable and acts with decorum at all times. People do gossip, but they are careful as to when they gossip, not to gossip in front of the servants, and with whom they gossip.

Upper class women are considered, by upper class men, to be weak, inferior and to derive no pleasure from physical relations. They are controlled by men from birth, usually by their fathers and then their husbands. They are expected to submit to the male head of the household's authority in the same manner as the children of the house. Wealthy women are expected to be accompanied by a chaperone at all times. Women are expected to be demure (to the point of it being considered bad manners to raise one's voice) and to defer to male wisdom. Children are expected to be seen and not heard, and sparing the rod is said to spoil the child. Of course, there are many families who act quite tenderly toward each other in private, but they will be considered by their peers to be lax, and in danger of fostering loose behavior.

Appearances are everything, manners should be adhered to and vulgarity is to be avoided at all times. This covers everything from standing up when somebody enters the room, to the use of each of the dozens of different knives, forks and spoons that are laid out before one at family mealtimes.

More significantly, art and entertainment are judged for their propriety – Neovictorian attitudes to such things are stultifying. It is expected that all music should be classical, art insipid and literature selected from a handful of old classics. Amateur musicians are common (indeed, it is expected that children might learn the piano or violin, in order to perform in the drawing room for their family), but are expected to select their playlist from a set number of pieces, all of which are three hundred years old or more. Art is generally restricted to watercolors, and anything abstract is treated with suspicion. Creative writing is a definite no-no! Much of this is to do with the fear of encouraging innovation – anything considered avant garde, bohemian, or challenging, is suppressed.

One thing the Neovictorian upper class isn't, is philanthropic. Philanthropy is considered a highly





dangerous and destabilizing weakness, and would not be tolerated, even if people were so inclined. The nearest the Neovictorians get to such a notion is participation in vigilante activity and the occasional overly indulgent administrator.

LEISURE

The poor are expected to avoid all leisure, as it will lead them to vice and indolence. That is why it is important that they are kept hard at work. For the rich there are certain leisure activities that are seen as acceptable.

For gentlemen it is currently popular to enjoy gardening, or at least planning the garden and watching the gardeners carry out the work. They also might spar, fence or practice Baritsu – sporting and martial pursuits are considered suitably manly activities. Ladies are encouraged to do a little embroidery and to entertain guests with a light afternoon tea (the maid prepares the tea, but the lady of the house might pour it, in this instance).

Both men and women might like to take a stroll in the parklands (ladies accompanied, of course), visit the trade block and pick up a few smart items, paint a watercolor of their estate, and attend dinners and other social functions. At the balls and parties that are regularly held, ladies might even find themselves dancing with gentlemen of an evening, the only permitted form of physical contact for the unmarried.

People being people, many individuals have secret lives and get up to activities that they should not. Vice, smuggling and rebellion has already been covered, but people also indulge in forbidden creative activities. Some people write – sometimes just for personal satisfaction, perhaps keeping a candid private diary. Others use auto-stenographs to plot lurid fiction, which might even find its way to a hidden press for private distribution. Artists might create dark and subversive works, hidden away in private workshops. Many creatives gain quiet satisfaction working

some subtle innovation into an established form – dangerous and radical stuff, but thrilling if they get away with it.

FASHION

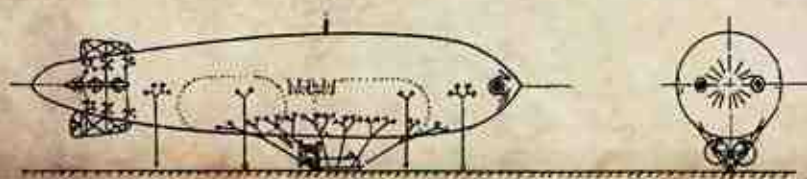
The rich have a lot of time on their hands, and not much with which to fill it. One obsession is fashion. Fashion in a Change Cage city is a complicated affair. The wealthy might wear four or more outfits in the course of a day, and each outfit should be worn with the correct accessories and be appropriate to the occasion for which it is worn. Innovation is avoided, but fashions change back and forth – collar lengths lengthen and shorten, bustles expand and reduce, colors come in and out of fashion. Some of the fashions are garish, and even flamboyant (although nothing like as flamboyant as Skyfolk fashion), others are drab and restrictive.

Items and pets also come in and out of fashion. Currently, it's fashionable for the upper classes to keep trained beasts as pets. In particular, officers aboard Navy airships take a pet as a mascot, the more vicious looking, the luckier for the ship.

For the lower classes, fashion is much less important for the majority. Most simply can't afford to think about such things, although they will be bedazzled by the appearance of their betters, should they get a glimpse of them. The exception is those working as servants, or in vice or crime. They often wear better clothes than their peers. If the factory girls appear to be wearing more fashionable clothes, all will suspect where they got the means to buy them. Likewise, thugs who work extorting from others often sport flashy suits. The majority tend to view these fashion icons strutting around their communities with envy and contempt in roughly equal measure.

THE SERVANTS OF THE RICH

There is a limit to the number of human servants





each rich household is allowed to maintain. Applications have to be made, agreed by the relevant select committee, and referred to the Emperor's palace for approval. But generally, every upper class household will be staffed by some servants. Servants are schooled in the workhouses, and generally work hard to impress the beadles and bullies who train them. Most household servants are female, although some boys are considered more suited to service than the navy, and might find a position as butler or footman.

Nearly all servants are taught that they must not only serve their betters without question, but also that

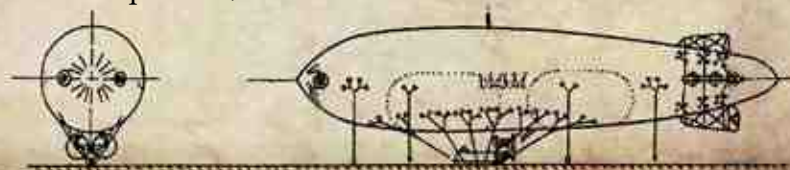
they are most privileged to be selected. Servants tend to think they are far better than the wretched lower classes who live in the blocks, and are always keen to distance themselves from their own humble beginnings. Some male servants get to see the world beyond the city. If they work for an IAN officer, then they might be taken along on a voyage – most officers find their servants indispensable, as having to prepare their own attire and dress in the morning can be quite taxing.

THE IMPERIAL AIR NAVY

The Imperial Air Navy (IAN) was formed in the early days of the Change Cage cities. As the outside world returned to wilderness, ground forces were largely dispensed with (the exception being the few Chuno Ggun agents who weren't assigned to the frigates or the Emperor's palace). The new threat to the Emperor's dream came from the skies. At the outset, the ambition of the navy surpassed their ability. Defeated, an uneasy accommodation was reached with the Skyfolk. Mutual hatred between the Skyfolk and the IAN continues to

this day, but the Emperor is less than certain of what the outcome of any war would be, so the two sides hold to an uneasy truce. The IAN focuses much of its energy on pirate hunting, although hawks in the high command still dream of the day when they might swat the Skyfolk out of the air.

The IAN has some advantages over the Skyfolk. They have access to large hangars, docks and airships. They have a much greater supply of manpower and coal. Their mechanized production process restricts itself to set designs – they have a wide variety of airships, from small scout airboats to mighty super-frigates. But they





lack innovation, experimentation and individual flair. Likewise, the IAN's officers are painstakingly taught set procedures and maneuvers, expected to follow all orders rigidly. The air sailors are drilled over and over again, in marathon length mind-numbing and back-breaking drills – while the Skyfolk value individual skill and dash.

The IAN offers upper class men a place in the scheme of things, and the chance of action and glory. Those put forward by their fathers, if accepted, attend a strict military academy from a young age. There, they are taught the principles of command and are expected to memorize a weighty tome of IAN regulations, which cover everything from the guideline number of lashes to be delivered to a drunken sailor, to the correct tactical command response to any given circumstance while aloft. Then they join a ship as a teenager, serving as a lowly midshipman. Promotion can often be a slow process, but most stay on in the career, as IAN officers are viewed as heroes within their own class.

There are a host of badges to pin on the tasseled jackets of the officers, and they enjoy nothing more than showing of their plaudits at upper class soirees. The highest honor granted is the much-coveted Emperor's Medal – Captain Pelinor Fines-Valor was famously quoted as saying that his “holds more value than any Admiral's jacket.” His career may have suffered since making the remark, but he is never without a beautiful and wealthy dance partner.

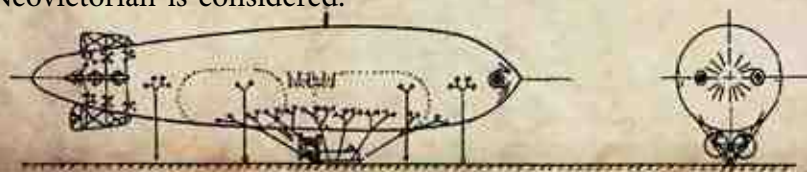
The sailors and marines come from the workhouses. They are terrorized and indoctrinated at the workhouse, and moved aboard at a young age. Starting out as powder monkeys and cabin boys, few survive to an old age; usually they are worked to death before they are allowed to retire. Life in the IAN is unrelentingly hard. The pay is low and they are seldom allowed ashore to spend it. Marriage is forbidden, and a man can be put to death at the whim of an officer. However, there are perhaps some compensations when the lot of the ordinary lower class Neovictorian is considered.

Rum is freely available, dolls are sometimes allowed on ship while in dock, and those who do make it to retirement live out their lives in segregated quarters in the dock blocks (to prevent them telling others tales of the outside world), and usually their savings (if they haven't been gambled away) are enough to ensure they have a more comfortable old age than their counterparts who work in the factories.

ESCAPE

Considering how grim life in a Neovictorian city is, it is hardly surprising that some of the Emperor's subjects wish to escape. However terrifying the prospect might be, some few brave souls still think it worth taking their chances on the outside – boredom, repression, oppression or poverty enough of a spur. Others have heard tantalizing tales of the world outside, so far at odds with the official version. Still others are motivated by fear – believing it is a matter of time before they are going to be exiled anyway, murdered by their husbands, or locked away forever in the Change Cage. These and other motivations for leaving are considered in the Culture sections of the Character Creation chapter (p.31).

Actually getting out of the city might be achieved in a number of ways – none of them undertaken without considerable risk. Of course, there may not be a choice, the individual might find himself or herself bundled onto an armored train and dumped in the hostile wilderness. Those who work in some capacity for the Imperial Air Navy, or whose employers work for the IAN, might be able to jump airship, although the officers try to keep their men confined to avert such a possibility. Then there is the possibility of joining with underground organizations – smugglers might assist an escape, for the right price. It won't be easy, and few manage it, but every year some Neovictorians do find themselves leaving their home city – usually forever.





THE CHUNO GGUN

The Chuno Ggun are ruthless operatives. They have three main tasks – to hunt together in the black frigates (large sleek airships, over the sides of which are hung battle automata and whose decks are filled with highly trained Chuno Ggun warriors); to hunt, singly or in small cells, stalking and killing renegades and escapees; and serving in the elite, personal guard, charged with protecting the Emperor's palace and person. There are less of them now than in the early days, and they have fallen out of the public eye, but at one time, before the Peelers, they policed the Change Cage cities (or at least those areas in which the workers lived), ruthlessly.

Chuno Ggun are fanatically loyal to the Emperor, and believe that only they are capable of sharing their leader's vision. They are carefully selected for recruitment at a young age by handpicked administrators. The potential candidates are subjected to loyalty testing and phrenological study, the results passed through the difference engines as a final profile check. Then they are indoctrinated and trained, a process which takes years, their motivation, abilities and loyalty carefully monitored throughout. At the end of this process most take their place amongst the ranks of the Chuno Ggun. Any that fail along the way disappear, never to be seen again.

The Chuno Ggun are based in secret locations in the wilderness (usually located near the rail and canal network, to ensure supplies are uninterrupted), have a large presence at the Emperor's palace, and work in the field, under deep cover, infiltrating groups, hunting individuals and monitoring enemies of the Emperor.

THE BARGEFOLK

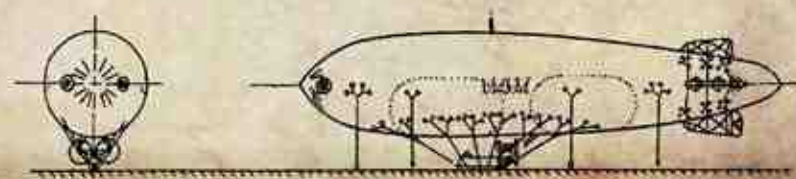
The Bargefolk work and live along the canals which connect the Change Cage cities to each other (and to small mining and lumber settlements along the

way). There are thousands of these barges plying the waters. They are slow moving and cargo is often "leapfrogged", so that each boat restricts itself to one relatively small section of canal.

The Bargefolk live in family groups, each family working their own barge. The barges are allowed into purpose-built docks, at the edge of each Change Cage city, where cargoes are unloaded by automata. The barge folk are prohibited from setting foot on land in the city, for fear they would communicate what is really going on outside to the masses.

Despite these regulations, the Bargefolk are responsible for bringing most of the smuggled goods into the Change Cage cities. Most of this illicit cargo is meat purchased from the Neobedouins, but various other items can be ordered if the buyer has the funds. The autocrats and Peelers are impeded from preventing these breaches of the law, their administrators often keen to get a share of the forbidden luxuries for themselves. Aside from their usual legal and illegal cargoes, sometimes barges are used to set down supplies near to Chuno Ggun bases. The Bargefolk know better than to ask or comment on these special drop-offs.

The canal barges are often heavily armored, bristling with power-generation windmills, and usually have one steamcannon turret. Despite these defenses, the barges are the most common prey of many pirates, and vulnerable to predators and the more hostile Neobedouin tribes. It is a tough life, and it has bred a tough people. The small crew size means they are often simply overwhelmed if attacked. Despite these dangers, most Bargefolk wouldn't trade their lives for anything. They are practically Free People and make a healthy profit from their underground commercial transactions. They tend to be looked after in their old age by their family, and their wealth allows them to get whatever luxuries and medicines they require from the Skyfolk (often via Neobedouin couriers).





THE EMPEROR'S PALACE

The World Emperor, Steward of All Nature, Victor Joseph Hypocrates III, lives in a vast complex located in Yellowstone Park. Whereas the policies of his line have led to the rest of the land being returned to nature, his home is in a perfectly managed idyll. Uberbeasts are largely kept out of the vast compound, although traditional wildlife abounds. Aside from a hand-picked guard of Chuno Ggun and his personal servants, few have ever actually visited the palace or surrounding parklands. Victor III makes his wishes known by decree, his orders relayed to the Governors and administrators in the Change Cage cities. He rarely leaves his palace, living in splendid isolation.

The current Emperor has access to a variety of technologies that are denied his people. His predecessors dabbled in genetic engineering, pioneered to re-establish long-extinct species, but it is not clear where his other resources come from – the complex is powered by geo-thermal energy and the Emperor has access to difference engines far more advanced than those used in the Change Cage cities. Are they cached remains of what went before? Or is the belief that nothing ever leaves the Change Cages a flawed one? Is his own personal attitude to technology somewhat different to his grandfather's? Nothing is clear – the Emperor's private thoughts are precisely that, private. Only those of his subjects living at the complex are aware of the fact that he has access to forbidden technologies, and without exception they keep his secrets.

The park is surrounded by a number of small forts, all manned by Chuno Ggun agents. Thousands of miles of powerful electric fences keep out all but aerial predators – the power comes from the sophisticated harnessing of the vast geo-thermal resources available within the park.

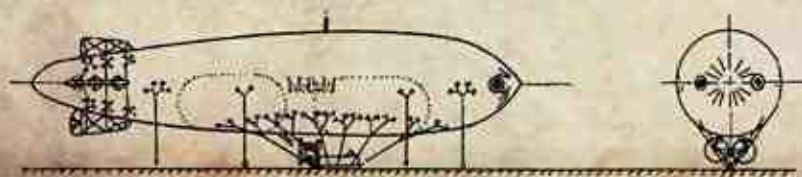
The palace itself is beautiful. There are hundreds of light, airy, rooms. Every outer wall is fitted with floor-

to-ceiling windows that offer stunning views of the landscape. However, in the event of attack, heavily armored shutters slide across, covering the whole building, which is designed to sink into the ground. Once locked down, row after row of elevated steamcannon turrets rise up to defend the palace.

If the upper classes live in gilded cages within the wealthy parkland of the city, the Emperor lives in similar, if yet more sumptuous, circumstances. Fear of assassination means that he is accompanied everywhere; fear of pirate attack means he has to travel around the park in a purpose-built armored train, never roaming far from the carriages when he does alight to take a stroll. But he has plenty of diversions.

He has the final say over many of the decisions taken in the Change Cage cities, his signature is required by the select committees to sign off permits, investigations, and confirm promotion or demotion in the IAN; the list goes on and on. He is adept at keeping the upper class happy and the lower class in line. Whether he wishes the Change Cage cities to inevitably follow the rest of humanity into oblivion, or wishes to keep them as a bulwark against a Neobedouin or Skyfolk revival, is yet another mystery. Another matter that will have to be resolved at some point is his own succession. Whether he decides to marry, bestows preferment onto the offspring of one of his concubines, or uses the genetic engineering equipment that he has at his disposal, at some point his people will demand that he ensures he has an heir in place.

The Emperor is the only person privy to the whereabouts of scattered remote research stations, some of which are still in use. These facilities were used during the "The Great Rectification" – the bio-engineered animals that have been reintroduced to the ecosystem were created by a scientific elite, working in these hidden bases. Those that are still





operational are kept supplied by the Chuno Ggun, and are still engaged in experimental bio-engineering. Those scientists that have tried to escape are rounded up by Chuno Ggun agents, and given the choice of summary execution, the Change Cage, or, if they are lucky, being returned to their workstation. Of course the original scientists working for Victor I are long dead – these are the descendants of that older generation, confined to the facilities from birth, home-schooled in scientific theory and practice by their parents. The Emperor is currently considering the reintroduction of more weird and wonderful fauna, but at this point is merely assessing his options.

DESOLATION

Desolation is the Change Cage city located in the heart of the Nevada desert. It is a dry, dusty place. Outside the city, frequent sandstorms, incredibly high temperatures and hungry predators, all make escape seem impossible.

Conditions in the factories are unbearable. They are, without exception, foul smelling, baking hot places. Dehydration, heatstroke and exhaustion are rewarded with a stay in a block hospital – where, if it were possible, the atmosphere is even worse. In some of the factories, when temperatures reach the highest levels, steampowered fans rotate. This usually doesn't help – the air circulates somewhat, but the heat and smoke generated by the engines negates any benefits.

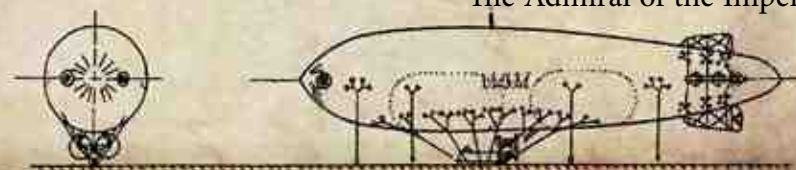
In Desolation the entrances to the canal and rail networks are located underground – automata and Bargefolk are responsible for the underground locks that terminate in blocks where the main trade is dock working. The dock blocks are a hive of activity, a steady stream of automaton-transports delivering materials from the barges to the factories across town. A single underground platform is maintained for the lonely train, that disembarks once a week, to be replaced by an incoming train from another city.

Water is scarce. The canals are fed from old irrigation systems and snow-melt from the mountains of the Sierra Nevada. But these old waterways are not maintained and vulnerable to attack. The IAN patrol the ancient dams, but who knows, perhaps one day the water will stop flowing for good? The rich have access to some underground water supplies, but most of the water in the city is recycled, it smells and tastes disgusting. Most lower class people in Desolation prefer the strong gin to the weaker brew – it has less water in it.

The wealthy all own automata whose sole purpose is to work fans – a rudimentary, automata-intensive, form of air conditioning, which although largely ineffective, does help to make life slightly less unbearable for the rich. If the upper classes travel to the blocks, they ride in automaton cabs. Their park and estates are irrigated and maintained to a high standard. The rich side of town is a veritable oasis, but simply strolling in the sunshine is exhausting and tends to make one sweat, which is most unseemly.

The Governor of Desolation, Franco Royston-Ragland Haverling, is an astute judge of character. His promotion of the most able administrators to the various select committees responsible for regulating the city allows him to spend most of his time hosting social gatherings. Over the course of the year he entertains every upper class family in the city at vast parties, hosted in his own private pavilion. Franco declines the seedy temptations on offer in the notorious pleasure blocks and although he turns a blind eye to the consumption of animal flesh, he never partakes himself – his loyalty to his Emperor is such that he would consider it a betrayal. The administrators and wealthy rakes make a point of not drawing attention to their carnivorous habits or the seedy goings-on in the pleasure blocks, and that is how Franco likes it. He likes to know what is going on, while pretending he doesn't.

The Admiral of the Imperial Air Navy fleet stationed





at Desolation, Sir Roderick Strickland-Villiers, is a hot-headed bully. Common enough qualities in the IAN, perhaps, but his rash actions have previously brought him dangerously close to gaining the ill-favor of Victor III. His ambition outstrips his ability, and repeated humiliation at the hands of the Skyfolk have led him to become a bitter, frustrated, tyrannical man, whose subordinates universally despise and fear him.

HELIUM CITY

Helium City, it has been said, is the still point of the turning world, the center around which the three cultural “spokes” of North America, the Neobedouin, the Skyloft and the Neovictorians, rotate.

Helium City is neutral territory, the only place where all three cultures can meet, in (relative) peace.

HISTORY

Long ago, Helium City was known as Amarillo, and sat upon the biggest deposits of helium in the world, on the windy plains of the Texas Panhandle. At the time of the Great Rectification it was not considered important by the Emperor, since he did not have many airships, and its population were rounded up and fed to the beasts early on. Once the Skyloft movement began, the Skyfolk quickly realized the importance of the place. As the Imperial ground forces pulled out of Texas with the introduction of uber-beasts into the area, the Skyfolk seized their chance. The sky city of High Amarillo, largely inhabited by refugees from the original city of the same name, fortified itself with high wooden walls on the outskirts of its platform and landed near the site of the helium mines. From this position of strength they were able to slowly push the uber-beasts back, expanding the defensive walls outward to include the drilling rigs.

It wasn't long before the local Neobedouin tribes began to trade with the city, and airships came from the other sky cities to buy the precious liftgas. Soon,

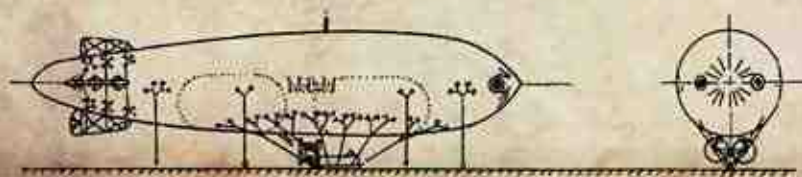
the city began producing its own currency, the Helios, backed by the wealth of helium upon which the city sat.

It was some time before the Emperor realized quite how important Helium City (as it was now calling itself) had become. As more and more sky cities were built, he began to wish he had an airship fleet, and the key to that was the vast helium resources below the upstart city.

Early in 2101, a massive army set out from Desolation, with the intention of taking Helium City. Guarded by a scant few airships, they marched for weeks across the desolate, beast-filled wilderness. Many soldiers were picked off by sabre-tooths, giant lions, bears and racids, others by Neobedouin who harassed them by night and day. It was a sad and sorry remnant who arrived in Helium City – a remnant far too small to make an attack or mount a siege.

The Neobedouin and Skyfolk expected the President of Helium City to demand the surrender of the remaining soldiers – instead he declared a truce and invited them inside the walls, tended their wounds and offered to open talks with the Neovictorians. No-one is quite sure whether President Miguel Higgins was greedy or far-sighted. Maybe it was a bit of both. He argued that opening Helium City to trade with the Neovictorians would be a way of bettering relations with them and defusing the tensions, though some thought he was really after the raw materials that the Neovictorians would use to pay for the helium they wanted and which his city could then sell on to the Skyfolk at a profit.

Higgins called in the representatives of the Skyfolk and the Neobedouins and put the proposal to them. Many were unimpressed, but they took the proposals back to their cities and tribes and three months later came back with their answers – they would support the notion of the city as neutral ground (they too could see the advantage of access to the products





of the Neovictorian mines), but would not respect any truce outside Helium City – particularly if the Emperor used his new airships to attack the Skyfolk.

Colonel Jamieson Cheetham-Harris, the leader of the Neovictorian army, who had been living as a guest of the city while waiting for the results of the Free Peoples' deliberations, welcomed the news. He went further, and had it written into the treaty that the IAN would not attack anyone within 50 miles of Helium City. All three groups signed the Tripartite Agreement. Cheetham-Harris returned to Desolation, where he was immediately flung into the Change Cage on orders of the Emperor; but the Neovictorians kept their part of the bargain, and have never since tried to attack Helium City.

MELTING POT

You can meet anyone in Helium City. Inside its high stone walls, which enclose an area of five square miles, grizzled Neobedouin outriders rub shoulders with haughty IAN captains and drunken pirates. Undercover Chuno Ggun agents infiltrate seedy bars in search of the fugitive sons of Neovictorian noblemen. Dolls conduct their business along the canalside docks. Bargefolk do eager trade with all and sundry. Thick-skinned misbegotten mercenaries and down-at-heel sailors come here seeking work, filling the doss-houses and inns that cater for any tastes. Escaped slaves from Skyloft cities seek a haven, knowing that if they can live here free for a year and a day, they cannot be reclaimed by their owners.

At the heart of the city, where one would normally expect the business district, the tall towers of the gas refineries stand, their steel pipework gleaming in the sunlight and throwing off flares of burning methane into the night sky. Over them looms the rectangular slab of the Chase Tower, the shell of a 31-story building left over from before the apocalypse – its windows are gone, its furniture looted, but its stairs are intact, and in the summer months, when trade

is at its maximum, dozens of airships can be seen anchored to the ancient structure. The owner of the building, a wily old ex-Neobedouin called Jack Bear, makes a fortune renting moorings to the many traders who visit, with prices inversely proportional to the number of stairs you have to climb to reach your airship.

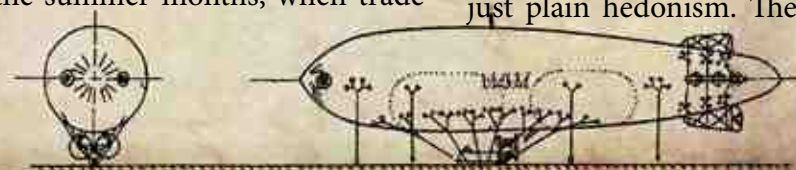
The rest of the city is lower – single-story, sandy-brick buildings with curved surfaces, designed to weather the tornadoes which sweep across the area in spring and autumn. At that time of year, bringing an airship to Helium City is considered foolhardy at best, and probably suicidal.

The citizens are a mixture of many creeds and colors. The permanent inhabitants consider themselves honorary Skyfolk, even though most of them have never set foot in an airship. Many are helium miners, many more merchants, traders and brokers, but the majority work in service industries serving (and often fleecing) the visitors who flood into the city every summer.

As well as the people who have grown up in Helium City, there are many from other cultures who came to visit and decided to stay. Whether it be those who have run away from the Change Cage cities, Neobedouin who have traded freedom for safety, or Skyfolk who have given up the high air for the chance to make a fortune, anyone and everyone can find a place here.

TRADE CITY

Helium City thrives on trade. In the tornado seasons of spring and autumn, and in the snows of midwinter, it is relatively quiet, but from June to September the size of the population almost doubles as Skyfolk, Bargefolk, Neobedouin and Neovictorian sailors flood into the city. The peak of the season is mid-July, when representatives of all the Neobedouin tribes on the continent trek to the city for a two week festival of trade, music, dance, marriage and just plain hedonism. The walls become surrounded





by Neobedouin encampments and it sometimes seems as if no one sleeps for fourteen days. Airships bob above, anchored to anything available, shining colored lights down onto the revelers below, and the scent of mammoth-steak drifts up into the night air from a thousand cooking pits.

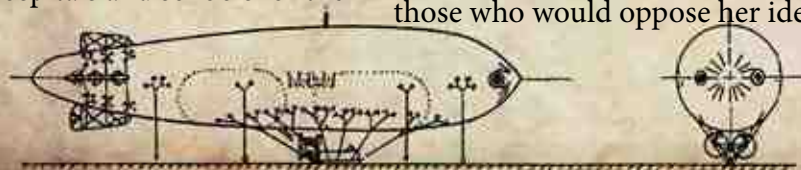
HELIUM CITY TODAY

Almost fifty years have passed since the signing of the Tripartite Agreement, and while there have been minor incidents over the years, it has never been broken. The Emperor used his supplies of helium to build the Imperial Air Navy, but has never managed to use it to conquer the Skylofts, due to their own Declaration of Allegiance Pact. The Neobedouin have probably come off worst from the Agreement, as they bear the brunt of Chuno Ggun and IAN attacks. Even they, however, have not broken away, because trade at Helium City has become too much a part of their culture.

The present President of Helium City (chosen by democratic vote of all the citizens) is Jaqui Remmington, a no-nonsense woman in her mid-forties who came up through the ranks of the Union of Helium Drillers and Bottlers. Her plan to tax the obscenely rich helium merchants of the city to pay for the building of hospitals and schools for the



less well-off is meeting with some opposition (particularly among the obscenely rich) and there are rumors that an assassin has been paid to get rid of her. Her links with the UHDB mean that she can shut down helium production with a nod and a wink, and she holds this threat over the heads of those who would oppose her idealistic plans.



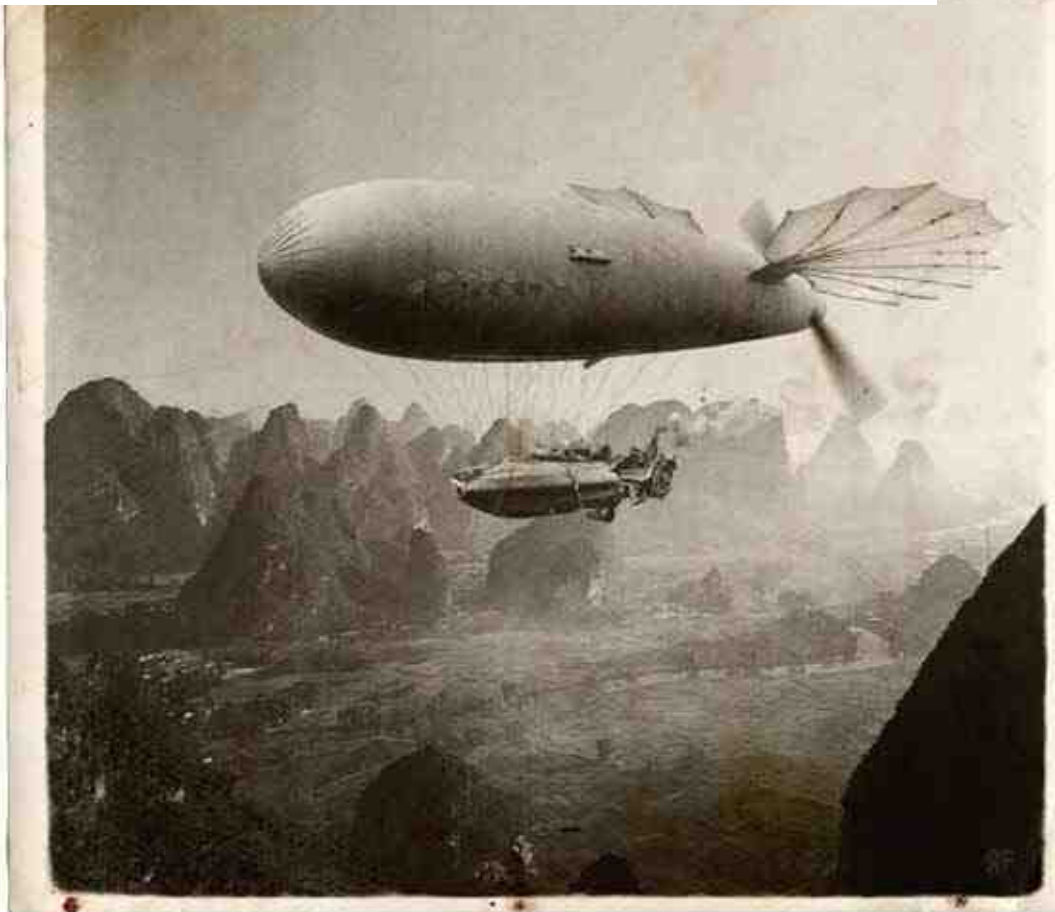


GOING HOME

Sand whispers
a cobbled street
beneath the wan glow
of a gaslamp. With a
rhythmic whirring,
a mechanical Peeler
patrols the darkened
slums, its lenses on the
lookout for anyone
breaking the curfew.
On the other side of
a curtained window
a hungry baby cries
while a gentle voice
sings a lullaby.
Behind the clockwork
policeman, a door
opens and laughter
and music spill out
briefly, but by the time
the Peeler turns, all is
still and silent again.

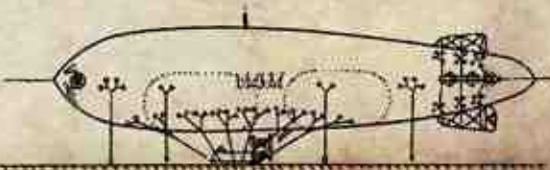
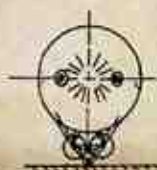
The Peeler stalks on,
past high walls behind
which the gentry
dwell; the only sound
is the whirr of the sprinklers, keeping the lawns green
in the desert night.

A shadow drifts across the moon; the Peeler looks up
in time to see an airship silhouetted against the silver
orb. The faint sound of throbbing engines drifts down
through the still air. It doesn't look like a vessel of the
Imperial Air Navy, and the Peeler logs the sighting
in its capacious memory – but the sky is beyond its
jurisdiction, so it turns back to its duties.



The airship drifts on, away from the Neovictorian
city of Desolation, out over the desert in the direction
of the mountains that glimmer white with snow
beneath the moon. Its engines thrum softly, and a
lone figure stands at the wheel, her eyes focused on
her longed-for destination.

From below comes the roar of a hunting sabre-tooth,
loud in the silence of the night. The hint of a smile
touches the pirate's face – the wild beasts cannot
reach her up here.





The old bearded man sitting by the campfire within the ring of wagons and steam-trucks stops playing his guitar at the sound of the sabre-tooth's roar. He puts down his instrument and picks up his rifle. The mastodons in the corral stir uneasily. But the bestial cry was far away. One of the caravans is creaking gently and the old man hears a woman cry out softly on an in-drawn breath. He grins wryly to himself and picks up his guitar again.

The shadow of an airship slides across the moon – he looks up briefly and waves, though he doesn't know if anyone up there sees him.

The pirate sees the ring of Neobedouin wagons and the guttering campfire at their center, far below. She sees the old man wave, and waves in return, though she doesn't know if he sees her. Almost she wishes to fly down and join him – but her sleeping crew expect to be in High Tortuga before morning. The airship flies on.

The tavern's tables have been pushed aside, and sweaty bodies leap and stomp to the scraping music of a fiddle. The air reeks of beer and tobacco smoke as a crush of gaudily dressed men and women drink and dance the night away. Suddenly, the door bursts open, and a voice shouts over the din; “The *Bright Shadow*! The *Bright Shadow*’s coming in!” There is a cheer, and one particular young man is at the front of the crowd that spills out onto the dockside to watch the approaching airship.

The floating city of High Tortuga bobs and sways slightly below its mighty gasbags, the massive chains that anchor it to the peaks flexing as it shifts in a mountain breeze. The mountains close in on either side as the airship flies up the valley, and tricky air

currents pluck at the flying vessel. But the woman at the helm steers with a steady hand – she's fought these currents many a time, they're as familiar to her as the thrum of her airship's engines.

She takes a moment to reach into her waistcoat pocket and pull out the coin she keeps there. She can make out the profile of Emperor Victor I as it catches the light, and the date, 2011. A grim year, a year of fear and despair, of jackboots and internment camps and the endless feeding of the beasts. She lost some good crew, men and women both, back then. She savors a last melancholy moment of solitude in the high cold mountain air, then slips the coin back into her pocket.

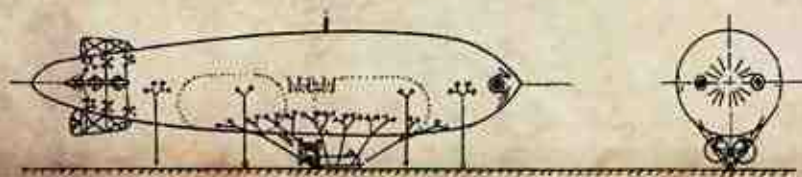
Ahead, the Skyloft city is a blaze of light that outshines the moon. They say that High Tortuga never sleeps, and tonight is no exception. The pirate rings the ship's bell and yells to her crew: “All hands on deck and prepare for docking!” Men and women stumble from their hammocks and up into the cold night air. Mooring lines are thrown over the side as the airship approaches the docks, where many other airships bob at anchor. Willing hands on the sky platform grab the lines and pull the airship down to safe harbor.

The crew pour off the ship and are taken up into the swelling crowd as they surge back toward the warmth of the welcoming inn. The woman stays aboard until the rest have gone, making sure everything is shipshape before she leaves her vessel. By the time she saunters down the gangplank, there is only one man left on the quayside. She walks up close to him and looks up into his smiling face.

“Well?” he says, with a quizzical look.

She grins a little, her eyes dancing. “I brought us treasure.”

Then his arms are around her, and she's home.





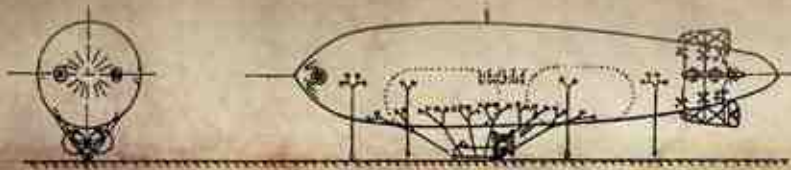
BOOK III: THE GAMES MASTER



RUNNING THE GAME

*"We've made an art of this horology,
To the point of a new theology,
I say to hell with modern technology,
And we embrace analog mythology!"*

– Abney Park, Throw Them Overboard





BEING THE GAMESMASTER

Being the GM is more work than being a normal player in an RPG. People playing characters can turn up to the game, play and go home again. The GM has to do some advanced preparation, to provide a story for characters to participate in.

No, let's put it another way. Being the GM is more *fun* than being a normal player in an RPG! If making up stories, concocting fiendish plots, thinking of weird and wonderful characters, and dreaming of fabulous places is your idea of fun, then being the GM is the best fun there is. The other players just turn up to the game, play and go home again – you get to play in between times too!

Some GMs spend as much time preparing for an RPG as they do actually running it, while others just jot down a few ideas on the back of an envelope and trust to their powers of improvisation. Some GMs use pre-written adventures (like the one in the back of this book, and the *Ruined Empires* adventure), while others make up their own. There's no one true way of GMing, and a lot of GMs use a mixture of all three methods – often taking a pre-written adventure, tweaking and twisting it to better fit their own version of the game world and their players' preferences, then improvising madly when the characters go off in a direction they weren't expecting.

GMs are expected to know the rules, provide information about the game world, play the part of any non-player characters (NPCs – i.e. everyone in the world who isn't a PC) and keep the plot going. This sounds like a rather daunting task, but as long as you're reasonably well-organized and can improvise if things don't go as you expected, you'll be fine.

PREPARING FOR PLAY

There are two main styles of adventuring – plotted and sandboxed. Most adventures turn out to be a mix

of these two styles, though quite where the balance lies will depend on your GMing style.

PLOTTED ADVENTURES

Plotted adventures have a structure much like a novel or a movie, and the players are taken through a number of scenes leading to an exciting grand finale. This type of adventure is easy to plot and run, as long as the players are co-operative. If the players decide they don't want to do what you expect them to do in a given scene, you're either going to have to make up something new and abandon your carefully made plot, or you're going to have to "railroad" your players back on track by making any options other than the ones you came up with seem unappealing.

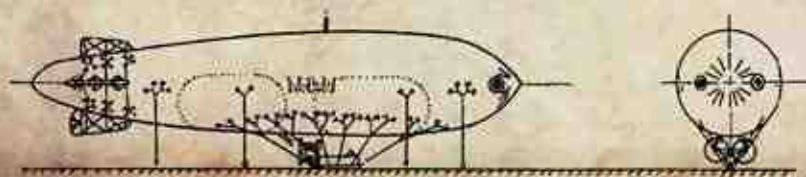
If you know your players well, an adventure of this type can be quite easy to run, as you'll know the sort of things that their characters do in a given situation and can plan your plot accordingly. But be careful – the players should always have at least the *illusion* of free will! If they feel they're being pushed to go in a certain direction, they're likely to start making sarcastic comments like "The plot compass is pointing this way!" and the atmosphere will be lost.

One way around this is to prepare for multiple outcomes. In other words, if the party do A, then X will happen, if they do B then Y. The adventure branches in a different direction, but you are prepared, and later events can bring things back on track. Covering more than one possibility in this way is sensible, but does entail more work.

Notes for a plotted adventure might look like this:

Blue Sky Thinking

- The PCs meet a patron, Jack Bear of Helium City. He wants them to track down an eccentric Skyloft inventor, Herr Blauhimmel, who left town without paying his extensive mooring fees. If they can recover the cash, he'll give them a quarter of it. (Haggling ensues,





he'll go up to half).

- The PCs ask around several seedy bars and the central library, and discover that Blauhimmel was working on some sort of automaton-human hybrid creature. He lives in a small sky city, Cloudless.
- The PCs fly to Cloudless, where they find a small wooden city with a population of about 500. The population seem very happy, and praise Herr Blauhimmel for having saved the city when it was poor and in danger of sinking and crashing into the mountain. He gave them more helium and cash to mend their gasbags, in return for permission to set up a workshop.
- The PCs begin to realize that all is not well in the city. The people seem a bit creepy, too happy, too adoring of Herr Blauhimmel. It's almost as if they're frightened. They are friendly, but change the subject if asked where Blauhimmel is at the moment. A weird old man tells them to be sure to be indoors by nightfall. "For soon comes Mister Night!"
- No-one will give the PCs anywhere to stay, and when they get back to their ship, they discover it is guarded. The crew have vanished (they were given drugged food and have been carried off as experimental subjects) and when the PCs return from the docks, they find everyone has bolted their doors and shuttered their windows.
- The sun dips behind the horizon, and a terrible howl splits the darkness. It's Mister Night! The PCs find themselves in a city full of weird clockwork-enhanced zombies (including some of their crew), led by the terrible Mister Night, a cross between a massive misbegotten and an automaton ganger, whose job it is to hunt out new bodies for Herr Blauhimmel's lab. A massive fight ensues.
- As one of their zombified crew is dying, he regains his senses and tells the PCs where Blauhimmel is.
- The PCs get to Blauhimmel's lab, where there is a last fight between themselves and the mad inventor, who is armed with weird weapons.
- After the fight, the PCs loot his laboratory, finding cool equipment and enough money to pay what's owed to Jack Bear. They might save some of their crew (or their crew may beg for death!), and return to Helium City to celebrate.

For some GMs, the notes above would be enough.

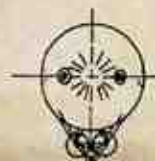
They would use stats from the NPC section (p.239) and make everything else up on the fly. Other GMs would want to write the adventure out in full, developing Jack Bear, some people in Cloudless, descriptions of the city, the zombie hybrids, and the equipment found, in the same way as we've written *The Tribulations of Scabby Jack*, p.275. For most GMs it would be bit of both.

WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR IDEAS?

So, where did the ideas for the *Blue Sky* Thinking notes come from?

I started with the idea of someone owing Jack Bear money. Who? A naval captain? No, a mad Skyloft professor. Called what? Think of a "sky" name. What's German for sky? Himmel. Professor Himmel. No, he's probably not academically trained. Mister Himmel. Mister Sky? Mister Blue Sky! (A well-known 1970s pop song by ELO). So the German for blue sky is Blauhimmel. Herr Blauhimmel. Sounds suitably sinister. Think about the song. Lots of happy people, pleased to see Mister Blue Sky. But "...soon comes Mister Night, creeping over, now his hand is on your shoulder." A monster that comes out when night falls. Last week I saw an episode of *Millennium*, set in a small town which locked its doors when the sun went down, leaving Frank Black outside to face the mad dogs that prowled the town. So the PCs are locked out when night falls. But they've got a crew, why aren't they helping? The townsfolk think Blauhimmel won't prey on them if he's got lots of sailors, so they take them food and they get turned into automaton zombies. *Night of the Living Dead!* And so on...

One of the nice things about *Airship Pirates* is that it allows you to mix and match genres at will, while still remaining in the *Airship Pirates* world. Keep surprising your players!





SANDBOX ADVENTURES

Sandbox adventures do not start off with a pre-determined plot – the GM decides on a few themes, some locations and a number of NPCs. He starts with a beginning scene, lets the PCs interact with his ready-made characters and lets the story go where it will.

The same adventure ideas described above, in *Blue Sky Thinking*, could be used as the basis for a sandbox. The GM would start with the following:

- Opening: PCs meet a patron, Jack Bear of Helium City. He wants them to track down an eccentric Skyloft inventor, Herr Blauhimmel, who left town without paying his extensive mooring fees. If they can recover the cash, he'll give them a quarter of it. (Haggling ensues, he'll go up to half).
- Villain: Herr Blauhimmel, mad inventor, intending to create an army of automaton-human hybrids to take over the world. Charming but utterly mad.
- Villain: Mister Night: Massive misbegotten-ganger hybrid who kills for Blauhimmel. But is sensitive (like Frankenstein's monster in the novel) and can possibly be befriended in the right circumstances.
- Villain: Captain Marmaduke Tennyson-Humperdink, Chuno Ggun agent (master of disguise, has established personality as renegade Neobedouin trader, Johnny Racid, in Helium City) – has heard rumor of Blauhimmel's work, and wants it for the Chuno Ggun.
- Place: Cloudless, Blauhimmel's home sky city, inhabited by people who are thankful to the inventor, but scared of him too. Resigned to losing one or two people a week to Mister Night's hunting hybrids.
- NPCs: people in Helium City who have heard rumors of Blauhimmel and weird creepy people at Cloudless.
- Mix "Johnny Racid" in with the NPCs. He will try to get a position on the PCs crew if he thinks they're on the right track, and betray them to the Chuno Ggun at the end. If they don't take him on, this won't happen.
- If the PCs don't follow up the leads, or fail to stop Blauhimmel (he might escape), he will begin raiding Neobedouin tribes around Helium city with a ship full of automaton-zombies, stealing more people for his growing army.

- If the PCs don't tackle him at this stage, he will eventually attack Helium City in force. The PCs may get involved in a final defense of the city. If they choose to stay away from the battle, he will take the city and set himself up as a sort of "dark lord", controlling supplies of helium and only giving it to people who swear fealty to him.
- What's the Chuno Ggun agent up to by now (assuming he's still around)? Is he trying to form an alliance between the Neovictorians and Blauhimmel?
- If we get to this point, the PCs find a chrononautilus while engaged in another adventure, and could go back in time to get rid of Blauhimmel before he started his experiments. But what would the ramifications of that be?

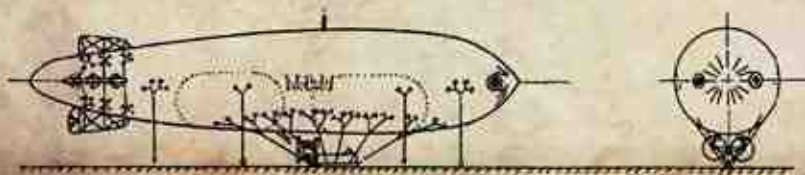
And so on...

As you can see, sandbox campaigns can be much more open-ended than plotted adventures. Various factions have their own motivations and agendas, and what happens will very much depend on how the PCs interact with them. If the GM definitely wanted the adventure to be a single evening, or a couple of evenings, she could leave out the Chuno Ggun agent and make sure the PCs finished off the inventor in Cloudless. But if she wanted to continue the adventures, she could let the dice fall where they will, and see whether Blauhimmel escapes or not, then continue from there. Even if Blauhimmel does escape, the PCs may have some of his technology, and "Johnny Racid" will be interested in getting hold of it.

Which brings us to the next point...

ADVENTURES AND CAMPAIGNS

You've already seen, above, how what starts as a short adventure turns into a "campaign" – a whole series of adventures with recurring villains and the possibility of escalating events. Campaigns are where role-playing can be at its most fun, as PCs grow and change over time, and the world becomes





a living, breathing place with the PCs at the heart of it. As with a single adventure, its important that the players feel they can have an effect on the direction of the campaign. As the GM, you need to have some idea of where the campaign *might* go, and some ideas for grand finales and the like – if you just make it up as you go along, it can easily fizzle out. Better to bring it to a grand finale with the possibility of carrying on afterwards if the players are still excited, than to let it fizzle out because you’ve run out of ideas and have the players drop out of the game because they’re bored.

You can, of course, mix a sandbox campaign with plotted adventures. Going back to the sandbox version of *Blue Sky Thinking*, if Blauhimmel escapes from Cloudless, the PCs may return to Helium City, and get paid, then get involved in a completely different adventure (possibly a pre-written one), and only *after* that begin to hear rumors of automaton-zombies attacking Neobedouin. This gives the feeling of a real world, with events going on while the PCs are otherwise engaged. It also gives a feeling that the PCs’ actions have consequences. If some Neobedouin survivor of a zombie massacre says “It was that bastard, Herr Blauhimmel – someone should have put a stop to him long ago!”, they’re going to feel a certain responsibility and maybe the desire to finish what they failed to do before.

RUNNING THE GAME

OK, so you’ve got your first adventure planned. Time to try it out on your eager (or possibly bemused) players. You may have the phrase “No battle plan survives contact with the enemy” drifting through your head. Don’t think like that! The players are just as keen to have a good time as you are. If this is your first RPG, they’ll be willing to cut you some slack. If things get on top of you, suggest a short break while you get your notes in order. If you get a rule wrong, don’t worry – admit it, and move on from there. If

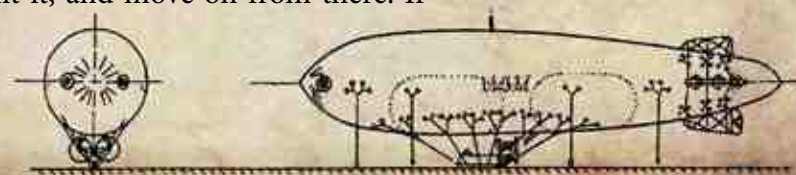
one of the players seems to know the rules better than you, suggest they help by explaining things when you get to a rule you’re not clear about.

Don’t be worried about making a fool of yourself – but don’t feel you have to. Some GMs will put on different accents for different NPCs and really ham it up – others will just say “He has a Texas drawl,” and carry on speaking for him in a normal voice.

Remember to describe things. It’s no use having an epic vision of a vast golden-towered sky city, under attack from a fleet of pirate ships, slowly tilting as its gas-bags are cut away and drift upward, the towers tumbling, the screams of the dying drifting faintly on the breeze as they plummet to the snowy mountains far below – if all you tell the players is “You can see a sky city. It’s crashing.” On the other hand, five minutes of excruciatingly detailed description of Captain Jeremy “Germey” Johnson’s privy is probably more than anyone needs to know. If art is more your thing than words, draw a picture – they’re said to be worth a thousand words!

Try to keep the game moving. If someone wants to do some shopping for new equipment, by all means let them – but if everyone else is getting bored while one player browses the equipment chapter for a new gun, and you know they’re not going to get to use the gun this session, suggest they can buy their equipment after the game’s over, and get on with the Neovictorian tea dance scene. If it seems like the game session is getting bogged down in discussing a rule you don’t quite understand, remember that it’s the story that’s important, not the rules – make a decision (a fair one, of course) and move on. Some people love rules and will talk about them for hours, given the chance – others find them terribly dull and are likely to start talking about last night’s TV if you don’t get the problem out of the way quickly.

Above all, remember that it’s *your* game. If there’s something in the game that you don’t like, whether





that be rules or background, change it or ignore it. If you think the chase rules are too complicated, replace them with a single opposed die roll to see if the chaser or chased won. If you think the world would be a better place if the Emperor Victor and the Neovictorian upper classes were all vampires, make it so!

MAKE NOTES

Making notes is a good idea. There's nothing worse than turning up to a session to find that everyone has a slightly different take on what happened in the last session, particularly if there's been a few weeks between sessions. As GM, you should probably make a few notes at the end of the evening, even if its only "Herr Blauhimmel killed. Johnny Racid escaped in Blauhimmel's airship with Zombifier Device, pursued by PCs." Sometimes players will make their own notes; if there's one person who does this all the time, and her notes are accurate, you can probably rely on them, and not bother yourself (though beware the day when she can't come to the game!).

PROBLEM PLAYERS

OK, sometimes there are problem players. But not very often. Mostly, everyone's there to have fun. Remember that you're the referee as well as everything else. If one of the players is talking too much and its obvious that someone else finds it intimidating, gently ask the offender to stop for a minute and let others have their say. If one of the players is quiet, make sure you prompt them to speak (if they want to – some players have a great time and barely say a word, only coming to life when there are dice to roll and things to hit!). If someone keeps challenging your judgments, suggest (politely) that they run an adventure for the group – it'll give you a chance to play a PC, and might make the challenger appreciate the difficulties involved.

But don't worry about problem players unless they appear – as long as everyone's obviously having fun,

and no-one feels left out, things will go swimmingly.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

As the GM, you'll be playing lots of different characters (whether they be major villains, minor crooks, members of the airship crew, strangers met in bars, Bargefolk families, Neobedouin tribespeople, or whatever) while the other players only have one character to play. Thankfully, you don't need to go through the whole character creation process for every character the PCs meet. Often, if they only have a speaking role and don't need to demonstrate any skills, your NPCs don't need stats at all. And even if they *do* need some numbers, most NPCs don't need the whole kit and caboodle of Attributes, Skills, Talents and Complications.

To make life easier, NPCs can be given just two Attributes:

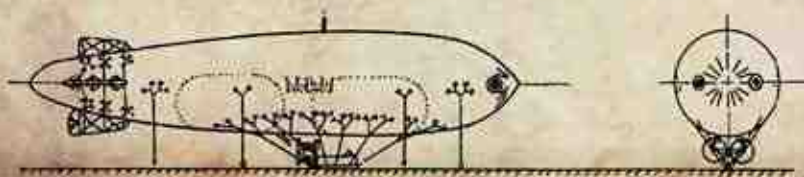
Physical – representing Strength, Dexterity and Fortitude.

Mental – representing Presence, Wits and Resolve.

If coming up with a character on the fly, decide on Mental and Physical, give the character 3 or 4 skills with a few points in each, 2 Health dice, plus another Health die for every two points of Physical, a weapon if necessary, and that's about it. Initiative is equal to Physical + Mental. (If you want a character to be particularly nippy, give him Perception skill and add that too). If there's something particularly distinctive about them, you might want to give them a Trait or Complication, but those can probably be left for the major NPCs such as villains and allies.

Example: *The PCs are at a Neobedouin festival when one of them insults a young beast dancer. The beast dancer challenges the PC to a fight. The GM wasn't expecting this, but comes up with a character on the fly:*

Physical +2, **Mental** +2; **Skills:** Athletics 5, Dance 7,





Intimidate 3, Martial Arts (Beast Dancing) 8 [Beast Claws 8 Damage]

Health Dice: OO/OO/OO – OO -2 / OO -4 / OO -8 / OO -16

Note that the damage caused by the Neobedouin's beast claws is listed. Health dice have been represented by O's so that the GM can tick them off as the character gets injured. The chances are that a Neobedouin beast dancer would have more skills than that, but they're not needed for the fight.

Sometimes a character can be defined with only one number. If the PCs come staggering into town badly wounded, you can quickly decide that there's a medical man called Doctor Tyrone, who has a Medicine total of +9 (including his Mental Attribute) and that's all you need to know to heal the PCs. If they then befriend him and he becomes a major part of the campaign, you can give him more stats, otherwise you needn't bother.

READY MADE NPCs

To make life easier, here are a whole bunch of ready-made NPCs. Often, you'll just be able to pull one of these out when you need it. Even if there isn't one that quite fits the bill, you can quickly tweak one of these to fit, swapping a skill here, putting an Attribute up or down a little.

Most of these characters are assumed to be a little above average – a challenge for a beginning character. For an average character of the same type, reduce Physical and Mental to 0 and knock a few points off skills. Remember that Physical gets added to melee and unarmed damage – the weapon damage statistic just gives the base damage for the relevant weapon.

ADMINISTRATOR

Ruler of a Neovictorian city block.

Physical +2, **Mental** +5; **Skills:** Appraisal 2, Bull 1, Intimidate 3

Health Dice: OO/OO/OO – OO -2 / OO -4 / OO -8 / OO -16

AUTOCRAT

Automaton in charge of an ID station between city blocks.

Physical +1, **Mental** +6; **Skills:** Charm 1, General Knowledge 3, Perception 8

Health Dice: OO/OO – OO -2 / OO -4 / OO -8 / OO -16

BARGE CREW

Man or woman in charge of a Bargefolk boat.

Physical +3, **Mental** +1; **Skills:** Firearms 1 [Steamrifle 9 Damage], Fisticuffs 1 [Punch 1 Damage, Kick 2 Damage], Navigation +2

Health Dice: OO/OO/OO – OO -2 / OO -4 / OO -8 / OO -16

BEAST DANCER

Young Neobedouin martial artist.

Physical +3, **Mental** +2; **Skills:** Athletics 5, Dance 7, Intimidate 3, Martial Arts (Beast Dancing) 8 [Punch 2 Damage, Kick 3 Damage], Specialized Weapon (beast claws) 4 [Beast Claws 8 Damage], Survival 4

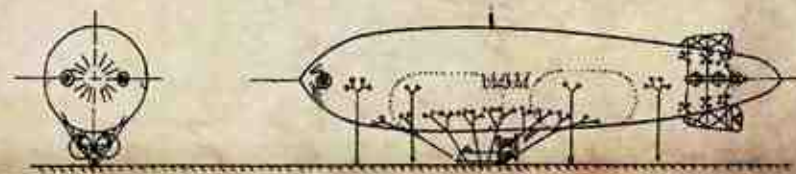
Health Dice: OO/OO/OO – OO -2 / OO -4 / OO -8 / OO -16

CHUNO GGUN

Elite Imperial soldier (you don't want to mess with him!).

Physical +7, **Mental** +5; **Skills:** Athletics 3, Dodge 2, Firearms 6 [Steamrifle 9 Damage], Intimidate 6, Swordplay +2 [Military Sword 7 Damage], Interrogation 3, Martial Arts (Baritsu) 3 [Punch 2 Damage, Kick 3 Damage]

Health Dice: OO/OO/OO/OO/OO – OO -2 / OO -4



AIRSHIP PIRATES



RUNNING THE GAME

/ OO -8 / OO -16

INVENTOR

An eccentric inventor.

Physical +3, **Mental** +9; **Skills:** Engineer (any) 4, Research 4, Science (any) 3

Health Dice: OO/OO/OO – OO -2 / OO -4 / OO -8 / OO -16

LADY

An upper class Neovictorian lady.

Physical +2, **Mental** +4; **Skills:** Conversation 4, Etiquette 3, Empathy 2, Fashion 3, Instrument (piano, violin or singing) 2

Health Dice: OO/OO/OO – OO -2 / OO -4 / OO -8 / OO -16

LORD

An upper class Neovictorian Lord.

Physical +2, **Mental** +6; **Skills:** Etiquette 3, Fashion 2, General Knowledge 2, Intimidate 1, Leadership 1

Health Dice: OO/OO/OO – OO -2 / OO -4 / OO -8 / OO -16

OUTRIDER

A Neobedouin scout.

Physical +4, **Mental** +4; **Skills:** Archery 2 [Yew Bow 6 Damage], Firearms 2 [Steamrifle 9 Damage], Survival 3, Tracking 3

Health Dice: OO/OO/OO/OO – OO -2 / OO -4 / OO -8 / OO -16

NAVAL OFFICER

A Neovictorian naval officer.

Physical +4, **Mental** +3; **Skills:** Etiquette 2, Leadership 2, Pilot 1, Swordplay 2 [Military Sword 7 Damage],

Tactics 1

Health Dice: OO/OO/OO/OO – OO -2 / OO -4 / OO -8 / OO -16

PEELER

An automaton law enforcement officer.

Physical +6, **Mental** +2; **Skills:** Blunt Weapons 2 [Night Stick 4 Damage], Firearms 1 [Needlepistol 5 Damage] Intimidate 3, Interrogation 1, Perception 2, Specialized Weapon (Whisk) [Whisk 6 Damage]

Health Dice: OO/OO/OO/OO/OO – OO -2 / OO -4 / OO -8 / OO -16

PIRATE CAPTAIN

Captain of a pirate airship.

Physical +4, **Mental** +4; **Skills:** Bull 2, Navigation 2, Skylore 3, Swordplay 4 [Military Sword 7 Damage]

Health Dice: OO/OO/OO/OO – OO -2 / OO -4 / OO -8 / OO -16

PIRATE/MARINE

Ordinary air sailor, handy in a scrap.

Physical +3, **Mental** +2; **Skills:** Fisticuffs 2 [Punch 1 Damage, Kick 2 Damage], Gunnery 1, Swordplay 2 [Cutlass 7 Damage]

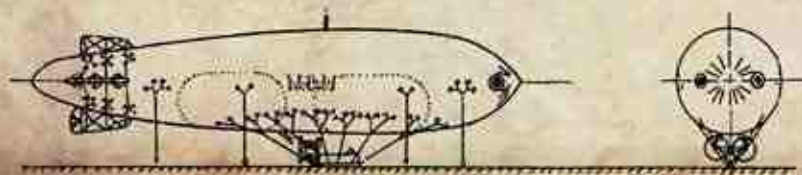
Health Dice: OO/OO/OO – OO -2 / OO -4 / OO -8 / OO -16

PROSTITUTE

Somebody who provides sexual services for cash.

Physical +4, **Mental** +5; **Skills:** Appraisal 2, Charm 3, Dodge 3, Empathy 2, Seduction 3, Streetwise 2

Health Dice: OO/OO/OO/OO – OO -2 / OO -4 / OO -8 / OO -16





SHAMAN

Neobedouin shaman.

Physical +3, **Mental** +8; **Skills:** Bull 4, Charm 2, Empathy 4, Intimidate 2, Medicine 3, Survival 3

Health Dice: OO/OO/OO – OO -2 / OO -4 / OO -8 / OO -16

SKYLOFT OFFICIAL

Bureaucrat in a Skyloft administration.

Physical +2, **Mental** +5; **Skills:** Appraisal 3, Bull 2, Business 2, Etiquette 2

Health Dice: OO/OO/OO – OO -2 / OO -4 / OO -8 / OO -16

THUG

A petty criminal.

Physical +6, **Mental** +2; **Skills:** Blunt Weapon 2 [Cosh 4 Damage], Dodge 1, Fisticuffs 3 [Punch 1 Damage, Kick 2 Damage], Intimidate 2, Streetwise 2

Health Dice: OO/OO/OO/OO/OO – OO -2 / OO -4 / OO -8 / OO -16

TRIBAL CHIEF

Leader of a large Neobedouin tribe

Physical +4, **Mental** +5; **Skills:** Appraisal 2, Business 1, Fisticuffs 4 [Punch 1 Damage, Kick 2 Damage], Leadership 3, Survival 2

Health Dice: OO/OO/OO/OO – OO -2 / OO -4 / OO -8 / OO -16

URCHIN

Wretched city child.

Physical +1, **Mental** +3; **Skills:** Appraisal 2, Athletics 1, Bull 2, Conceal 3, Pick Pockets 4, Streetwise 2

Health Dice: OO/OO – OO -2 / OO -4 / OO -8 / OO -16

THEMES OF AIRSHIP PIRATES

Airship Pirates is a game of steampunk post-apocalypse time-travel pirate adventure. That covers a lot of bases. You can choose to emphasize each of those elements separately, or mix them together. Let's have a look at each of the elements and what they bring to the gaming table.

STEAMPUNK

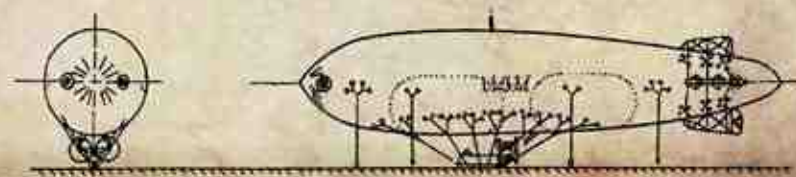
*"If you map out my psychology,
It will look like archaeology,
I've got no love for this society,
I prefer total free autonomy."*

– Abney Park, *Throw Them Overboard*

Steampunk lays a lot of emphasis on a retro (specifically Victorian) look at the world, whether that be in manners, technology, fashions or whatever. But if it were just about recreating the Victorian age, it wouldn't need "punk" in the word. Steampunk is the Victorian age with attitude – there's a rebellious streak running through it, a questioning of Victorian attitudes to such things as race, gender, imperialism; and there's also a questioning of modern values such as mass production over craftsmanship, and creativity as a thing to be packaged and sold by big corporations. Steampunk turns the assumptions of both the Victorian age and the modern world on their heads, creating a world of brass and wood and steam, where technology is beautiful and still understandable by the person who owns it, where Victorian fashions mix with post-modern lifestyle options.

In the game, steampunk can be seen in the Skyfolk's attitudes to their technology and airships, their excitement over the creation of new inventions and the many cultures which have grown up in the sky cities, in opposition to the stultifying Victorian squalor of the Change Cage cities.

It can also be seen in that very same Victorian





oppression. *Airship Pirates* is not a game about being all imperial and lording it over the lower orders and the primitive natives – it's about *escaping* the straight-jacket of an oppressive society, specifically the Change Cage cities, to a freer world where an individual and his or her choices make a difference. (That said, if you really *want* to play a group of upper class toffs sneering at the lower orders and sailing about in an IAN frigate to "civilize" the dirty Neobedouin savages, we won't stop you – it's your game!).

POST-APOCALYPSE

*"Fingers of rust gently intertwine,
Lace the seams of sacrifice in beautiful decline.
Catalysis of creations of all that was mankind,
Pull our corruption towards nature,
the state that's predefined."*

– Abney Park, *Beautiful Decline*

Post-apocalypse stories are, on the surface, about the horrors of a collapsed civilization and the grim life that is led in its ruins. But let's face it, that's not really what they're about at all – they're about living in a world where most of the people, together with their laws and social conventions, are gone, and the survivors have the elbow room to create new societies, to live as they want and do what they want. They're about the struggle for freedom in a world where it seems possible that the struggle can be won.

This is largely seen in the game in the lives of the Neobedouins, who made the decision early on that they would rather live free in the wilderness than live safe and oppressed in the Change Cage cities. They live a life of love and laughter, joy and tears – the dangers of the wild beasts contrast with the comfort of the tribe. And though they may live with death only a heartbeat away, they are never in any doubt that they are alive!

Post-apocalypse stories are also about exploration and discovery. There's a huge world out there – the whole of North America, a wilderness! – and very little is known about it in 2150. There's always





something new to be discovered, or something old and lost to be rediscovered. The world is full of empty, decaying cities, where the knowledge and technology of the old times lies waiting, guarded by the man-eating beasts that prowl the ruins.

TIME TRAVEL

*"Just when I thought we had won,
We were back at the start again.
With no wind in our sails and the doldrums setting in.
Now I'm covered in grease from my head to toes,
Slappin' the iron but the engine's froze,
And there's nothin' left but post-apocalypse punk."*

– Abney Park, *Post-Apocalypse Punk*

So what is time travel about? Again, it's partly about exploration and discovery. If the North American wilderness is huge, the period of time from 1650 to 2150 is even huger! Who knows what you're going to find in some past age, particularly when you come from a time when history books are few and far between and the past is a mish-mash of legends, distorted facts and plain misconceptions? They say that the past is another country. If you manage to screw the timeline up, you may well find, when you get back to it, that the present is another country too! So if time travel is about exploration, its also about freedom and responsibility. If you have the ultimate power to change all of time, you have the freedom to stamp your mark upon it – but you also have the responsibility not to screw it up, or you'll find yourself living with the consequences – or dying from the consequences.

PIRATES

*"With a crew of drunken pilots,
We're the only airship pirates,
We're full of hot air and we're starting to rise,
We're the terror of the skies,*

But a danger to ourselves."

– Abney Park, *Airship Pirate*

Last, but not least, we come to pirates. In reality, pirates were mostly pretty nasty – murderous, desperate cut-throats who thought of nothing but their own survival. But, of course, the romantic image of the pirate is of the freedom-loving rascal who thumbs his nose at authority, and this is the sort of pirate who inhabits the world of *Airship Pirates*. That is not to say all pirates are good at heart, but mass slaughter, rape and slavery should be kept for the villains, a bad example against which the PCs set themselves. The characters in an *Airship Pirates* game should be lovable rogues, not psychopaths!

FREEDOM, EXPLORATION, RESPONSIBILITY AND CONSEQUENCES

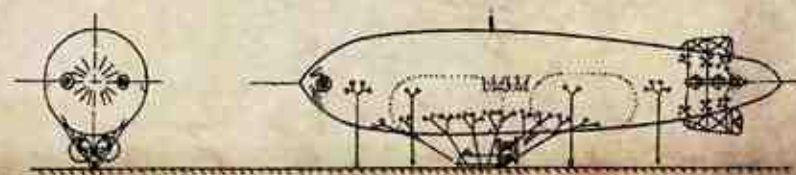
As has been seen, four main themes run through the *Airship Pirates* game: freedom, exploration, responsibility and consequences. How do these feed into the adventures you run?

FREEDOM

*"Run, little girl,
I've got your back, you're covered now,
Go and run and hide yourself, you're safe."*

– Abney Park, *This Dark and Twisted Road*

There are various ways that the theme of freedom can be brought into a game. The two obvious ways are through rescue and escape – the PCs may be rescuing someone who has been imprisoned (whether physically, in the Change Cage, or socially, in a loveless arranged marriage); or they may themselves be imprisoned (for crimes real or imaginary) and





need to escape. But the theme of freedom can also be portrayed by a wild Neobedouin party being interrupted by a Chuno Ggun raid; the joy in the streets of a sky city after the death of an evil dictator; or a daring raid on a Change Cage city which leaves the authorities looking foolish (see the story at the beginning of the book).

EXPLORATION

*"As long as the road's clear,
A song is in my ear,
And I will kiss this world goodbye"*

– Abney Park, *Wanderlust*

As has been said earlier, exploration comes up as a theme in the exploration of the wilderness and the exploration of the past. Deep dark forests, vast trackless deserts, bleak mountains, mosquito-infested swamps, all can become a place of adventure, particularly if the PCs' airship makes a forced landing and the characters must trek miles for help. Ruined cities are also a scene of exploration; tottering skyscrapers, buried cellars, miles and miles of tumble-down houses, any of which might hide wonders of past technology or turn out to be the lair of a ferocious beast.

But perhaps the most interesting form of exploration is that of other cultures; whether that's experiencing life on the road with the Neobedouin, finding a sky city in a hidden valley in the Rocky Mountains, or trying to negotiate the strange class attitudes of a Neovictorian city. And the past is a whole new kettle of fish; how much is this strange money worth? How on earth do I cross the road in all this traffic? Why are all the men looking at my legs like that?

RESPONSIBILITY AND CONSEQUENCES

*"We're way in over our heads, it seems,
And this place is coming apart at the seams,
We can't stop or control our direction,*

The further we go, the less protection."

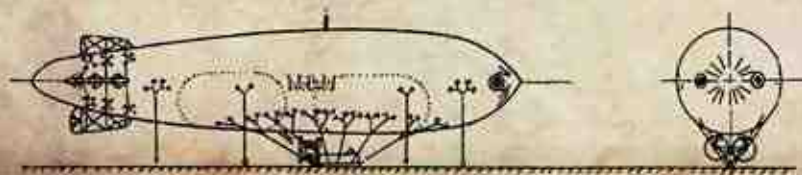
– Abney Park, *Too Far to Turn Back*

As Abney Park and the crew of the *HMS Ophelia* have found, actions have consequences. You might set out in the morning with the intention of doing good, but if you don't think it through (or think it through with insufficient information), you can really make a mess. This is something that should be emphasized in the game. The PCs' actions in the game world have consequences – if you break the law, the forces of law and order *will* come after you; if you piss someone off, they will do their best to get their own back; if you sack a sky city, there will be refugees, and your reputation will quickly get ahead of you. The rules are set up so that the PCs are heroes, who can perform amazing stunts that mere mortals wouldn't contemplate. That's not to say their heroism will have positive results. An epic raid on the White House to assassinate Victor Hypocrates on the day of his presidential inauguration might go spectacularly well, but if you get back to 2150 to discover an overcrowded cyberpunk nightmare world, it doesn't mean that much.

INSPIRATION FROM THE SONGS

Listening to the songs of Abney Park can also give you good ideas for themes you can use in your games. The albums *Lost Horizons*, *Aether Shanties* and *End of Days* have been the main influence on the game. Certain themes run through the lyrics which can guide your ideas on what an *Airship Pirates* campaign could be like. Here are some ideas.

Abney Park always seem have bad luck; they might be heroic, but somehow it always goes wrong. In the song *Airship Pirate*, they attack an airship only to find it has "a crew of nuns and orphans." In *Post-Apocalypse Punk*, the crew "Tried to make a buck but we can barely stay aloft,/Tried to swing a deal but we pissed the wrong guys off." In *The Ballad of Captain*





Robert, the poor captain has to deal with a pretty unreliable crew: "Some went crazy, some went mad, some we kicked off ship in Chad"; but he remains strong – in *Until the Day I Die* he sings "I've chased this dream since I was five/And I have barely stayed alive/While folks have fallen off this ship/I have never lost my grip."

Mutiny seems a constant threat aboard the *HMS Ophelia*. In *Aether Shanty*, Abney Park sing of:

"The back-stabbing, loot-nabbing,
plans behind doors.
Running low on the rum and
depleting our stores.
Can't tell who's on our side and
who's ready to flip,
When we hit the next port the
whole crew could jump ship."

On top of that is their constant ability to find themselves in deep trouble. As *Too Far to Turn Back* says:

"We've come too far to turn back,
It's way too dark to unpack,
We'd stop right here but we're slipping
This ground is loose, we're not gripping."

The song *Wrath of Fate* returns to the theme of bad luck and constant near-disaster:

"The rain was blowing,
the lightning cracked,
All the windows smashed.
With sails scorched or barely there,
All our hopes were dashed.
With tattered lines and planking charred,
The ship stayed on its course,
Our fires lit the clouds around,
We all felt deep remorse."

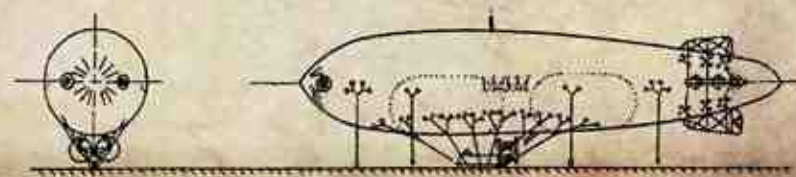
But then it repeats the sense of hope that the bad times can get better:

"But the crew stayed at its posts,
And the Captain at his wheel!
We all endured the wrath of fate,
But thought our fate was sealed.
A chain's as weak as its weakest link,
And rust did cut us through,
But strength in arms and hearts and head,
Held 'cause our course was true."

This sequence of events – bad luck, near-disaster, distrust, mutiny, despair, followed then by determination, a pulling together and finally survival, if not triumph – might well describe the course of the "perfect" *Airship Pirates* adventure!

Other Abney Park albums too, though not necessarily directly related to the world of the role-playing game, can inspire adventures and themes. As an example, here are adventure ideas that popped into my head on listening to *The Death of Tragedy*:

- *Stigmata Martyr*: A false messiah rises among the Neobedouin, promising to take them to a new home where they will be safe from the Imperial Air Navy. Is he genuine, or are the tribes being led astray?
- *The Wrong Side*: A dark and secretive youth movement grows in one of the Change Cage cities, which finds ways to avoid the curfew and delights in terrorizing the more law abiding citizens. Are they young rebels or something more sinister?
- *Dear Ophelia*: The whole of Hamlet could be re-run in the Emperor's Palace, with the players taking on the roles of Shakespeare's characters – would it end differently?
- *Sacrilege*: The PCs travel back in time to the seventeenth century. While engaged in a Neobedouin-style party in a remote area, they are set upon by peasants who accuse them of witchcraft and drag them back to their village to stand trial.
- *All the Myths Are True*: The PCs cause a change





in the timeline and return to 2150 to discover that “all the myths are true”; vampires and zombies stalk the land, and giant tentacled monsters lurk in the swamps surrounding Everglade.

- *Death of the Hero*: Traveling back to war-torn 17th century Europe, the PCs rescue a damsel in distress, and are hailed as heroes. The local villagers beg them to use their airship and futuristic technology to fight off an approaching army. If they don't help, the villagers will undoubtedly be slaughtered, but if they do, they may change the future. What will they do?
- *Love*: Hmm... werewolves? I think we're into a different sort of role-playing here!
- *Downtrodden*: Not an adventure idea, but it could be used as inspiration for a character, perhaps an aging beast dancer who never quite fitted into his tribe and feels bitter over a wasted life.
- *False Prophecy*: Another character song, perhaps this time an automaton who has stopped pretended to be a mindless machine and decided to flee from the Change Cage city she has inhabited for too long.

All these ideas can be used by a GM, or you can listen to the songs and come up with your own plots.

OTHER INSPIRATIONS

Of course, you're not limited to listening to Abney Park for your inspiration. No, really! Many songs can be good inspiration for adventures, as they often have a certain atmosphere, while being open to more than one interpretation. Once you start thinking about a favorite song in relation to the *Airship Pirates* world, you might find it seems to mean something other than it does in the real world and the ideas will start to flow.

Ideas can, of course be lifted and adapted from films, novels, newspaper headlines, or incidents in real life – just give it the *Airship Pirates* twist, and the ideas will

come flooding in!

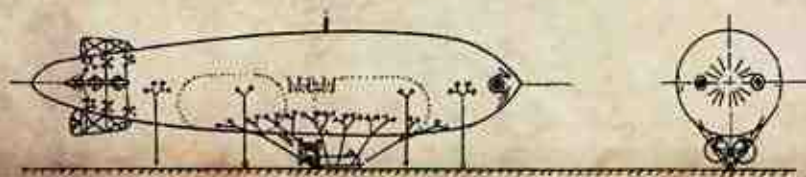
Pictures can also provide inspiration – they not only give you ideas for adventures and characters, but can be shown to your players so that they'll know where their characters are, or who they're talking to. The internet too is a great source of ideas – just do an image search for “steampunk” and “steampunk art” and you'll have enough characters, gadgets and adventure ideas to last you a while.

And don't forget, we'll be producing more adventures and sourcebooks for the *Airship Pirates RPG* – look out for those too!

CINEMATIC ADVENTURE

As you might have figured out by now, *Airship Pirates* isn't meant to be a realistic portrayal of life after a world-wide apocalypse. Its meant to portray a world as depicted in science fiction adventure, whether that be the more fanciful Victorian SF of the nineteenth century, the pulp adventure magazines of the 1930s and 1940s, or the Hollywood blockbusters of modern times. Characters are larger-than-life, fights are spectacular and unlikely, and the “sets” are as scenic as possible. Airships aren't overly burdened by realistic worries over buoyancy and ballast – they'll go where you want, when you want, unless things go wrong, and then they're likely to go *horribly* wrong.

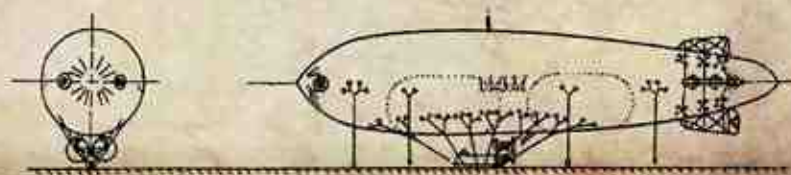
Remember, as GM you have an unlimited special effects budget. If you can imagine something and describe it or draw it, the players will be there with you. Isla Aether isn't on top of Mount Whitney, and the Emperor's Palace isn't in Yellowstone Park, because that's the most practical and sensible places for them to be – it's because they're the most spectacular! You've got the whole of North America to play with – stunning scenery, mighty skyscrapers crumbling into decay, long-extinct beasts brought





back to life. This is your backdrop – use it!

Spectacle should be part of a cinematic adventure. If the PCs are attempting a heist from Helium City, don't have it happen on a dull day with a bit of drizzle, have it happen on a day when a storm front is approaching and tornadoes are dancing along the horizon, getting closer. If a fight on a sky city leads to an explosion, make sure it cuts some of the cables attaching the city to its gasbags, so that the platform begins to tilt and slide toward a jagged peak below. If the PCs are fighting their rivals hand-to-hand, don't have them fighting on a bit of flat grassland, make sure the fight's in a howdah on the back of a rampaging indrikkus, on the roof of a train, or floundering in a swamp in the Everglades while crocodiles look on hungrily. It won't cost you any more, and your players are more likely to be talking about it for days afterwards.

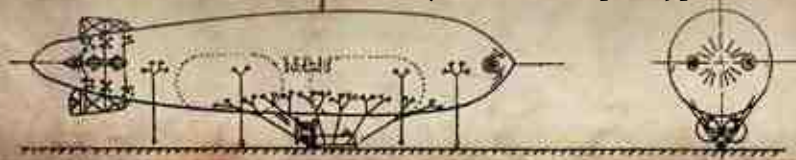




TIME TRAVEL

*"It was 1906 but we screwed the timeline up.
It wasn't just for kicks but I'm afraid that the gig is up.
Trading through time every kind of junk,
Smashed the past and messed the whole thing up,
Now there's nothing left but post-apocalypse punk.*

– Abney Park, Post Apocalypse Punk





The first and most important things to remember about time travel are

THE SIX GOLDEN RULES:

- Time travel is uncommon.
- Time travel is difficult.
- Time travel is infrequent.
- Screwing up the timeline is difficult.
- There's only one timeline, so look after it.
- A time traveler's personal past cannot be changed.

We'll be exploring the golden rules below, but first...

A BRIEF HISTORY OF TIME TRAVEL

It all began in 1906, with the invention of the Chrononautilus by a certain Doctor Leguminous Calgori. This could be said to be the beginning of the Great Apocalypse, though of course no-one knew it at the time. Fitting his time travel device to an airship, the *HMS Ophelia*, created especially by Britain's Royal Navy, he set off on the winds of time with a crew of hardened sailors – their mission, to promote the interests of the British Empire by meddling with the timeline.

That was the theory, anyway. Due to a miscalculation in setting the Chrononautilus, they jumped forward to 2006, where they were rather surprised to collide with a small aircraft carrying Abney Park to a gig. The rest, as they say, is history. Or it would be history, if Abney Park hadn't screwed it up.

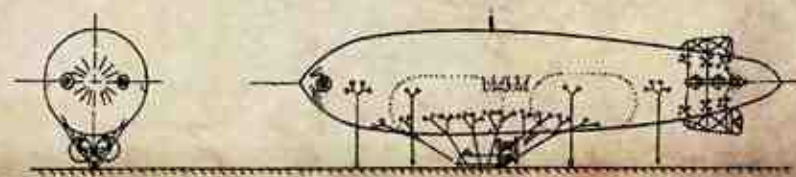
Here is not the place to go into exactly what Captain Robert and the surviving band members did to

change time so irrecoverably (all will no doubt be revealed in Captain Robert's forthcoming memoirs, *The Wrath of Fate!*). Suffice to say, their intentions were good – they wanted to make the world a better place. Interfering in a battle here, kidnapping a dictator there, preventing an atrocity somewhere else, they created a world of peace and tranquility. A world ripe for conquest by a ruthless and charismatic dictator called Victor Hypocrates (the first of that name) whose mad schemes for world domination and a better tomorrow fell upon the welcoming ears of a population with no safeguards against such insane charm.

When Abney Park and the *Ophelia* arrived in 2150 to see what they had achieved, they found a world whose population had been decimated, people huddled in grim cities against the savage beasts of the wilderness, and the world ruled by Emperor Victor Joseph Hypocrates III, who cared nothing for people as long as nature thrived.

TIME TRAVEL AND THE PLAYER CHARACTERS

But the Chrononautilus aboard the *HMS Ophelia* is not the only one in existence. Dr Calgori created another as a back-up. When he failed to return from his initial mission, it was assumed the device didn't work and the second one was put into storage. Since then it has passed from place to place, and has eventually ended up in the North America of 2150. Quite where it is, and when the PCs will find it depends on you (some suggestions are given on p.123). If you want a game with a lot of time travel, introduce it into the campaign immediately; if you would rather experience the world of 2150 as it is currently before risking its destruction, make the Chrononautilus the reward at the end of an epic adventure, or an item chance-found along the way.





THE GOLDEN RULES OF TIME TRAVEL

Here, the golden rules of time travel are explained...

1. TIME TRAVEL IS UNCOMMON

As has already been said, only Abney Park and the PCs have time travel devices – there is no time patrol, there are no other time-traveling airship pirates. Chances are, you'll probably never even run into the *Ophelia* on your travels, but you *might* see the results of their meddling, unless they decide to settle down and leave well alone in future.

2. TIME TRAVEL IS DIFFICULT

For those experiencing it, time travel is NO FUN. This can not be emphasized enough. Anyone who has time-jumped once will think twice before doing it again. Sane individuals would never dream of putting themselves through such an ordeal. Thankfully, the PCs are airship pirates, which probably rules them out of the “sane” category. The rules and details of the process are described on pp.252-60, but to explain briefly: as the Chrononutilus warms up preparatory to the time jump, those close by are overcome with an unreasonable and unreasoning dread, which those who experience it come to call “the Fear”. This is not an understandable fear of the unknown but a strange physiological effect of the chronomorphic field given off by the device. The best protection against this effect found so far is to get very, very drunk – rum, of course, being the medicine of choice for the discerning pirate.

Unfortunately, this is not the best way of dealing the with second part of the time travel process; arrival. When the airship pops into existence in its destination time period, the displacement of air causes the vehicle to be surrounded by a small but very violent thunderstorm – not a very tenable situation for an airship crewed by drunkards. It can all go horribly wrong quite quickly!

There's also the problem of limits. The Chrononutilus

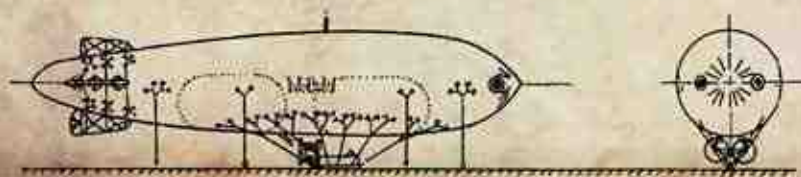
was invented in 1906. For some reason, possibly related to its date of manufacture, it is impossible to travel more than about 250 years in either direction from that date. The backward limit appears to be about 1650 and the forward limit is about 2150. It is possible that a Chrononutilus created in 2150 would be able to jump as far as 2400, but there doesn't appear to be anyone in 2150 who understands the principles of temporal physics well enough to create a new time travel device.

3. TIME TRAVEL IS INFREQUENT

The Chrononutilus is a temperamental device, prone to malfunction and maladjustment. It doesn't always get you to your requested temporal and physical destination, and occasionally doesn't work at all! On top of that is the fact that you can't just jump to exactly when you'd like. Due to strange spatio-temporal effects which are, as yet, unexplained, the Chrononutilus is tied into the gravity well of the sun, but not that of the Earth. You have to jump in multiples of exactly a year – if you try to jump (for instance) six months, you'll find yourself in the depths of space, because the Earth will be on the other side of its orbit around the sun at the time. (This is one of the reasons time travel is best done in an airship – to minimize the risk of materializing in the middle of a mountain or a building that wasn't there at the start point). On top of that, once you jump, you're going to be stuck in your destination time, usually for at least a week, because it takes that long to do the calculations for another jump, even with access to a difference engine; without one, it's going to take twice as long. There are no electronic computers in 2150.

4. SCREWING UP THE TIMELINE IS DIFFICULT

Contrary to popular fiction, it really isn't all that easy to screw the timeline up. Stepping on a butterfly will result in a dead butterfly, but is unlikely to have much





of an affect on the future. The timeline is remarkably resilient, and will resist all but the most major changes. Most changes to the past will have only a minor effect in the future, and will smooth themselves out within a relatively short period. Prevent a famous inventor from doing his work, and the chances are, someone else will come along and invent things which are similar; the details will be a bit different, but there won't be any major changes in the timeline. If you kill the Wright brothers, it's likely that Alberto Santos-Dumont will create a working airplane instead; the history books will be a little different, but by 1915 the fighter planes of the Great War will be pretty much the same. But there are some things – which we call “change points” – which *will* have a major effect on the timeline. A change point might be a particularly significant battle, an important world leader, an invention that no-one else had thought of, etc. Interfere with a change point and the repercussions down the timeline can be catastrophic. The trouble is, its not always easy to recognize a change point until its already been changed. We'll discuss change points later, on pp.255-8.

5. THERE'S ONLY ONE TIMELINE, SO LOOK AFTER IT

Once you've changed the timeline, that's it. It's changed. If you liked the future you came from and find you've screwed it up, the only way you can get it back is to try to undo your own mess. You can't flip your airship to an alternate reality where you didn't make a mess, and put your mistakes behind you. You have to undo what you did, or make another significant change that will get things back on track. But there's one problem – it's not easy to get back to the place where you made the mess. If there's already a Chrononautilus in the time you're jumping to, this sets up what Doctor Calgori calls a “standing chromorphological wave interference effect (or SCWIE), which makes the time jump calculation *extremely* difficult; get it wrong and you're likely to

end up in a different time entirely. So meeting yourself is going to be an extremely rare occurrence, and teaming up with whole crowds of yourself virtually impossible.

6. A TIME TRAVELER'S PERSONAL PAST CANNOT BE CHANGED

Except in exceptional circumstances, changing the timeline doesn't alter a character's own past. A *character's personal timeline is unchangeable*. Once you are “outside the timeline”, your past and memory remain the same, only the world around you changes. When you travel in time, you in effect create a whole new timeline, separate from the one you left; your old timeline becomes inaccessible (see rule 5 above). So a character who has screwed up the timeline and changed the present world to an overcrowded hellhole will still remember the wilderness of his youth, even though it never existed in the timeline in which he currently exists.

THE MECHANICS OF TIME TRAVEL

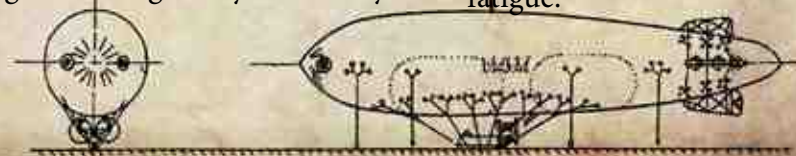
As has been said above, time travel is difficult. Having said that, we've tried to make the mechanics as easy as possible. Time travel is unlikely to be a frequent occurrence in your campaign, but something special and memorable.

USING THE CHRONONAUTILUS

Use of the Chrononautilus (p.123) requires the Science (Temporal Physics) skill. A series of complex calculations must be made, which takes seven days (working 8 hours per day) – assuming the use of a difference engine.

If no difference engine is available for the calculations, it will take fourteen days to do the calculations (again, working 8 hours a day).

Attempts to do more than eight hours a day on calculations are likely to lead to mistakes due to fatigue.





Once the calculations have been made, the character must make a Science (Temporal Physics) roll to activate the time travel device. The following penalties apply:

Situation	Penalty
For every day less than a full week spent on the calculations.	3 black dice
For every hour over 8 in a day that the calculator spends.	1 black die
If attempting to get to a time where a Chrononautilus is already present. (This is cumulative – if there are two Chrononautiluses present, the penalty will be 24 black dice, etc).	12 black dice

Remember the following rules:

- A temporal jump must be made in exact units of a year. (E.g. If it is noon on 21st April 2150, you can only jump to noon on 21st April in some other year). Failure to do so *will* result in complete destruction of the airship and all crew – no exceptions! Luckily, this is inscribed quite clearly on the side of the Chrononautilus (see p.123).
- Attempts to jump past the end of 2150, or before 1650 will result in nothing happening. The Chrononautilus will simply fail to function.

Once the roll is made, consult the following table:

Successes gained	Effect
1	Arrive 2D6x1000 miles from the right place
2	Arrive 2D6x100 miles from the right place.
3-6	Arrive 2D6x10 miles from the right place.
7-10	Arrive 2D6 miles from the right place.
11+	Arrive in exactly the right place.

Exactly where the PCs end up is at the GM's discretion, but should usually make for the most exciting arrival possible!

Important: Remember how many successes you gained on the roll – it will also effect the amount of damage the airship and crew suffer on arriving at their destination!

Example 1: Professor Golightly has Wits 4 and Science (Temporal Physics) 3. His airship is currently in 2150, and he wishes to go back to 2011 and attempt to assassinate the infamous Doctor Emmerson, who began the uber-beast breeding program. He is in no particular hurry, so has no

penalties to his roll. He rolls his dice pool of 7 dice and gets 4 successes. The GM rolls 3D6 to see how far he is from his intended target; she gets 11, and multiplies it by 10. Professor Golightly arrives in 2011, 110 miles from his target point – above Washington DC and right in front of a military fly-past for the Emperor's birthday! Time for evasive maneuvers...

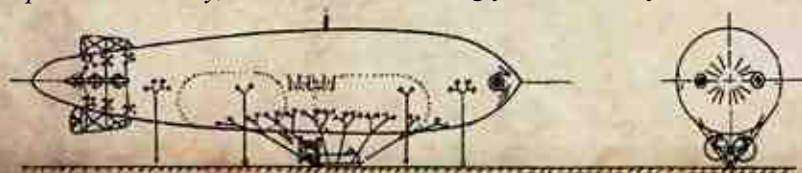
FOUL FAILURE

In the case of a Foul Failure, the airship arrives not in the wrong place, but in the wrong time! This can be decided at the whim of the GM (to make for the best plot), or using the following rule:

Roll 10D6 and add up the pips, rerolling any 6s and adding them to the total. This is the number of years which the airship travels from its starting date. Roll 1D6 – if it is odd, the airship arrives *before* the time it set off from, if it is even, it will arrive *after* the time it set off from. Remember that the rules about not traveling before 1650 or after 2150 still apply – if such a result comes up, either have them arrive in 1650 or 2150, or flip the result of the odd/even dice roll.

Also, roll dice to find the distance from target as though 1 success had been gained; i.e. The airship will be 3D6x1000 miles from the target.

Example 2: Professor Golightly's crew have been having an overly exciting time in 2011. They've failed to get anywhere near the person they were planning to assassinate, and now find themselves pursued by the Emperor's forces. They need to make a quick time jump, but haven't done the calculations. The Professor scribbles some equations on the back of an envelope, and says he thinks he has the answer after only eight hours! He has his normal dice pool of 7, and spends 3 Fate Points to get 3 automatic successes on top of whatever he rolls. But he has $6 \times 3 = 12$ black dice for the six days less than the normal seven he should be spending. He gets a bad roll and only has 1 success, making for a total of 4 with the successes he bought





with Fate Points. But he has seven successes on the black dice, leading to a Foul Failure! The GM rolls 10D6 and gets a total of 30, then rolls a 1, to show that the airship has jumped from 2011 to 1981. Rolling 2D6 and getting 11, she multiplies this by 1,000 – the airship is not only in the wrong time, its 11,000 miles from where it started. Since the circumference of the Earth is only 24,901 miles, this puts the airship almost halfway round the world from its starting point near Washington DC. The GM arbitrarily decides that they've materialized above the desert of central Australia! The crew will be able to tell more or less where they are with a successful Navigation roll, once the stars are out (or possibly by spotting a kangaroo!) – but they've no way of knowing what year it is until they can find someone who knows, which might take a while as there was no western colonization of Australia in this timeline...

MAKING A TIME JUMP WITHOUT CALCULATIONS

This is never a good idea. But if there's no-one with the Science (Temporal Physics) skill, or there isn't time to spend at least eight hours doing the calculations, or someone decides to just fiddle with the dials and pull the lever to see what happens, use the following rules:

Roll 6 dice.

- If all 6 come up as 6s, the ship will arrive safely in some time or other, using the rules for a Foul Failure above, to find out when and where.
- If the dice *don't* all come up as 6s, the ship has materialized in space when the Earth doesn't happen to be there, and everyone has but a few moments to see the wonders of the universe in all their glory before they die a horrible death.
- A kind GM may allow one of the players to spend a Scripting Die (i.e. 6 Fate Points) to turn the horrible fate into a slightly less horrible fate – they survive the jump, but are in whatever time and place the GM decides!

THE FEAR

As has been stated earlier, time travel is No Fun! Once the dials of the Chrononautilus have been set and the button is pressed, it takes 30 seconds for the chromomorphic field to build up – this causes a phenomenon known among those who have experienced it as the Fear. Apply the following rules:

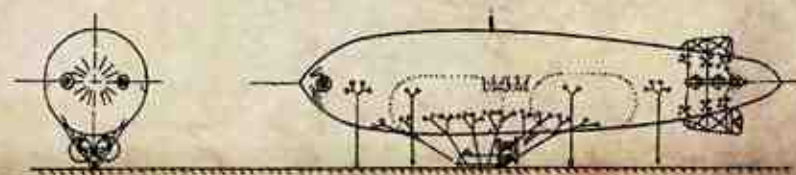
- Immediately the lever is pulled, everyone within the Chrononautilus' field (i.e. everyone on the airship) feels the strange physiological effects of the device's field and has their Resolve reduced by 5! This, in effect, turns everyone into cowards; even a person with high Resolve will suffer an anxiety attack. If a person's Resolve drops below -3, they are literally catatonic with fear and can do nothing until they recover.
- Resolve returns at the rate of 1 point per half-hour after the time jump is complete.

RUM WILL CURE IT!

It is possible to lessen the effects of the Fear by drinking alcohol beforehand. Most pirates choose rum, but whisky or any other strong spirit will do. See the Drinking Rules on p.113. Each level of inebriation will reduce the effects of the Resolve loss by 1, but at the expense of co-ordination and clear thinking. In order to remove all effects of the Fear, a character must be Legless – all dice pools are reduced by half!

A STORM IN A TIME CUP

Arrival in the new time causes a sudden increase in air pressure, as the airship displaces the air in the new time period. In effect, the ship arrives in a small but powerful thunderstorm, complete with howling gale, deafening thunder, and lightning striking the airship. The intensity of the storm is based on the number of successes gained on the original Science (Temporal Physics) roll – the smoother the time jump, the gentler the arrival.



AIRSHIP PIRATES



TIME TRAVEL

Number of Science (Temporal Physics) successes	Intensity of Storm (black dice penalty to Resolve, Athletics and Pilot rolls)
1	5
2	4
3-6	3
7-10	2
11+	1

On arrival in the new time, several things must be checked:

- Everyone must make a Resolve test, with a number of black dice penalty equal to the intensity of the storm. Anyone failing this will be too afraid to act until the storm is over. (Anyone who has a Resolve of 0 or less will not be able to make this test – they are just too scared to act).
- For each point of intensity of the storm, everyone aboard will lose 1 pip of Health, and the airship will take 10 points of damage.
- The person flying the airship (assuming he can act at all and the Fear hasn't got him) may make a Piloting roll, with a number of black dice penalty equal to the intensity of the storm. Remember also to apply any modifiers for drink! On a success, the pilot manages to steer the ship out of the storm, halving the damage that would otherwise be done to it (round down). On a Foul Failure, the Pilot cannot break free of the storm, and the ship takes double damage.
- Characters taking damage can make an Athletics roll to dodge falling debris and generally avoid being shaken about (even if suffering from the Fear, unless they are catatonic) – on a success, the damage they take is halved (round down).

The storm will disperse naturally after half an hour, and the weather will then return back to what it was in that time and place before the airship arrived.

SCREWING THE TIMELINE UP

As we've said already, screwing the timeline up is not easy. In game mechanics terms, there are two sorts of screwups:

Minor Screwups: These are cosmetic changes to the

timeline which will soon disappear again, leaving only minor signs of their existence in future years.

Major Screwups: These are major changes to the timeline which have epic repercussions down the ages.

We'll look at how the GM deals with them in a little while, but first a note about the timeline and its Eras.

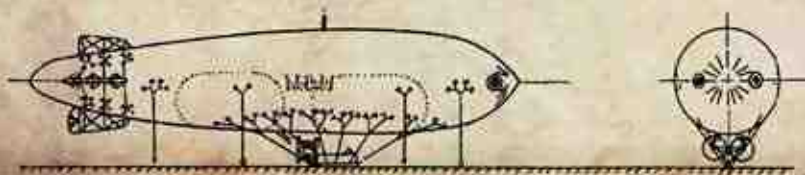
ERAS

You may have noticed that the timeline on p.161 doesn't mention particular years for events, giving only a general idea of what happened in each era. This is to make it easier for the GM to adjudicate time travel. If the players say they want their characters to jump back to 4th May 1936, you can describe what they see when they arrive without worrying about what *exactly* was going on at that date – each era has its own flavor around which adventures can be based.

Example: *The PCs decide to jump back in time to 1935, in an attempt to steal some cool diesel tech. Since they were discussing visiting the Diesel Age in a previous game session, you've prepared an adventure for when they arrive in the new era in which they get the chance to infiltrate a racing team and steal a high-powered sports plane. Your adventure can happily take place any time in that era from 1901 to 1950 – if they'd said they wanted to visit 1901, they would arrive at one of the very first air racing meets; if they'd said they wanted to visit 1950, they would arrive at a very big commercial racing meet, televised around the world. The characters and situations in your adventure can be much the same, with only slight cosmetic changes to differentiate the year.*

SCREWUPS AND CHANGE POINTS

A change point is an event, or person which, if changed, will have major repercussions down the centuries – this is known as a Major Screwup. It





is entirely up to the GM what constitutes a change point. The GM may have an entire alternate timeline planned based on a time travel adventure, or she may want the episode in the past to have only minor repercussions and the time the PCs came from to be essentially intact when they get back to it.

Because the timeline is difficult to alter, the GM has total control over when it's altered and by what amount. Most changes to the timeline are Minor Screwups; it is up to the GM to decide if the changes the PCs make cause a Major Screwup.

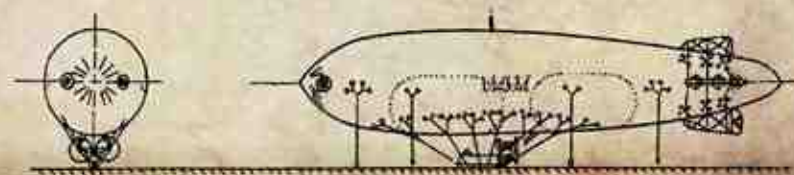
MINOR SCREWUPS

If you decide that what the PCs have done has caused a Minor Screwup, you can just make up some minor change to the timeline. The change will effect the timeline for 2D6 years, after which it will leave traces visible only to a diligent historian. If short of ideas, roll on the Minor Screwups table, below, and try to come up with an explanation of how the PCs' actions have caused this:

Example: The PCs in the above example (who have traveled back in time to the Diesel Age) manage to drug the pilot of the racing plane they're planning to steal. They use it to win the race, then fly it back to their airship and make their escape. The GM decides this is a Minor Screwup. She rolls on the Minor Screwups table and gets 7. Since the PC piloting the plane is renowned for his enormous pink mohican haircut and was seen on the televisor all over the world, she decides that pink mohicans become popular for 2D6 years (rolling a 9). After that, changes to the timeline fade away. The original pilot curses the PCs, claims on his insurance, and sweeps to victory with a new plane in the next race instead. By 2150 there is no sign of this change except in ancient fashion magazines and racing papers.

It may be that the event which the PCs choose to act upon seems like it should have major repercussions, but this need not be the case. If the PCs assassinate some major politician and the GM doesn't want to create a whole new timeline, the politician's deputy can step into his position and the timeline goes ahead much unchanged but for a new person in charge. If the PCs alter the outcome of an apparently decisive battle, it could turn out that the losing side had forces in reserve which they didn't know about, and make up their lost ground over the next few weeks or months. Unless the PCs' actions impact a change point, the timeline will soon smooth itself out and get back to where it was before.

2D6 Roll	Minor Screwup
2	Children smoke pipes.
3	A craze for keeping unusual pets sweeps the culture (chameleons, piranha fish, leopards, etc.).
4	An odd new tax is enacted (window tax, spectacles tax, tea duty, etc.).
5	Sexual abstinence or promiscuity becomes briefly popular (on odd/even roll).
6	The belief that the world is going to end in 2D6 years grips sections of the population.
7	A new fashion sweeps the culture (shoulder pads, shaved heads, cosmetic amputations, etc.).
8	A strange new hobby becomes really popular (growing bonsai trees, collecting animal teeth, knitting boiled-egg cozies, etc.).
9	Everyone carries a gun.
10	A new religious or political movement takes hold briefly.
11	Something odd becomes illegal (swearing, eating dairy products, singing in public, etc.).
12	A strident campaign to ban something takes hold (greatcoats, sex before marriage, parachutes, etc.).





MAJOR SCREWUPS

Unless a GM is good at thinking on his or her feet, it is best to plan a Major Screwup in advance. When planning an adventure in the past, decide what the change point is and what effect it will have on the timeline. Make at least brief notes on what subsequent eras will look like following the Major Screwup, and decide on how the PCs' own time will be substantially altered by their actions.

Example: The GM has decided that the PCs' trip to the Diesel Age (see examples above) is going to have major repercussions rather than just being a minor screw-up. The pilot they drug was destined to win many races and become a multimillionaire. When the PCs intervene in the race, his career is ruined and he dies in poverty. But the pilot was, as an old man, destined to give his millions to Victor Hypocrates' presidential campaign fund. Without this bankrolling, Hypocrates' campaign fails to gain a foothold and someone more sane and less ruthless becomes president instead. The GM makes the following notes on the changed eras:

1951-2000: Population Crisis – the world's population grows beyond the Earth's ability to feed it, particularly with pollution running rife. A series of wars over resources escalates until a nuclear conflict occurs.

2001-2050: Ruins – Much of the Earth is a radioactive wasteland. A few people in remote areas escape, but struggle to survive.

2051-2100: Rebuilding – The survivors gather together and construct new cities, slowly building up their tech levels while mutants roam the wastelands.

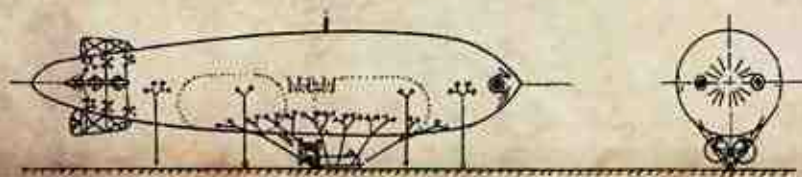
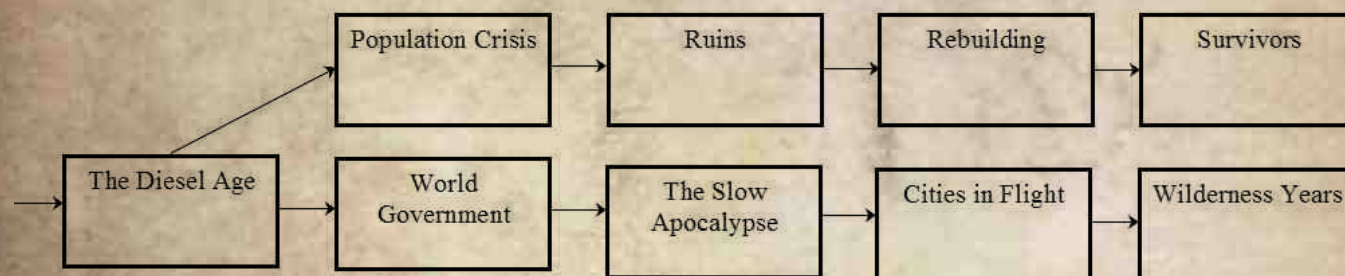
2101-2150: Survivors – The PCs arrive back in 2150 to find North America is an irradiated wasteland sparsely populated by tribes of misbegotten and strange beasts. Three huge overcrowded cities, Desolation, Everglade and Old Borealis live at a Victorian level of technology, huddling behind their walls for safety. There are no Neobedouin and no sky cities. The PCs are the only airship pirates!

FIXING MAJOR SCREWUPS

In the above example, the changed timeline would look like the nearby diagram. A new timeline has sprouted from the Diesel Age, and now any time travel to previous ages will visit the new eras the GM has created rather than those described in this book.

The chances are, if the PCs have managed to make their home timeline less pleasant than before, they're going to want to change it back. But how? It's already been ascertained that traveling back to a time which already contains a Chrononautilus is very difficult (see Using the Chrononautilus, p.252) – if the PCs try it, the chances are they'll have a Foul Failure and arrive instead in one of the new eras they've created. The GM can roll randomly to see when, or fudge it and pick an era for which an adventure has been prepared.

But what then? If the PCs have not arrived in the era they aimed for, do they have any chance of getting things back to how they were before? Again, this is up to the GM, but it's best to take note of the players' reactions to the changed timeline. If the





players love the new version of 2150 and it's only the characters that are grumbling, you can make it virtually impossible to change things back – every subsequent change is only a Minor Screwup. Or maybe they create another Major Screwup and make things different again (a world where there has been overpopulation but no war, and the whole world is one massive Change Cage city, for instance!).

But if the players (and the GM) really want to return to the default *Airship Pirates* version of 2150, it's possible to create a way out. A new change point can be created in one of the new eras which will put things back on track for 2150.

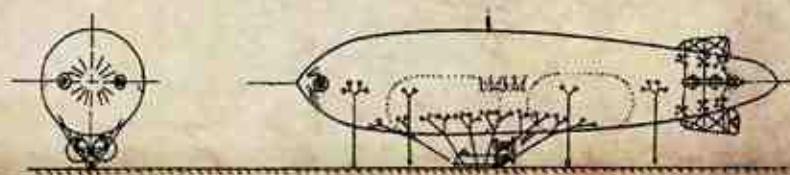
Example: *The PCs who screwed the timeline up in the above example attempt to return to the Diesel Age, but instead find themselves thrown into the Population Crisis era. No-one has heard of Victor Hypocrates, and a President the PCs have never heard of, called Jimmy Carter, is in power. Instead, Hypocrates has teamed up with a mad scientist and is planning to release a plague upon the world to kill off the excess population. But the mad scientist has been imprisoned in an insane asylum – the PCs must help Hypocrates rescue him so that he can put his fiendish plan into operation. When the PCs get back to 2150, things are more or less back to normal, except that there are only mundane beasts out in the wilderness – Hypocrates came to power in the aftermath of the Great Plague and his grandson Victor III still rules the world. The Neobedouin will look at them funny if they start talking about sabretooths and mammoths, but apart from that, the world's back to normal.*

BLASTING THE PAST

The rules and guidelines here give you the tools you need to create a time-spanning *Airship Pirates* campaign of your own. If you want a fully fleshed-out time travel background, with alternate timelines, change points, NPCs, and everything ready to throw your players in at the deep end, look out for the *Blasting the Past* sourcebook for the *Airship Pirates* RPG.

MEETING YOURSELF

It is of course possible that, due to a lucky roll and the use of Fate Points, the PCs *do* manage to get to a time where they already exist. If such is the case, the GM should play the earlier versions of the PCs as NPCs, trying to portray their actions as best he or she can. If a player argues that “my character wouldn't do that!” some negotiation may ensue, but the GM always has the last word. It is, of course, the duty of the GM to portray NPC versions of PCs as faithfully as possible – players have a lot of creativity invested in their characters and seeing them portrayed badly can be annoying. If you, as GM, doubt your ability to do a good job, you can use the optional rule in the nearby box.





OPTIONAL RULE: YOU CAN'T MEET YOURSELF

If you don't want the possibility of PCs meeting other versions of themselves in other parts of the timeline, you can make it a house rule that this is impossible. Something in the way space-time is constructed prevents this ever happening. If the PCs arrive in a time and place where they already exist, strange coincidences will arise to prevent the meeting. For instance:

- A freak storm blows the PCs' airship off course, and by the time they get back to where they want to be, the other versions of themselves have moved on.
- The PCs see their other selves across a crowded room at a party, but the doorman won't let them in because their invitations are obviously forged copies of ones he's already seen.
- The PCs are arrested for the crime that their other selves have just committed.

CHANGING YOUR OWN PAST

As was said in the sixth golden rule, a time traveler's personal past cannot be changed.

But what if PCs go out of their way to change their own past by meddling directly with their *personal* timeline? Take the following example:

Example: A year ago, on the March 1st 2150, the PCs took part in an adventure which involved trying to infiltrate the secret base of their enemy, the villainous Captain James "Yellow Eyes" Cavendish, in order to kill him and steal his treasure. They utterly failed to get into the base, being badly injured by Cavendish's guards, didn't get the treasure and have spent the last year in poverty, being hounded from place to place by Cavendish and his minions.

Now, the PCs have got hold of a Chrononautilus and

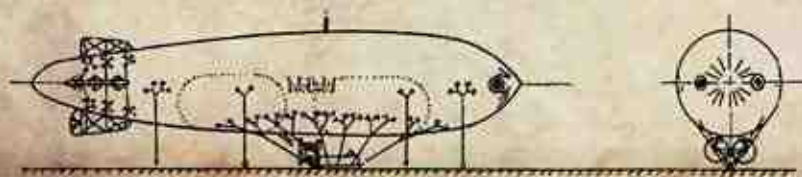
have come up with the cunning plan of traveling back in time a year, and teaming up with their younger selves to get into their enemy's base. They feel sure that if there are twice as many of them, they'll be able to get in, kill Cavendish, and then divide the loot between them. On March 1st 2151, they travel back in time a year...

So, how do you, as the GM, deal with this? Assuming they've made good enough dice rolls to get to the right time, and assuming you're not using the optional "You can't meet yourself" rule, you can rerun the scenario with the earlier versions of the PCs as NPCs (perhaps decreasing their skills and attributes slightly from their current levels depending on how much experience the characters have gained since this adventure was first run).

Simply run the scenario again with the two sets of characters and let the dice fall where they will. If one of the past versions of a character is killed, they are dead, but their future self is *not* dead, because that's not what happened in their personal timeline. If the PCs and their earlier selves manage to kill the villain and get the treasure, they can share it between themselves and then return to their own time. They can even kill their younger selves and steal all the treasure from them, if they have the stomach for it.

The problems start when the PCs get back to their own time. While they themselves are unchanged, everyone around them remembers the new past they have created.

Example: Having teamed up with their younger selves, the PCs have killed Captain Cavendish, and split the treasure 50/50; unfortunately, in the fighting, the younger version of one of the characters, Jamie, was killed. They return to 2151 – having spent 18 hours in 2150, they'll arrive 18 hours after they left. In the world they return to, Captain Cavendish is dead, and the characters are great heroes – all except Jamie, who





is greatly mourned; in fact, everyone remembers what a great funeral the PCs put on for him. The PCs are going to have some serious explaining to do!

How is this possible? It is assumed that when a new timeline is created, the old one still exists somewhere as a parallel timeline, and that the PCs who have changed their own pasts are from that old timeline rather than the new one they have created. *Every time the PCs make a time jump, they create a new timeline!* But since the Chrononutilus cannot jump between parallel timelines, this is all academic. The PCs are stuck with their own personal pasts, even though they can change the whole world around them.

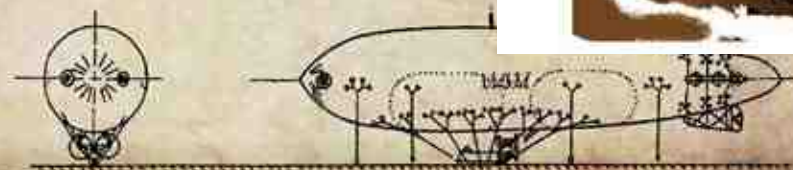
CHANGING ANOTHER PC'S PAST

Roleplayers being roleplayers, someone is bound to come up with the bright idea of one or more of the PCs traveling back in time and meddling with the past of the *other* PCs. This *is* possible. If the PC Theophrastus Bottomly travels back in time five years and shoots the earlier version of the PC Walter Smith, then Smith will be dead – just as dead as if he'd shot him in the present, but without the inconvenience of a body. The player of Walter Smith will have to roll up a new character. (Hopefully, this sort of inter-party violence will be a rare occurrence!).

If Bottomly travels back in time and persuades the younger Smith that he really ought to learn Baritsu, you may Smith to reallocate some Skill points from other skills to Martial Arts (Baritsu).

Of course, some players might want to abuse time travel and keep changing each other's pasts to give themselves better skills – but bear in mind how difficult time travel is, and if they insist on keep doing such things, you can always fudge a dice roll, or claim a malfunction of the Chrononutilus, to send them somewhere really unpleasant. Having their airship crash in the middle of the Australian desert in 1650

should be enough to make them think twice about frivolous use of time travel in future!

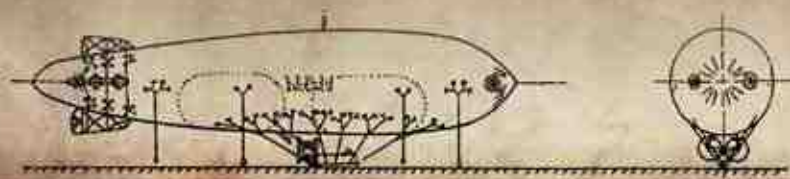




BESTIARY

*"Suddenly the beast takes notice,
Unexpectedly we've earned his focus."*

– Abney Park, Too Far to Turn Back





INTRODUCTION

The next section looks at some of the weird and wonderful uber-beasts that were reintroduced into the wild by Victor II. A few more mundane animals are also described. The list is by no means exhaustive. Most of the creatures that existed before the screwing up of the timeline can still be found in the wilderness – although some of them were brought to extinction through loss of habitat and over-hunting before the Great Apocalypse.

PEOPLE ON THE MENU

When Victor II oversaw the bio-engineering program that led to the creation of the uber-beasts, he had very specific ideas about what the reintroduction of mega-fauna would mean for humanity. He demanded that a taste for human flesh should be hard-wired into the predators. The consequence is that the carnivorous beasts scent humans as prey, and especially tasty prey at that. This does not cause them to lose all sense of self-preservation, but does mean that they are liable to stalk potential human targets for longer, and that if they find vulnerable, solitary, or undefended people, they are more likely to go into a killing frenzy.

The “Great Rectification” was achieved using technology that has since been outlawed. Yet Victor III still has access to the secrets and to a few remote research stations, inhabited by those with the skills to create still more species. Whether they will or not, and what horrors they might unleash, remains to be seen.

STATISTICS

The scientists made the uber-beasts especially robust. The statistics given are generally those for the very biggest examples of a species. There are smaller versions of many of the beasts to be encountered, different subspecies which may be lower down the

food-chain, and younger creatures who are not fully grown – where appropriate simply adjust statistics down accordingly.

The Mental Attribute for beasts represents instinct and animal cunning. Domestic animals can be trained to do tricks, but beasts are not capable of abstract reasoning. Movement represents the top speed of the animal during a chase.



ALLIGATOR

Type: Predator

Habitat: Wetlands

Physical: +9

Mental: +4

Health Dice: 7

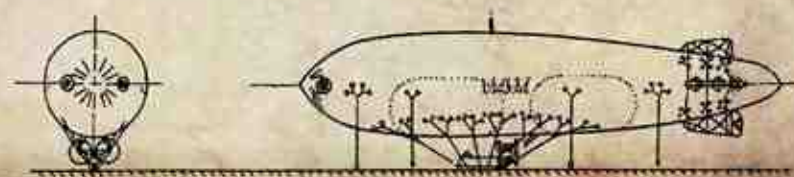
Armor: 6

Damage: Bite 9 Damage, Tail Swipe 5 Damage

Handling: 4 in water/2 on land

Movement: 30 yards per round/20mph in the water; 45 yards per round/30mph on land

Alligators had been virtually wiped out, victims of a loss of habitat as humans drained the wetlands. Since the “Great Rectification”, they have flourished





once more. With large bodies, thick clawed limbs, powerful tails and rows of vicious teeth, although they are not especially bred uber-beasts, they can still be extremely dangerous. They can grow up to 15 feet, move extremely fast while in the water and, although seeming slow-moving out of it, they can nevertheless run for short distances very quickly (for a maximum of three rounds, after which they give up).

They can be found throughout most of the south (although not the extreme southwest). Alligators are quite happy to see humans as potential prey; the wariness they once had, pre-Apocalypse, has diminished, now that humans are rarer and no longer pose such a threat. Even if not particularly hungry, they will attack anyone going near their eggs or young. Aside from the giant alligators, their bite is the most powerful there is. Even surviving that, the chances are that infection will set in, merely replacing a swift death with a long and agonizing one. If their bite doesn't get you, then their tails might – one bone-crunching swish is enough to take someone down. There are also crocodiles to be found near the Change Cage city of Everglade. Crocodiles rarely attack humans, but if they do, use Alligator statistics.

AMERICAN CHEETAH

Type: Predator

Habitat: Prairies and Plains

Physical: +7

Mental: +5

Health Dice: 4

Armor: 0

Damage: Bite 6 Damage

Handling: 8

Movement: 90 yards per round/60mph

The American cheetah is a fast and deadly animal. They can grow up to at least 6 feet in length, and weigh

up to 150lbs. They have long legs, a slender body, and short snouts. An American cheetah can race along at 60 miles an hour and its tough, retractile, claws are designed so that they can grip onto their prey, even at such high speeds. This means that if a victim were to survive the shock of impact, escape once in the creature's clutches is nigh on impossible.

Their incredible turn of speed means they are able to catch the most swift-footed plains grazers. So, if you see one coming, running won't help you. Bred with a taste for human flesh, people caught in the open have no chance unless they are either extremely well-armed, or have the phenomenal reflexes of a beast dancer. Even then, most wise money would go on the cheetah.



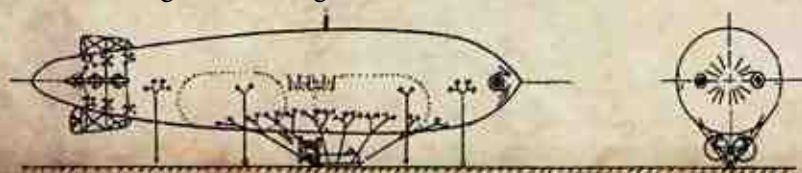
AMERICAN LION

Type: Predator

Habitat: All

Physical: +12

Mental: +5





Health Dice: 9

Armor: 0

Damage: Bite 12 Damage

Handling: 6

Movement: 60 yards per round/40mph

Standing over 4 feet tall at the shoulder, 12 feet long, and weighing up to 700lbs, the American Lion is a heavy muscular beast, able to catch and kill large prey and bully other predators off their kills. Their terrifying jaws are filled with razor sharp teeth, and they have powerful retractable claws with which to grip their prey. Aside from a small area along the east coast, they are a hazard right across the continent. Where it is colder, they might use a cave as a shelter, in warmer climes, such as forests, they make a den on the floor. Wherever they are found, they are bred to love a diet of human beings, and they present a terrible danger to the Free People.

Able to bring down mammoths, the American Lion is at the top of the food chain, a beast not to be messed with lightly.

BISON

Type: Food

Habitat: Forests and Plains

Physical: +10

Mental: +2

Health Dice: 9

Armor: 1

Damage: Charge 6 Damage

Handling: 3

Movement: 45 yards per round/30mph

Bison have long brown shaggy winter coats, to protect them in the winter months, light tan ones

in the summer. Bulls can grow up to 7 feet tall at the shoulder, 12 feet long and are long-horned and heavy beasts. They are hunted by the Neobedouins, who eat them, or sell the meat to the Neovictorians who can't get enough of them, and are willing to pay very high prices for the best cuts. The Neobedouin also highly prize their hides, which they decorate and either wear or use in the construction of their yurts and caravans. Bison spend most of their day avoiding predators, grazing and wallowing in the mud.

CAMELOPS

Type: Food and Beast of Burden

Habitat: All, except Arctic and Tundra

Physical: +8

Mental: +5

Health Dice: 6

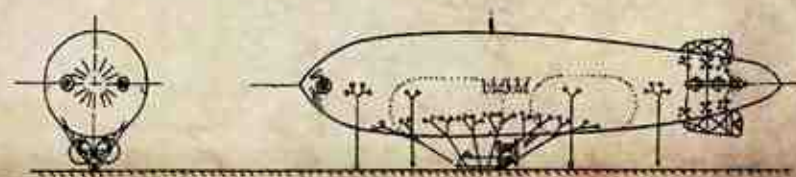
Armor: 0

Damage: Kick 7 Damage

Handling: 5

Movement: 60 yards per round/40mph

Camelops are similar to camels, but over 7 feet tall at the shoulder. They are used by the Neobedouin as mounts. A well trained camelops is considered better than a horse by many of the Neobedouin. They can eat the most scraggy greenery, and require little water considering the distances they can travel. Some of them are used to pull small caravans, although they are notoriously slow and grumpy if put to this work. Many of the desert tribes herd camelops to be bartered or sold for meat, or to those other tribes who might want to use them as mounts or to pull their homes. If they are on the menu, then their hides won't be wasted, but fashioned into blankets and clothing.





DIRE WOLF

Type: Predator

Habitat: Any

Physical: +9

Mental: +5

Health Dice: 7

Armor: 1

Damage: Bite 8 Damage

Handling: 6

Movement: 60 yards per round/40mph

Dire wolves are similar to other wolves, but much larger (they grow to 5 feet long, and weigh up to 240lbs), with broader jaws, longer teeth and sturdier legs. They hunt as a pack and can smell humans from miles away. Once they have a scent they can follow their targets over great distances with ease.

When they are not chomping humans, dire wolves mainly live off bison and horses. They harry at the beasts, tearing chunks out of them, until eventually they fall and are overwhelmed by the pack.

DOG

Type: Pet/Working/Food

Habitat: Any

Physical: +5

Mental: +8

Health Dice: 4

Armor: 0

Damage: Bite 3 Damage

Handling: 5

Movement: 45 yards per round/30mph

Neobedouin keep dogs, mainly using them to help with the herding, and sometimes as pets.

GIANT ALLIGATOR

Type: Predator

Habitat: Wetlands

Physical: +20

Mental: +2

Health Dice: 35

Armor: 10

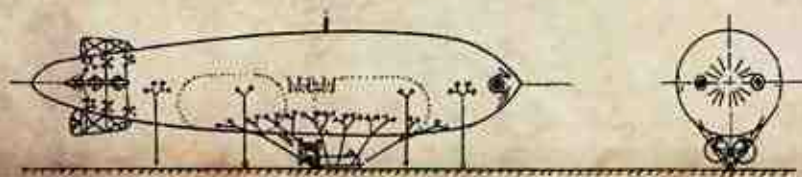
Damage: Bite 20 Damage, Tail Swipe 10 Damage

Handling: 4 in water/1 on land

Movement: 38 yards per round/25mph in the water; 38 yards per round/25mph on land

The giant alligators look much like, and live in the same areas as, ordinary gators. But they grow much bigger – they grow to over 40 feet long and weigh up to 15 tons. They have large teeth, particularly useful for crushing. Their bite is twice as hard as that of their smaller relatives – when they bite something they usually just tear straight through it. When they hunt through murky waters, all that can be seen of them is their nostrils, the rest of their immense bulk hidden below the water line.

Their favorite method of hunting is ambush. As prey moves toward the river bank to drink, they lunge out and bite. Due to the changes made in their genetic coding, they are especially fond of eating people and know where to gather to catch those Neovictorians expelled from Everglade. Skyfolk maintain that they have flown over even bigger specimens – the size of whales.





GIANT CONDOR

Type: Predator

Habitat: Warm and Mountainous

Physical: +7

Mental: +3

Health Dice: 5

Armor: 0

Damage: Peck 6 Damage, Claws 5 Damage

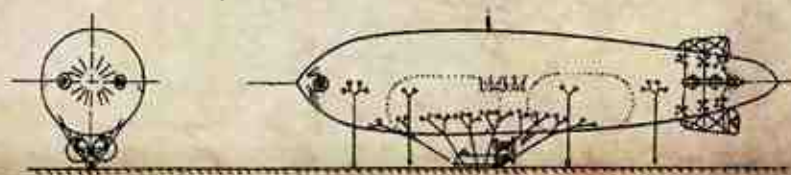
Handling: 6

Movement: 60 yards per round/40mph (flying)

Vulture-like, giant condors have huge bills and can

weigh as much as 150lbs. Unlike vultures, they do not live by scavenging alone; they can sweep down and catch prey in flight. With a wingspan of up to 25 feet, they are a terrible sight as groups of them gather around, in the air above a Neobedouin caravan, before plunging down to strike. Giant condors try to avoid being grounded, as away from the mountains they struggle to get the momentum needed for flight.

Giant condors range over most of western and southwestern North America, but are sometimes found further afield. As well as attack the Neobedouin, they have been known to flock around the Change Cage cities, causing those on the sidewalks to run for





cover. When hunting humans, who they find delicious, they tend to try to pick off infants rather than adults. They sometimes attack airship crews as well – many a midshipman or cabin boy has been snatched from the rigging by a hungry giant condor.

GIANT POLAR BEAR

Type: Predator

Habitat: Arctic

Physical: +15

Mental: +3

Health Dice: 12

Armor: 0

Damage: Brawl 11 Damage

Handling: 3

Movement: 30 yards per round/20mph

Giant polar bears weigh over a ton, and are twice the size of a human when stood up on their hind legs. They can take out large prey easily. They do this by using their massive forelimbs to grab and wrestle their target. They generally eat large walruses, but are quite happy to vary their diet if humans are available.

GIANT SLOTH

Type: Best Avoided

Habitat: Forest

Physical: +16

Mental: +3

Health Dice: 22

Armor: 1

Damage: Claws 10 Damage

Handling: 0

Movement: 1½ yards per round/1mph

Although mostly harmless unless disturbed, their immense size means that giant ground sloths are best avoided. Weighing as much as a bull elephant, and 20 feet tall when stood up on their hind legs (twice the height of an elephant), the sheer size of the giant sloth is enough to deter most predators. If that isn't enough, they have long, razor-sharp claws, shaped like sickles. When moving on all fours, these claws cause the giant sloth to shuffle in a most peculiar fashion.

HORSE

Type: Beast of Burden/Food

Habitat: Plains

Physical: +7

Mental: +2

Health Dice: 4 Dice

Armor: 0

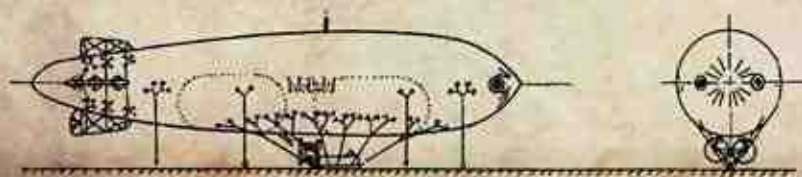
Damage: Kick 5 Damage

Handling: 6

Movement: 60 yards per round/40mph

A horse is a horse. Of course.

Used as mounts, pack-horses and to pull small caravans. Also used as food by a variety of predators.





HYAENODON

Type: Predator

Habitat: Any

Physical: +10

Mental: +5

Health Dice: 8

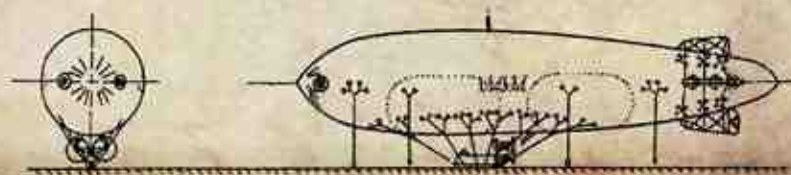
Armor: 0

Damage: Bite 9 Damage

Handling: 7

Movement: 75 yards per round/50mph

Hyaenodons have long, narrow snouts, long bodies, and long tails. The largest are huge – standing over four feet tall at the shoulder and 10 feet long. They are extremely fast, can turn on a cent and when they have killed their prey, their bone-grinding teeth are so tough that they can eat every part of their victim. Hyaenodons hunt mainly at night, gathered in packs so that they might hunt larger beasts, although they will often pick off the youngest, weakest or lone animals to conserve their energy.





INDRIKKUS

Type: Beast of Burden

Habitat: Forest

Physical: +25

Mental: +3

Health Dice: 40

Aarmor: 3

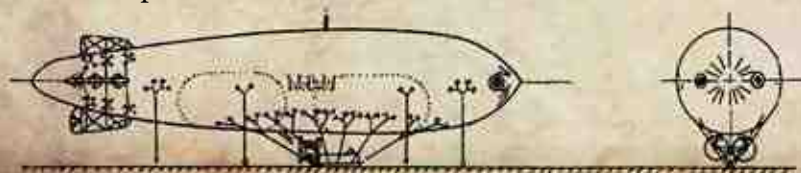
Damage: Tread 30 Damage

Handling: 1

Movement: 30 yards per round/20mph

Indrikki are truly massive animals. 18 feet tall at the shoulder, 30 feet long, and able to stretch their necks up to heights of over 25 feet to feed, these 20-ton animals are so big that even the most vicious predators will only attack an infant Indrikkus. Their upper teeth are tusk-like, and they have a supple, mobile, upper lip, which they use to strip trees of their greenery. They have very long necks and thick bodies and legs. Their hide is very tough, providing them with another defense.

They resemble an over-sized and bulky cart-horse, and this is the role they often fulfill for the





Neobedouin. Despite being slow, and needing to browse, the Indrikki are capable of pulling the larger caravans, and can even be harnessed to pull the smaller steam-trucks if they get into trouble, have engine failure, get stuck, etc. They have an extremely docile nature and will happily carry a howdah on their wide backs, giving their rider a good view of the surrounding area. Their tempers wear thin, however, if their young are threatened or they are gathered together in a herd and startled by fire or predators – in which case get out of the way, as “you only get stepped on by an Indrikkus once!”

MAMMOTH

Type: Beast of Burden/Food

Habitat: Arctic, Forests, Hills and Plains

Physical: +18

Mental: +6

Health Dice: 20

Armor: 3

Damage: Charge 17 Damage

Handling: 1

Movement: 15 yards per round/10mph

Mammoths graze throughout much of North America. The grazers on the central plains are more than twice the height of a person at the shoulder, and weigh 10 tons or more. Their tusks can grow up to 14 feet long. The northern species have a covering of long woolly hair, to protect them from the cold. They are much sought after by Neobedouin who domesticate them to ride or pull their wagons (or both at once) or slaughter and sell as meat to the Neovictorians.

MASTODON

Type: Beast of Burden/Food

Habitat: Forests, Hills and Plains

Physical: +14

Mental: +6

Health Dice: 13

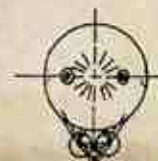
Armor: 2

Damage: Charge 12 Damage

Handling: 2

Movement: 15 yards per round/10mph

Generally a little smaller than mammoths (about 8 feet tall at the shoulder, and weighing about 5 tons) and more suited to foraging than grazing, tucking in to fallen leaves and pine needles. Mastodons are fairly similar in temperament to their larger cousins, and are used by the Neobedouin for similar purposes.





RACID

Type: Predator

Habitat: All

Physical: +10

Mental: +2

Health Dice: 7

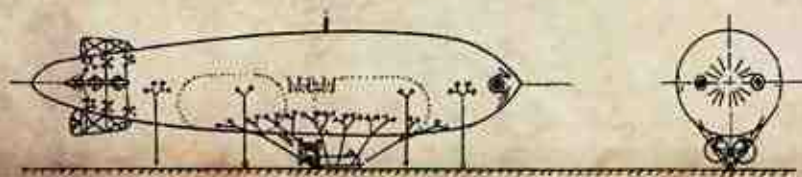
Armor: 0

Damage: Peck 12 Damage

Handling: 5

Movement: 45 yards per round/30mph

Racids, commonly called “terror birds”, are giant flightless birds, that can be found just about anywhere. Although generally content to scavenge or hunt for small prey, the larger specimens truly are terror birds, growing over 12 feet tall and with a viciously sharp, eagle-like, beak. Although they look somewhat ungainly, they can run at 30 miles an hour. Racids are incredibly ill-tempered and have a proclivity for human flesh.





SABRE-TOOTHED CAT

Type: Predator

Habitat: All

Physical: +11

Mental: +6

Health Dice: 9

Aarmor: 0

Damage: Bite 10 Damage

Handling: 7

Movement: 75 yards per round/50mph

Standing over 4 feet tall at the shoulder, with foot-long canines, and massive forequarters, the sabre-tooth cat is a fearsome sight. Heavy for a big cat, the sabre-tooth can bring down large prey, including young mastodons and mammoths. An unarmed human is not much of a challenge and a welcome treat. Although their grip and bite can be fatal in itself, often they deliver a massive ripping wound with their enlarged canines and allow their prey to slowly die from blood loss.

SAIGA ANTELOPE

Type: Food

Habitat: Plains

Physical: +2

Mental: 4

Health Dice: 2

Aarmor: 0

Damage: -

Handling: 8

Movement: 90 yards per round/60mph

Large herds of saiga antelopes roam the plains, preferring these open spaces, where they can see predators coming from a long way off. They are

about the size of a large dog and have cream colored fur which keeps them warm in colder climes. They are a major food source for many predators. They have excellent eyesight and are nimble, so usually larger predators content themselves with picking off the weaker or older antelopes, while the rest of the herd makes its escape. They can survive off scrubby plants, which other animals find unpalatable or poisonous, and so roam into semi-desert areas. They can also swim, and herds travel great distances to find food.

SCIMITAR CAT

Type: Predator

Habitat: Desert and Plains

Physical: +8

Mental: +5

Health Dice: 6

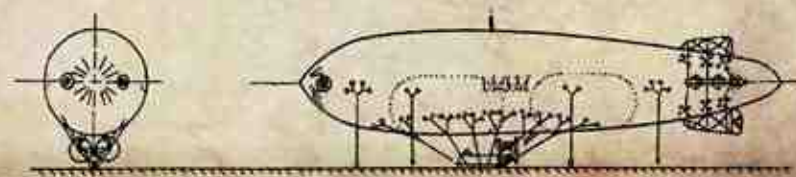
Aarmor: 0

Damage: Bite 7 Damage

Handling: 6

Movement: 60 yards per round/40mph

The scimitar cat is a fast, extremely agile predator, the size of a lion, but more slender in the body. Hiding up a tree won't help you avoid a scimitar cat, they are excellent climbers. Their jaws are so strong, and their bite so vicious that they can bring down bison, and even young mammoths. They hunt and scavenge in packs – their bodies are shaped somewhat like a hyena's, with long front limbs and squat, powerful hindquarters. This allows them to make sudden, long murderous leaps – their fast speeds meaning they are equally adept at running down or ambushing prey.





SHORT-FACED BEAR

Type: Predator

Habitat: Forests and Plains

Physical: +14

Mental: +3

Health Dice: 11

Armor: 0

Damage: Brawl 10 Damage

Handling: 6

Movement: 60 yards per round/40mph

On all fours, a short-faced bear is as tall as a man; stood up they are over 12 feet tall. The short-faced bear uses its bulk when attacking (they weigh just under a ton), but their long powerful legs allow them to run up to 40 miles an hour, an incredible pace for such a large animal, enough to allow them to surprise even horses and saiga antelope. Bio-engineered to attack humans, the short-faced bear is a formidable foe.

SHRUB OX

Type: Food

Habitat: Forests and Hills

Physical: +9

Mental: +2

Health Dice: 8

Armor: 1

Damage: Charge 5 Damage

Handling: 4

Movement: 45 yards per round/30mph

Massively-built, and standing at a height somewhere between a bison and a muskox, these gentle browsers live off a diet of shrubs and leaves. They are a popular illegal foodstuff amongst the Neovictorian upper class, and therefore a prized catch for the Neobedouin.

STAG-MOOSE

Type: Food

Habitat: Forests

Physical: +10

Mental: +5

Health Dice: 9

Armor: 0

Damage: Charge 6 Damage

Handling: 5

Movement: 45 yards per round/30mph

The stag-moose looks exactly as it sounds, like a cross between an elk and a moose, although larger. Their intricate antlers are sought after by the Neobedouin, who like to carve and decorate the material (shamans sometimes wear them when conducting special rituals), and stag-moose meat fetches a good price from the Skyfolk and Neovictorians.

TERATORN

Type: Predator

Habitat: All

Physical: +5

Mental: +3

Health Dice: 4

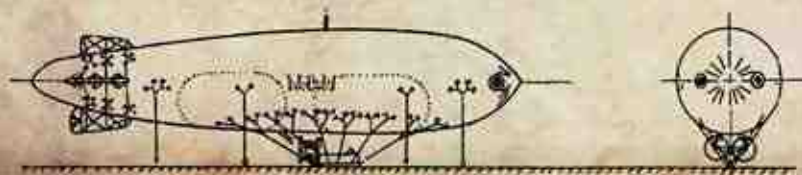
Armor: 0

Damage: Peck 4 Damage, Claws 4 Damage

Handling: 6

Movement: 60 yards per round/40mph (flying)

Teratorns are similar to their larger cousins, the giant condors, and equally as vicious. Their smaller wingspans (about 12 feet) and lighter bodies mean that they will only attempt to attack larger prey if they are flocked together, and are more able to land and scavenge like the vultures they resemble





(as unlike the giant condor, they don't struggle as much to get back up into the air). Nevertheless, their gripping claws and ability to swoop down and scoop up smaller prey means that, if spotted, Neobedouin parents make sure their babes are close when teratons are in the skies above them.

WOODLAND MUSKOX

Type: Food

Habitat: All (except Desert)

Physical: +8

Mental: +2

Health Dice: 7

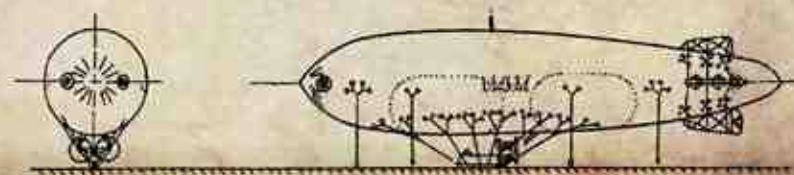
Aarmor: 0

Damage: Charge 4 Damage

Handling: 5

Movement: 45 yards per round/30mph

Smaller than the shrub ox (the larger males standing 5 feet high at the shoulder), with long, dense, shaggy hair, the muskox is particularly fond of grazing on the plains or foraging in wooded areas. Muskox have large, curving, horns. The woodland muskox is another animal that the Neobedouin hunt for food and skins, and that the Skyfolk and upper class Neovictorians enjoy eating.





THE TRIBULATIONS OF SCABBY JACK

*"There was a young boy in a clockyard,
Building himself from the pieces he found,
Screwing on what's been left on the ground,
Hoping to finish enough one day to leave."*

– Abney Park, *The Clock Yard*

The following introductory adventure has been designed for a party of 3-6 beginning airship pirates to be played over one session. If the party playing is smaller or larger than that, then guidance will be offered on how to adjust the story accordingly. If you are intending to run a PC (playing in the adventure), stop reading now! If you are the GM (who is going to run the adventure) – read on.

The following information is for the GM's eyes only!

SUMMARY

This section gives a brief overview of the adventure and some of the events that might occur. Read through this summary carefully before attempting to run *The Tribulations of Scabby Jack*.

THE PROBLEM

"Scabby" Jack Cutter's son has been kidnapped by a rival pirate crew. Scabby Jack, a wealthy retired pirate, believes his boy, William Cutter, has been kidnapped and sold to some Bargefolk, who are hoping to collect a ransom. The boy's father would like the PCs to rescue his son and bring him home. He is keen that the lad remains unharmed, but other than that will give the PCs a free hand as to how they manage the situation.

WHAT IS REALLY GOING ON

The boy is on the barge, but the Bargefolk have also

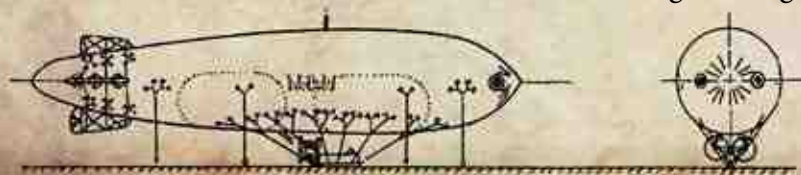


been captured. An old rival of Scabby Jack, Larry "the Limp" Lasko, took William. Larry (short for Larreta) doesn't care if the boy lives or dies, but she would like to get both the ransom, and the rescuers' airship as a prize.

POSSIBLE EVENTS

Each of the events mentioned below are expanded and detailed over the course of this chapter. The following events should take place:

- 1) Scabby's Problem. The PCs are invited to meet Scabby Jack at his mansion on High Tortuga and will





be asked to undertake a mission.

- 2) The Nutshell. The party arrives near to the barge, named the Nutshell, and will have to negotiate the release of the hostage. The party may realize that the barge owners are also being held, by some of Larry's crew. The PCs (and William) may get attacked by wild beasts as they move between the barge and their airship.
- 3) Revenge. The rival pirates will try to take out the PCs and their ship – the ransom is nice, but if they can take the PCs' ship as a prize, all the better.
- 4) Ending the Adventure. The adventure concludes with either the party enjoying the rewards of their success or coming to terms with their failure.

THINGS CAN CHANGE

When running the above events, bear in mind that the players will have an effect on what actually happens in the game. They may come up with a bold plan for rescuing William that changes things. If so, you should consider what they come up with, and if it seems possible, let them run with it. Of course, they might handle things rather poorly – but great plans, or bad ones, should be allowed – it is the tale of the PCs, after all. If they find a way to avoid a conflict altogether, or cause an unplanned fight, go with it – it all adds to the story.

Remember – the NPCs will also react to the PCs' actions. They too can adapt to a changing situation. The main thing is that the PCs should live with the consequences of their actions. By the end of the adventure it is likely that the PCs will have made new

allies, or enemies, depending on the outcome of their mission.

If you feel confident enough, you may also run the events in a slightly different order. For example, there is no reason why the party might not get attacked by beasts at any stage once they are on the ground. There is no need to change things, but if it feels right, there is no reason you shouldn't inject your own ideas and complications into the story. The more games you run, the more confident you will feel scripting your own adventures. This adventure is designed to be quick – to be played in a single session – but it could be expanded to form the start of a long campaign.

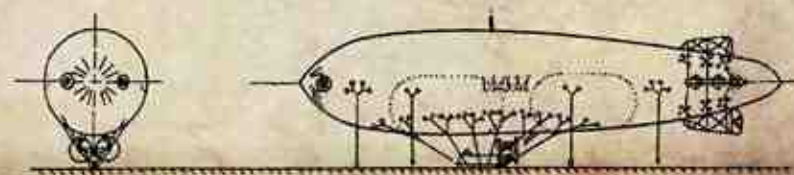
SCABBY'S PROBLEM

The PCs begin the game holed up in a bar, the Breezy Bolt-hole, on High Tortuga, a pirate Skyloft city. It's the morning, and the PCs are eating breakfast. Aside from the sound of the usual drunken fights, echoing from somewhere across the city platform, things are quiet in the pirate haven – it's early morning, after all. It is likely that the PCs will be looking for work. If they are just starting out they won't have much money, and will have a crew who are eager to accumulate some loot.

INTRODUCTIONS

If the party ask, then the bar is tiny and, apart from the barman and the PCs, empty. It has an all-wooden interior and smells of booze and stale urine. The barman is a retired pirate, Jose "Big-hands" Beaney (Jose has tiny hands, a fact that he is very sensitive about).

If the players are meeting to play *Airship Pirates* for the first time, with a new set of PCs, now is a good opportunity for everyone to introduce themselves to each other. Allow each player to describe their PC a little, preferably "in character". Don't worry if some players manage this more easily than others at this



AIRSHIP PIRATES



SCABBY JACK

stage. If your group is new to role-playing this can take a little time. It will come.

KINGSTON LIPP

At a suitable lull in the conversation a messenger enters the bar, and interrupts the PCs. Read or paraphrase the following:

The door of the snug swings open and a youngster swaggers into the bar. He is dressed in brightly-colored raggedy clothes, has a cutlass on his belt, and wears a bright red bandana. Seeing you, he smiles and walks up to your table.

"Fair winds to you! I bring you a message from Scabby Jack Cutter, the scourge of the air. He asks that you come to his house, on the far side of yonder dock. He says to look lively about it."

The youngster, Kingston Lipp, is one of Scabby Jack's servants. Scabby Jack has decided that the PCs are his best option for the mission. None of his long-term allies are moored up at present, and he isn't going to make the drop himself. Scabby has a small private airship, which he uses for pleasure, but since retirement he has no large airships at his immediate disposal – when he has the need, he hires others to carry out his business. The PCs might know nothing about Scabby Jack, but if any of them are from High Tortuga, they'll be aware that he is a wealthy ex-pirate, who has a fancy house and keeps himself to himself. If he has a job going, he should be able to pay well.

Kingston knows nothing about the mission itself. The PCs can ask him a few questions, find out where Scabby Jack lives and make their own way there, or follow Kingston straight to the meeting. Kingston won't mind if they travel separately, but will urge them to hurry, as *"the boss don't like being kept waiting."* If the PCs haven't reached Scabby's mansion by midday then Kingston will come and get them.

WHAT KINGSTON KNOWS

Assuming the PCs are interested, they might want to ask a little about Scabby Jack, either before they head off to meet him, or as they travel to Scabby Jack's manor. On a successful Presence+Conversation roll Kingston can provide some or all of the following:

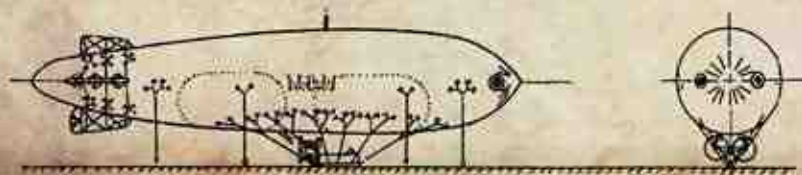
- Kingston has worked for Scabby Jack since being a small boy.
- For as long as Kingston has known him, Scabby Jack has been retired.
- Scabby Jack is extremely wealthy – he made a lot of money through piracy and has vowed to spend the rest of his days enjoying his booty.
- Scabby Jack doesn't discuss his business deals with Kingston.
- Scabby Jack has only the one son, and he's rarely seen in public.
- Scabby Jack is a good employer, but not someone to be messed with.

Remember: The above information shouldn't just be read out verbatim – the players should be encouraged to role-play conversations with NPCs they meet, and NPC answers should relate to the questions the players ask.

WHAT JOSE KNOWS

If the party decide to make their own way to Scabby Jack's they might think to ask Jose Big-hands about Scabby Jack. He won't say anything in front of Kingston, but if asked privately on a successful Difficult (3 black dice) Presence+Conversation roll, or an Average (no black dice) Presence+Bribery roll, the PCs can find out some or all of the following:

- Scabby Jack is extremely wealthy and a generous patron. He dabbles in buying and selling, usually selling any stolen booty that ends up on High Tortuga back to its original owners.
- Scabby Jack doesn't like to talk about his past. Rumor has it he amassed his fortune by leaving a fellow pirate, Larry Lasko, in the lurch, although Jose doesn't know the details and such treachery is par for the course where pirates are concerned.





SCABBY'S MANSION

The PCs will hopefully go and see what Scabby Jack wants.

High Tortuga is built on a large, eight-sided main platform, alongside which extends a further donut-shaped ring. A mass of brightly colored gasbags cluster in the air above the sky city, so that it floats high above the mountains. Only the massive chains anchoring it to the rock below prevent it from floating away. The main platform is a maze of alleyways, doss-houses and low bars. Half of the adjoining ring-shaped platform is filled with similar sleazy airside bars, backing onto the moorings and hangars provided for pirate airships, including the spot where your own airship is moored. The other side of this ring is where the wealthier inhabitants live, in large houses and even manors and mansions, away from the rabble. Scabby Jack's mansion is located amongst these more sumptuous homes.

When the party get to the right address:

Scabby Jack is obviously very rich. His home is one of the largest on the platform. There is a wall surrounding the main house, a gatehouse, and several cannon sited on the roof of the building. Scabby Jack is obviously security conscious.

The gatehouse is guarded by several large thugs, who will happily let the PCs pass when they state their business, as long as they've come alone. There is no reason for the PCs to start trouble at any point during the visit, but on the off-chance they do, there are 20 guards scattered about the place, all with:

Physical +4, **Mental** +3, **Skills:** Dodge +2, Fisticuffs +4 [Punch 1 Damage, Kick 2 Damage], Firearms +4 [Needlerifles 8 Damage]

Health Dice: OO/OO/OO/OO - OO -2 / OO -4 / OO -8 / OO -16

It is not important to describe every room of Scabby's house in detail. The PCs will be escorted around the

back, and into a large reception room where Scabby Jack sits, flanked by a couple of bodyguards, ready to meet the PCs and tell them about the mission.

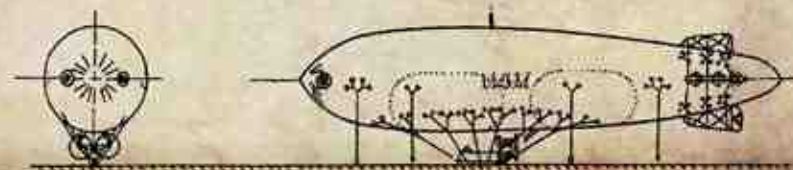
The reception room is decorated with finely gilded tapestries, all with a nautical or aeronautical theme. The floor is polished and varnished, light shining up through the floorboards, a reminder that you are airborne. There is a solid wooden desk, behind which sits a middle-aged man in a large comfortable leather chair. The man looks up at you as you enter, his pale gray eyes glittering as he sizes you up. The man himself, who is none other than Scabby Jack, is dressed in fine clothes, although he wears them badly. He is overweight and dissipated. His left arm and hand seem withered and sore, although it is hard to make out the nature of the injury; criss-crossed tattoos adorn his limbs. Either side of the seated figure is a burly guard carrying a needlerifle. The man at the desk motions for you to sit.

The PCs are seated opposite Scabby Jack. On a Very Difficult Perception test they will detect that there is a trapdoor immediately in front of Scabby Jack's desk, a security measure and method of disposing of incompetent employees. Scabby Jack will explain the following:

"Good to meet you. It's always a pleasure to meet enterprisin' folks. I'm Jack Cutter, though you can call me Scabby, as most do. I have a job for you, if you're willing to take it. There's pay in it for you, and my gratitude to boot, if you pull it off right. What do you say, lads and lasses?"

Despite putting a brave face on it, Scabby Jack is extremely concerned about his son's well-being. Hopefully after garnering some interest from the party, he continues:

"I'll not beat around the bows. It's my boy William. Some scurvy dog has gone off with him, snatched him from this very city, last night. I sent me men out to look round for him, thinking he was up to larks. But it's worse than that. I was sent this note last night. He's





been taken.”

The note reads as follows:

“We have your boy. Bring 10,000 Helios, and half of your plate, to the North Desolation Canal, 125 miles out from the City, by 4 o’clock tomorrow afternoon. Moor on the pylon and bring the money. We will leave out a cart for you to load up. Only five of you load it. Then bring the money to the barge or we kill the boy. Any tricks and the boy dies.”

The note was brought by a lad who didn’t realize what he had been asked to deliver. He had been handed it, along with a few cents, by a man whom he didn’t recognize and told where to take it. He can remember nothing about the person who gave it to him. If the party want to ask the lad themselves, Scabby will be evasive (his over-exuberant questioning of the lad has left him unable to answer any further questions for the time being).

SCABBY JACK CUTTER

Jack Cutter, or “Scabby” Jack as he is more commonly known, is a pirate turned businessman. As a youngster he had always expected his life to end any moment, dangled on a rope or shot down in battle. In truth he was happy enough to live that way. Things changed – he married and longed to have children. But his wife died, and in his loneliness he arranged to buy an automaton “companion” child through criminal contacts in Desolation. He treats the clockwork child as though it were real, and is deeply fond of it. He was also given the opportunity of recovering a vast treasure. He had “found” a treasure map, the previous owner having met an unfortunate end, with the location of a hoard from the “old days” marked upon it. The only trouble was that the hoard was near to a Chuno Ggun encampment, clearly more recently marked on the old parchment.

Jack decided that retrieving the treasure was too dangerous a mission for his ship alone, so he invited

along a fellow pirate captain to share the hoard. He didn’t warn Larry Lasko, the other captain, about the Chuno Ggun. They got to the hoard (a lost treasure, hidden years before by some of the Emperor’s victims) safely, but on their return, the Chuno Ggun attacked. Larry’s ship was in trouble, but Jack Cutter, who had made sure that the most valuable loot was on his ship (to be “sorted out later”) sped away, leaving Larry and her crew to their fates. Larry lost her ship and followers, suffered grievous wounds to her left leg, which had to be amputated, but somehow made it back to High Tortuga alive. She demanded Jack share his hoard, but Jack refused even to see her. Since then, Jack has retired a wealthy man, while Larry has continued working, only recently managing to get a ship of her own once more). Scabby Jack is unaware exactly how much Larry hates him.

Scabby Jack’s automaton son has been kidnapped (Scabby doesn’t know Larry is responsible), and he has been given a ransom note. He has no ships at his disposal at present and none of his business partners are in town. In desperation, Scabby has had his men ask about and they’ve told him that the PCs are in town, have a boat, and might be looking for work. At no point will he tell the PCs that his son is actually a machine – he’s almost forgotten himself.

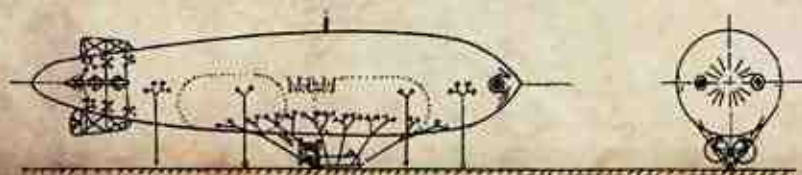
“Scabby” Jack Cutter

Physical: +2 **Mental:** +6 **Skills:** Appraisal 1, Business 3, Intimidate 3, Perception 1, Swordplay 3 [Cutlass 7 Damage]

Health Dice: OO/OO/OO – OO -2 / OO -4 / OO -8 / OO -16

WHAT SCABBY JACK KNOWS

The party might have some questions for Scabby Jack. He has the following information for them. William was snatched from the airfront area where he was out strolling. His bodyguard has since disappeared, and Scabby thinks that he might have carried out





the abduction, although he doesn't know what vessel he might have commandeered to get William out of High Tortuga. Scabby has a chart of the area and will be able to accurately note the location of the drop-off on a map for the PCs.

Scabby believes William's bodyguard has made an opportunist deal with some Bargefolk. He thinks the PCs should go along with the plan, and then take out the Bargefolk, *"A few bargies shouldn't be too much of a problem for proper pirates."*

If the PCs have heard of Scabby's falling out with Larry, and suggest a connection, Scabby will stroke his scraggy beard, consider the idea, and agree that *"The filthy bitch might have something to do with it. If so, do away with the scoundrel."* He won't go into detail about his relationship with Larry, waving away any inquiry with, *"She's been aloft too long and it's sent her mad. Last stupid thing the wretch will do, you'll knock her out of the air, huh?"*

WHAT SCABBY JACK DOESN'T KNOW

Larry's crew captured the boy after killing the boy's bodyguard and throwing him off the platform. There were no witnesses. They escaped on a small airboat, met up with Larry and her ship (the *Revenge*), and took the boy to the barge (the *Nutshell*).

SCABBY'S PLAN

Scabby wants his boy back, but doesn't want to give up half his plate or 10,000 Helios. He will suggest the PCs *"...sort the details out. You're pirates, ain't ya?"*

If pushed, he will offer some crates of plate – actually cheap trinkets electro-plated to look like glittering prizes. Unless properly looked at, they might fool the PCs – a Very Difficult (6 black dice) Wits roll, or an easy (+5 dice pool) Appraise roll will detect the fraud. But Scabby is happy to own up. *"I love my boy, but I'll not be blackmailed by any Tom, Dick or Susan. This should fool 'em long enough for you to get my boy."*

He will also offer a suitcase full of Helios, but again, only the top few notes in each bundle will be genuine, the rest forgeries which can pass at a glance, but are easy to spot if examined closely.

He will offer to pay the PCs for their services. He will be willing to pay 3,000 genuine Helios (remember the PCs will need to split this with their crew according to what shares have been agreed in the airship's articles, see Pirate Code, p.189). He will pay 1,000 up front, the rest on their return. He will also warn them, *"You better not cross me, or when my lads get back they'll hunt you down."*

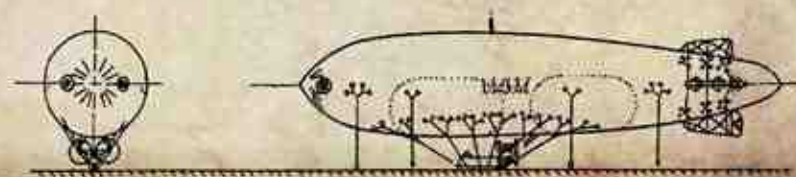
If the PCs need more incentive (they shouldn't, they are pirate adventurers, after all) then Scabby Jack will let it be known that he has connections in whatever business the PC's Schtick is in – which he can use to their advantage (getting them a show, prized pitch at a festival, etc) or disadvantage (*"if you don't help me you'll never work again"*).

WHAT IF THE PCs AREN'T INTERESTED?

If the party don't want the mission then remind them they are missing out on a patron and pay. It will mean an end to the adventure as planned, but not the end of the PCs' involvement with Scabby Jack. Scabby will order his men (all 20 of them) to capture the PCs' ship. It is the only suitable vessel available on High Tortuga; all the other airships in town are either too small to undertake the mission safely, or are owned by pirates who refuse to work for Scabby Jack (and too well-defended to easily steal). If the PCs aren't ready to take to the air immediately, they could lose their ship and crew (although Scabby Jack will probably return them once he has completed the mission himself).

LEAVING HIGH TORTUGA

The PCs will have little time to prepare, just enough to gather their crew and head aloft. Describe the view as they leave, heading up into the skies between the





mountain-tops or weaving their way between the mountains, eastwards, toward the desert. Take time to describe the weather and the wind conditions (it's sunny and breezy).

THE NUTSHELL

Leaving High Tortuga is the hardest bit of the voyage, it will require an Easy Pilot roll (+5 dice to pool) as there are no contrary factors, and the PCs' ship is not too large. To find the location marked on the map will take an Easy Navigation roll. The journey to the barge where William is being held will be uneventful, and probably last about two hours. If it is the PCs first trip then take a little time to describe the ground below – dry scrubby desert, patches of rocky terrain, perhaps with herds of Camelops running about, etc.

When the PCs ship reaches the area where the barge is waiting, read or paraphrase the following:

As you approach the area indicated by Scabby on the map, you can make out the canal, snaking through the desert. Set back from the canal, on the side of your approach is an old metal frame, pointing skyward. It must be the pylon mentioned in the ransom note. As you get nearer still you can make out a barge on the water of the canal, moored up, waiting for your arrival. There are figures on the deck of the barge, perhaps William Cutter and the kidnappers, although at this distance it is impossible to tell.

THE EXCHANGE

How the PCs handle the exchange is up to them.

WHAT THE KIDNAPPERS WANT TO HAPPEN

Basically, the expectation is that the PCs will moor up at the pylon; disembark from their ship, alone; load up a handcart (that has been left for the purpose at the base of the pylon) with loot and bring it to the *Nutshell*; and then get set upon by the scoundrels

aboard (who will try to overwhelm the PCs, whether they realize that the booty is counterfeit or not). At the outbreak of hostility one of the pirates aboard the *Nutshell* will also fire flares into the air – the signal for the *Revenge*, Larry the Limp's airship, to join the fight.

OTHER POSSIBILITIES

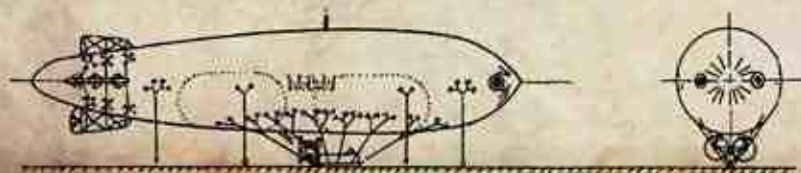
The PCs might have other plans. Some might work, others definitely won't. The PCs might be able to send somebody over, under a flag of truce, to demand that the kidnappers bring William halfway, while they bring the cart with the treasure to meet them in the middle. The PCs might prepare their own attack, and if they get the jump on the kidnappers they might be able (if they are sharpshooters) to take out the kidnapper holding William. Such ideas should be given a chance to work – following the appropriate Skill rolls and some good role-playing. If the PCs try to just moor by the barge, or take their airship too close to the barge, rather than landing at the pylon then warn them – *You can make out one of the kidnappers raising his knife to a young boy's throat. All the men aboard wave you away menacingly.*

If they push it, give them one more chance, but if they just attack the *Nutshell* from the air, the pirates aboard will kill the boy and light flares to attract the *Revenge*.

THE NUTSHELL

If the party disembark from their ship at the pylon – a rickety old handcart has been placed at the foot of the pylon, obviously the kidnappers intend you to place the plate and *Helios* upon the thing and take the treasure to them.

On approaching the barge – the boat is long, flat and wide. There are several men on the long wide deck. All are armed, and one of the men is holding a knife to the throat of a young lad.



AIRSHIP PIRATES



SCABBY JACK

If the PCs don't attack first – then when they get to the barge, the exchange might be negotiated, but as soon as the pirates think the PCs are near enough – *the men leap over the side of the boat, cutlasses drawn, and attack. From the rear of the boat there is a whooshing sound and flares shoot upward, exploding in bright colors, surely visible for miles around.*

While running the fight between the PCs and the kidnappers remember, most of the kidnappers start on the deck of the boat. There should be as many kidnappers as there are PCs + 2 more (so whatever the size of the PCs party they will only be outnumbered by 2). 2 of the kidnappers will fire flares into the air as soon as fighting breaks out. Use the map of the area to keep track of where everybody is and who is fighting who.

At the end of the fight the PCs will either have killed or subdued the pirate kidnappers (they will surrender when they have lost half of their number) or William will have been killed.

WILLIAM CUTTER

William has the stature of an eight-year-old boy dressed in a blue and white sailor suit, but is obviously an automaton. He was created as the companion to a broody Neovictorian spinster, 27 years ago, and has since been passed from one weird lonely woman to the next, before being sold to Cutter. William is frightened, but not stupid. He will take any opportunity to escape, and will be grateful to his rescuers.

Physical: 0 **Mental:** +3 **Skills:** Dodge 3, Perception 2, Swordplay 1

Health Dice: OO/OO – OO -2 / OO
-4 / OO -8 / OO -16

In the *Nutshell* there is a terrified family of Bargefolk. There are 4 Bargefolk in total, a mother, father and their two teenage children. They have been tied up for a day, and although they have had a little water, they are hungry. If the PCs come near to the deck of the barge, they will hear muffled cries. If the PCs investigate, the Bargefolk will plead with the PCs to be released. On release, the Bargefolk will be very grateful and possibly offer the PCs a chance to buy some smuggled goods (they have some dried meatstuffs and some scrap metal).

KIDNAPPER PIRATES

The pirate kidnappers know their orders and will try to follow them. They will make a decent fight of it, but will surrender if half of them are incapacitated. They will probably not fall for any really implausible tricks, but will be willing to negotiate a little, as they want the PCs to get close enough so that they can attack them, and want to get their hands on the treasure. Whatever else, as soon as a fight breaks out, they will light the flares to call the *Revenge*.

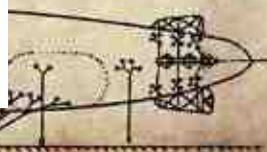
Kidnapper Pirates

Physical +3, **Mental** +2, **Skills:** Dodge 1, Fisticuffs 2 [Punch 1 Damage, Kick 2 Damage], Swordplay 2 [Cutlass 7 Damage]

Health Dice: OO/OO/OO – OO -2 / OO
-4 / OO -8 / OO -16

COMPLICATIONS

At some point, possibly on their way to the *Nutshell* to make the exchange, possibly during the fight between the PCs and the kidnappers, or possibly when the PCs are returning with William to their airship (possibly after freeing the Bargefolk aboard the *Nutshell*), 2 Dire Wolves will attack (for stats see p.265). The animals



AIRSHIP PIRATES



SCABBY JACK

have a taste for human flesh, and will press their attack until they are severely wounded (down to gray dice).

The party should be given a Perception roll (Difficult, 3 black dice) as the Wolves creep through the rocky area towards them, then a Perception roll (Average, 1 black dice) to react before the Dire Wolves are upon them (so the PCs may be able to fire on the Wolves once or twice before they are engaged in melee).

Remember, describe the outsize wolves with their slaver jaws and maddened eyes, as they slink out of the rocks and run full tilt at the PCs (or kidnappers).

THE SIGNAL FLARES

The *Revenge*, Larry the Limp's airship, is hidden in a nearby hangar, built into the side of a rocky outcrop. A lookout will be watching for the release of the flare, the signal for the *Revenge* to slip its moorings and take to the skies, its target the PCs' ship. The *Revenge* will take a while to close in on the PCs' airship, so as long as things don't go disastrously below, the PCs should have enough time to climb back aboard their airship and decide whether to fight or run.

REVENGE

At the point the flares are used, the *Revenge* will rise up from its moorings and take to the skies. What happens next will be up to the PCs and be affected by the progress of their rescue operation and any accompanying fight. If the PCs manage to extricate themselves from any surviving pirates on the *Nutshell*, avoid being killed by any savage beasts, and get back to their own airship they will have a choice – head towards the incoming airship and make a fight of it (in which case, refer to p.136 for rules on running an airship battle), or run away (in which case refer to the chase rules on p.133).

THE PIRATE SHIP REVENGE "TIGERFISH" CLASS

Handling: 8 **Movement:** 100 mph

Armor Points: 5 **Crew:** 50/40

Resource Space: 50 **Range:** 1000 miles

Fixed Cargo Space: 50

Cost: He14,440

Resources: 18 Small Cannons (18 ARPs), 4 Grappling Hooks (8 ARPs)

Free Cargo Space: 24 ARPs.

Complications: none

Weapons: 18 small cannons (9 on each side).

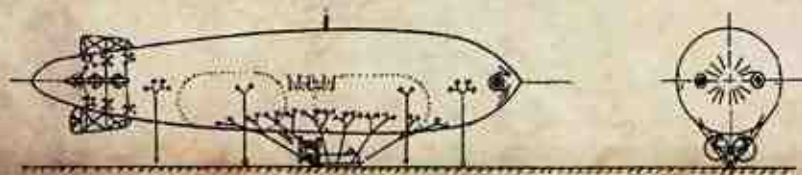
Broadside Damage: 90

Health: 17 Health Dice

LARRY "THE LIMP" LASKO

Larry Lasko is a middle-aged pirate captain. By rights she should have died many times, but she doesn't see her survival as lucky, but more of a curse. Since her betrayal by Scabby Jack, all those years ago, she has been consumed with the desire for revenge. Larry literally crawled from the wreckage of her airship, all the way back to a Skyloft city – she lost a leg in the crash, following the fight with the Chuno Ggun, and nearly lost the other to disease. After years of fighting her way back to good (enough) health, and scheming to get together a loan to get airborne, she is determined not to blow her chance for vengeance this time. She has attempted to get some justice before, but failed to get her rival to even notice her, which to Larry is the worst insult of all.

Larry the Limp has been planning her revenge for years. Her crew had staked out William Cutter, watching his routines and Larry made sure that no





captain sympathetic to Scabby Jack was moored up in High Tortuga.

Physical: +4 **Mental:** +4 **Skills:** Dodge 3, Firearms 3 [Steampistol 6 Damage], Perception 2, Pilot 3, Swordplay 3 [Cutlass 7 Damage]

Health Dice: OO/OO/OO/OO – OO -2 / OO -4 / OO -8 / OO -16

Individual members of Larry's crew are as follows:

Physical +3, **Mental** +2, **Skills:** Dodge 1, Fisticuffs 2, Swordplay 2 [Cutlass 7 Damage]

Health Dice: OO/OO/OO – OO -2 / OO -4 / OO -8 / OO -16

The crew of the *Revenge*, at full strength, count as a Rank 5, Competent crew.

But remember, up to 8 of the full crew of 50 are down on the *Nutshell*, so there are possibly only 42 crew + Larry, currently on the *Revenge*.

Larry was hoping that Scabby Jack himself would come for his son, in his small private airboat. But as he hasn't, she will content herself with trying to take the PCs' ship as a prize. Depending whether the PCs decide to flee or fight, there might be a variety of outcomes.

Larry will try to catch the PCs' airship, and fight it out, first with cannon, and then, if her ship is not too beat up, by boarding. If the PCs are winning the fight, Larry will try to disengage and flee.

If the PCs manage to corner Larry, given the chance, she will explain:

"I never meant to do you any harm. Nor the boy. It's that bastard Scabby that caused this." She spits a wad of tobacco. "He betrayed me. He left me to die. He may as well have bit my leg off himself."

The PCs might be able to kill Larry and her crew

and seize the *Revenge* as a prize. It will likely be beat up following a fight, and Larry would rather blow more holes in it herself than let the PCs take it whole. Nevertheless, if they do manage it, they should be able to sell it for between a third and a half of the listed price for the *Tigerfish* (with no assets). Of course, they will have to share the prize with their crew and possibly pay for their own repairs and maybe compensation for any sailors lost or seriously injured in their service. If you really don't want the PCs to have so much cash so early in their careers, you could be really mean and decide that whoever gave Larry the loan claims ownership of the airship (although as pirates the PCs shouldn't care too much about that – lawyers get short shrift in pirate cities).

A TWIST

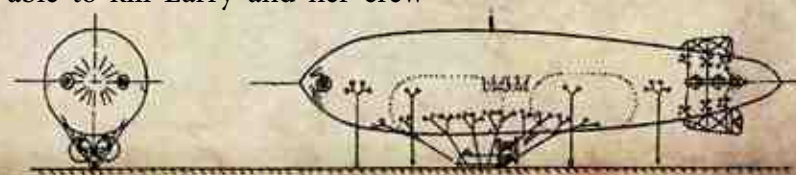
On the way back to High Tortuga, William begs the PCs not to take him back to "that monster", Scabby Jack. He asks to join the crew – *"I don't want to spend the rest of my life pretending to be a small boy for a smelly old man with bad breath. If you don't want me in the crew, then let me go – drop me off at another sky city, anything!"*

ENDING THE ADVENTURE

After running through (or avoiding) all of the possible events it is time to conclude the adventure. The final outcome will vary according to how successful, or otherwise, the PCs have been in completing the mission.

IF THE PCs RESCUED WILLIAM

If the PCs have managed to rescue William Cutter and return him to his father they will be rewarded as promised. In fact, in addition to the remainder of their cash reward, Scabby Jack will be so pleased he might offer the PCs a box of his stuff: *"Just some old junk from my old piratin' days, but you might find something of use."*



AIRSHIP PIRATES



SCABBY JACK

If the PCs have rescued William but had a really disastrous time, for instance losing their airship in the process, Scabby Jack will lend them (he isn't daft, he won't make such an extravagant gift) the money for a new one. But in such a case he will feel he has discharged any debt he owes the PCs and the PCs will end up owing him.

WHAT'S IN THE BOX

If Scabby Jack gives the PCs his old pirate chest it will contain a lot of junk, but you might decide there are some rare treasures as well. It could contain any manner of items – perhaps one or two small but useful items of equipment, suitable for pirates, from the Equipment chapter; a treasure map or similar plot device, which might provide a lead for future adventures; or even, at the GM's discretion, a “worthless piece of junk”, which turns out to be a Chrononautilus. Give careful thought to bestowing a Chrononautilus on the PCs at this stage – if you give players a time travel device, then at some point they will want to use it, so make sure that you are ready to run that sort of game.

THE FUTURE

By rescuing William, the PCs will also have secured a long-term friend and patron in Scabby Jack, and possibly (if she still lives) and enemy in Larry “the Limp” Lasko. Scabby Jack might have further missions for the PCs, while Larry “the Limp” might well turn up again to wreak her revenge.

IF THE PCs FAILED TO RESCUE WILLIAM

If the PCs didn't manage to rescue William, they will certainly not be paid the rest of the reward money. In

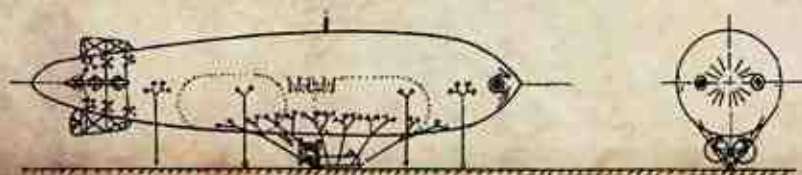
fact, it is likely that they will have made an enemy of Scabby Jack, who at the very least will have some of his burly bodyguards abduct the PCs (probably while they are on their own, having a quiet drink in a bar, rather than while their crew are with them) and dangle them over the edge of the High Tortuga platform until they explain exactly what went wrong and why Scabby Jack shouldn't just have them removed.

IF THE PCs RESCUED WILLIAM BUT DIDN'T TAKE HIM HOME

If the PCs agree to take William Cutter (real name William-10) into their crew, or drop him off at another sky city, it would be better if they don't return to High Tortuga for a while. They have *definitely* made an enemy of Scabby Jack, and he will put out a bounty of 10,000 Helios on their heads – specifically, on the actual head of the PCs' captain, as long as it's delivered to him in a bag. This might prove to be a temptation to members of the PCs' own crew. The retired pirate could well become a recurring villain in the campaign – unless he dies of old age or loneliness.

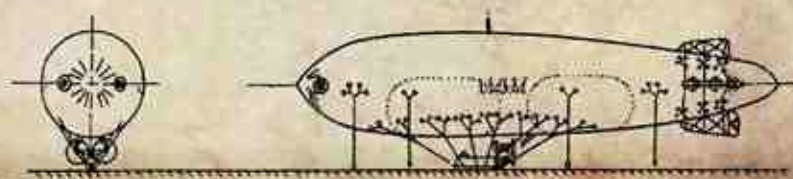
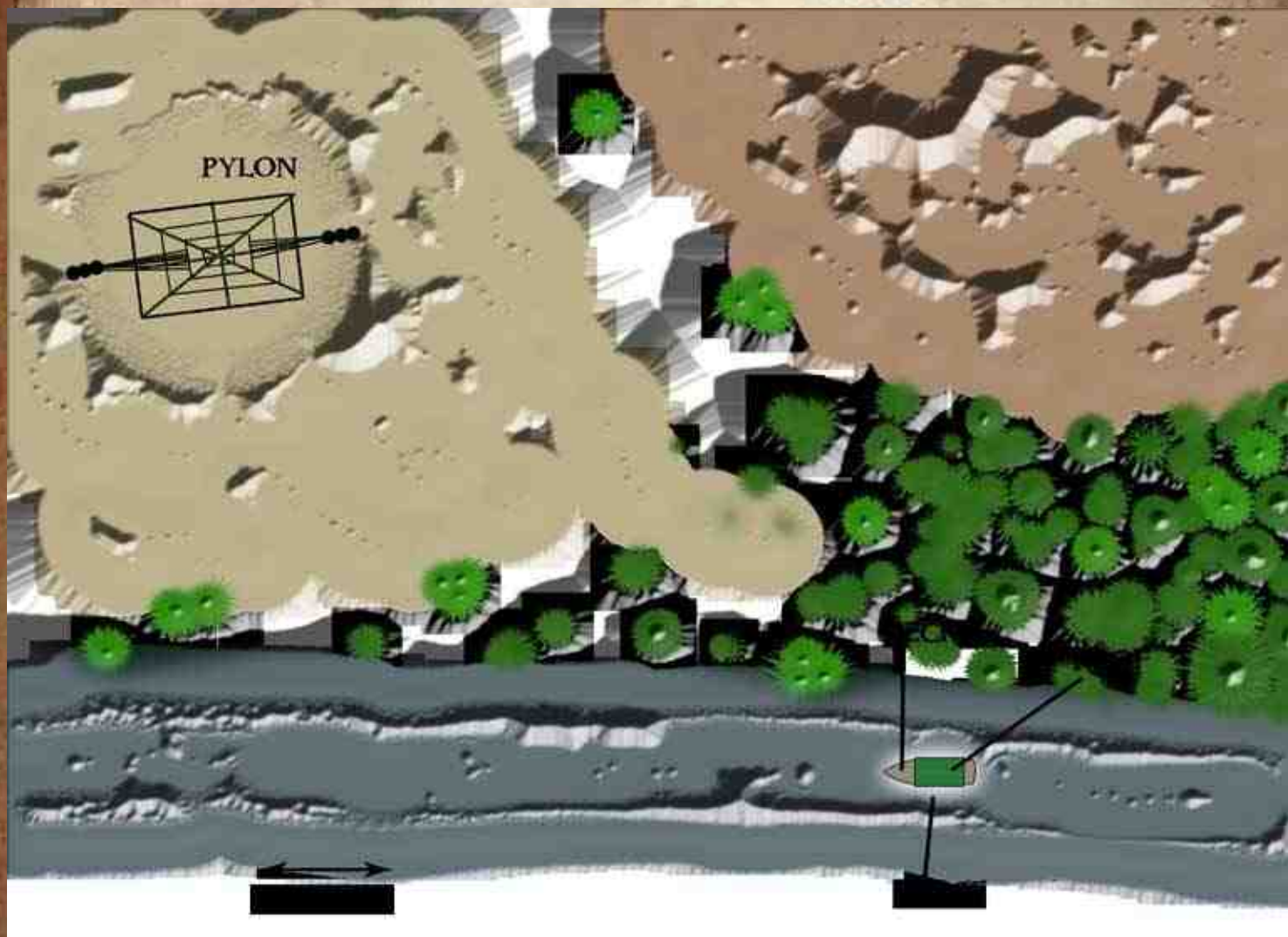
EXPERIENCE

Whether the PCs succeeded or failed they should be awarded some experience points at the end of the session (see p.115).



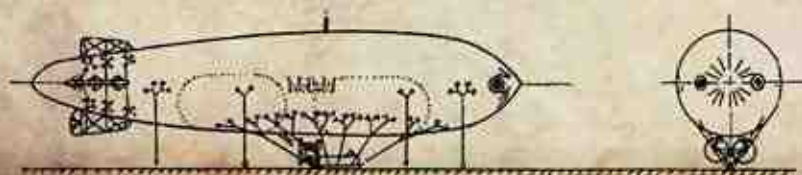


CANAL RENDEZVOUS MAP





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AIRSHIP PIRATES



THE ARTISTS OF

AIRSHIP PIRATES



MANDEM

Pages 22, 23, 26, 29, 36, 49, 80, 85, 97, 109, 131, 150, 153, 158-159, 160, 205, 207, 214, 260, 261, 262, 263, 266, 268, 269, 271

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Paisley Patterns from Scrappin Cop: www.scrappincop.com

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Page 8

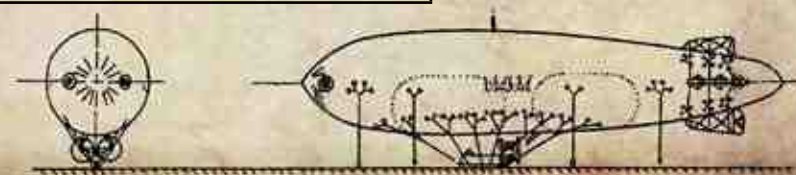
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AA Forrester

Pages 15, 118, 230

Promotional - AA Forrester: Bespoke Daguerrotypes
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AIRSHIP PIRATES



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Nils Härgestam thanks Erin Winslow for supporting steampunk art.

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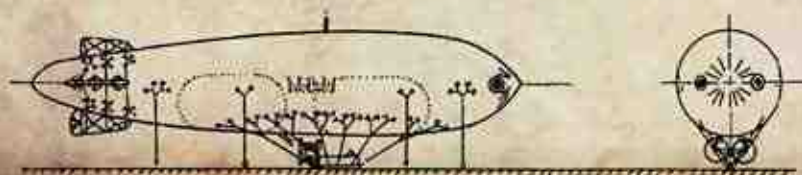
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AIRSHIP PIRATES



CHARACTER SHEET

NAME

CULTURE

BACKGROUND

GENDER

HAIR

AIRSHIP

CAPTAIN

PLAYER

RACE

CLASS

AGE

EYES

SCHTICK

ATTRIBUTES

☐ STRENGTH ☐ PRESENCE

☐ DEXTERITY ☐ WITS

☐ FORTITUDE ☐ RESOLVE

DERIVED ATTRIBUTES

☐ INITIATIVE (DEX+WITS+PER)

☐ MOVEMENT $5 \cdot \text{DEX IN YDS/ROUND}$

SNEAK $(5 \cdot \text{DEX})/2$

RUN $(5 \cdot \text{DEX}) \times 3$

SWIM $(5 \cdot \text{DEX})$

LEAP HORIZONTAL $(1 \cdot \text{DEX})$

JUMP VERTICAL $(0.5 \times \text{HLEAP})$

COMMON SKILLS

☐ ACT (PRESENCE)

☐ ATHLETICS (DEX)

☐ BLUNT WEAPONS (DEX)

☐ BULL (PRESENCE)

☐ CHARM (PRESENCE)

☐ CONCEAL (WITS)

☐ DANCE (DEX)

☐ DODGE (DEX)

☐ DRIVE (WITS)

☐ EMPATHY (PRESENCE)

☐ ETIQUETTE (WITS)

☐ FIREARMS (DEX)

☐ FISTICUFFS (DEX)

☐ GENERAL KNOWLEDGE (WITS)

☐ HIDE & SNEAK (DEX)

☐ IMPROVISED WEAPON (DEX)

☐ INTIMIDATE (PRESENCE)

☐ LEADERSHIP (PRESENCE)

☐ MIGHT (STRENGTH)

☐ PERCEPTION (WITS)

☐ PILOT (WITS)

☐ RIDING (DEX)

☐ STREETWISE (PRESENCE)

☐ SWORDPLAY (DEX)

☐ THROWING (DEX)

HEALTH

☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

SPECIALTIES



AIRSHIP PIRATES



CHARACTER SHEET

EQUIPMENT AND NOTES

PERSONAL WEALTH

HELIOS

EXPERIENCE

TOTAL



FATE POOL

TOTAL



COMPLICATIONS

CONTACTS

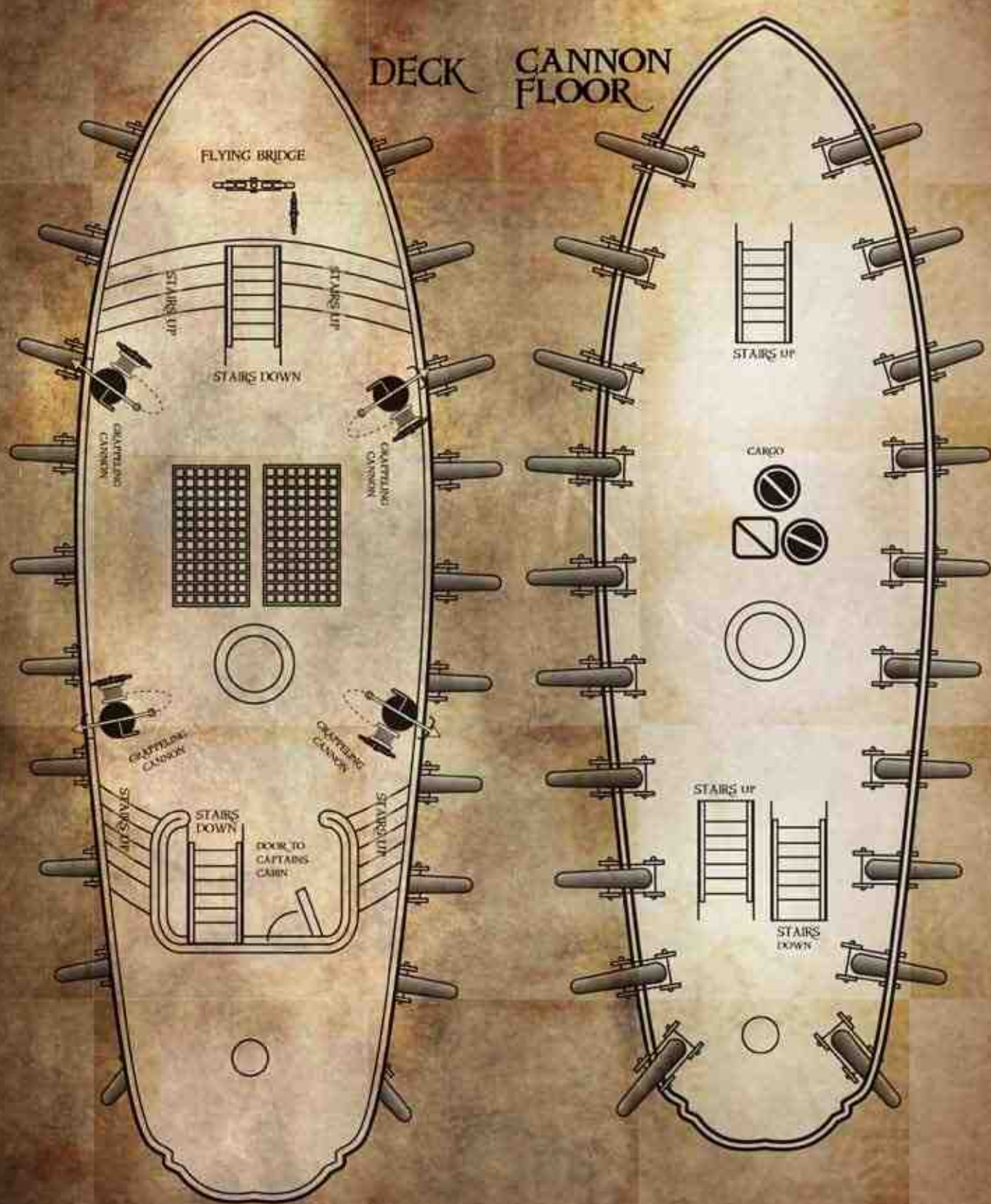
ARMOR

TALENTS AND RACIAL ABILITIES

WEAPONS



THE PIRATE SHIP CORDELIA





THE PIRATE SHIP CORDELIA - "TIGERFISH" CLASS

HANDLING, 8

MOVEMENT, 100 MPH

ARMOR POINTS, 5

CREW, 50/40

RESOURCE SPACE, 50

RANGE, 1000 MILES

COST, HE15,620

RESOURCES, 20 SMALL CANNONS
(20 ARPS).

4 GRAPPLING HOOKS (2 ARPS).

MUSIC STUDIO (10 ARPS).

LUXURIOUS CABIN (5 ARPS).

WEAPONS LOCKER (3 ARPS).

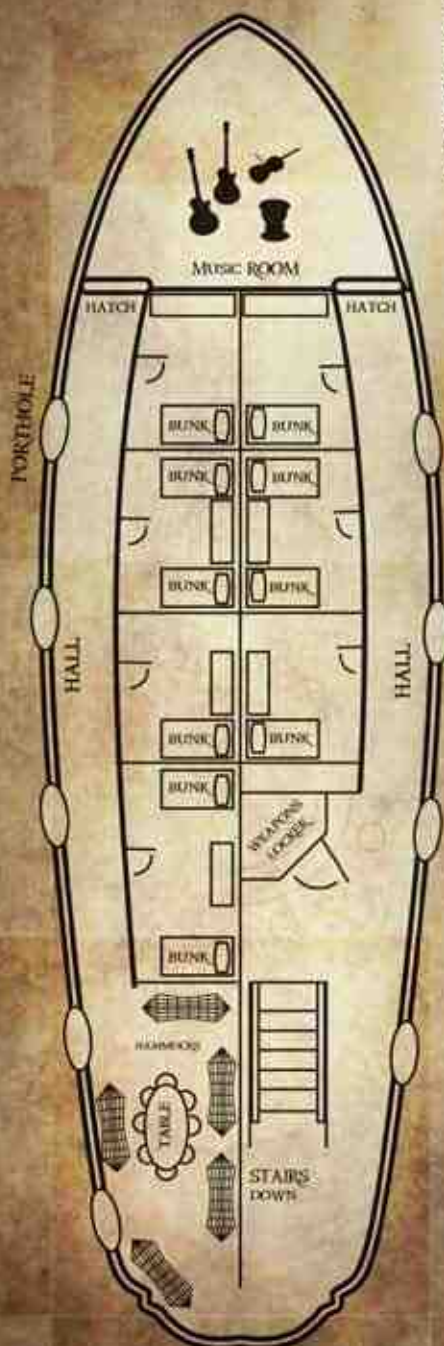
FREE CARGO SPACE, 4 ARPS.

COMPLICATIONS, NONE

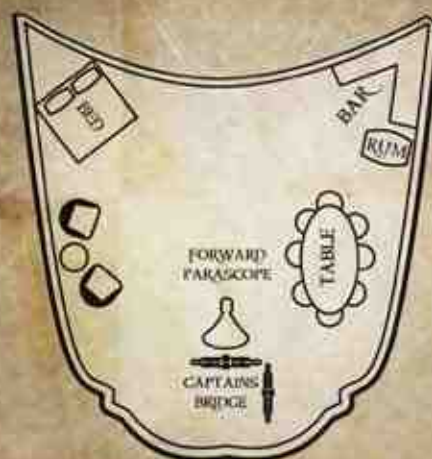
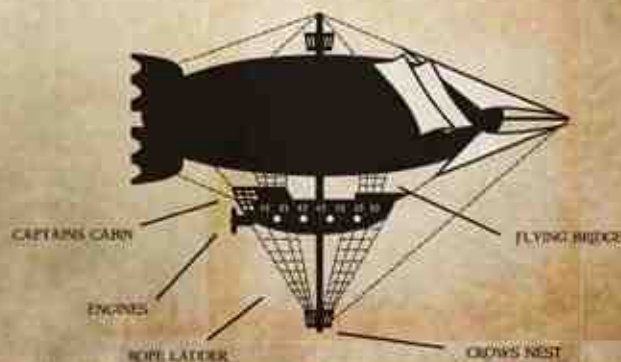
WEAPONS, 20 SMALL CANNONS
(10 ON EACH SIDE).

BROADSIDE DAMAGE, 100

HEALTH, 17 HEALTH DICE



CREW QUARTERS



CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS

AIRSHIP PIRATES

AMERICAN WASTES



AIRSHIP PIRATES



SIERRA NEVADA



★ RUINS

● HIGH TORTUGA

★ RUINS

⚙️ DESOLATION

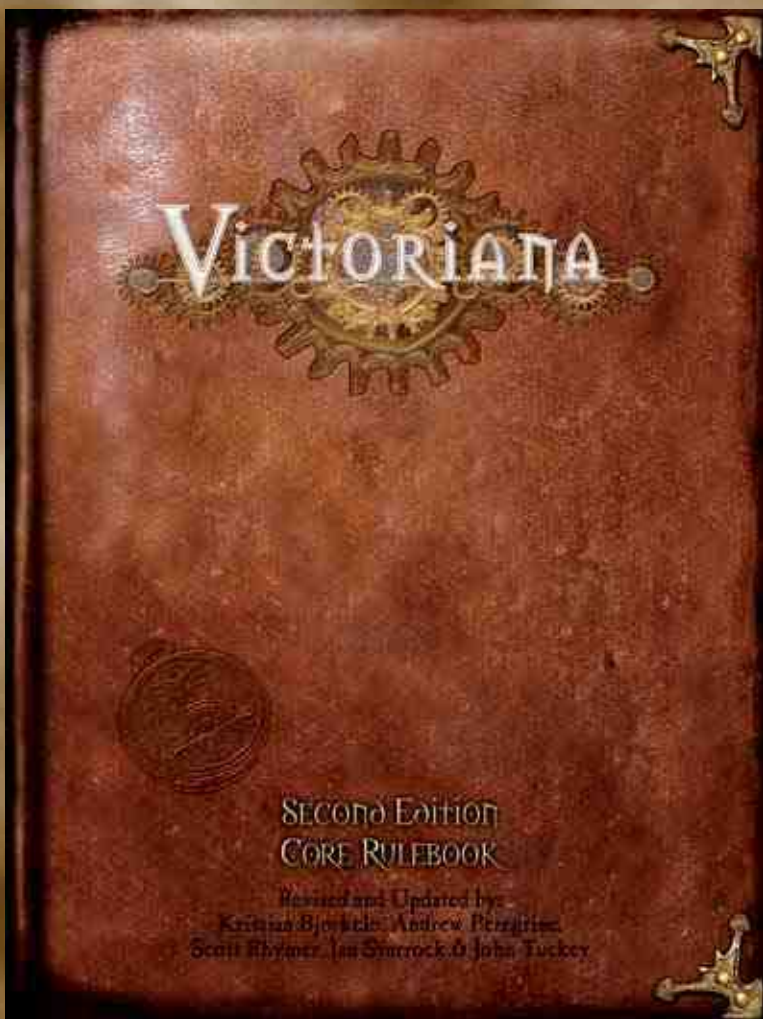
★ RUINS

● ISLA AETHER

▲ NEOBEDOUIN
OIL REFINERY

★ RUINS





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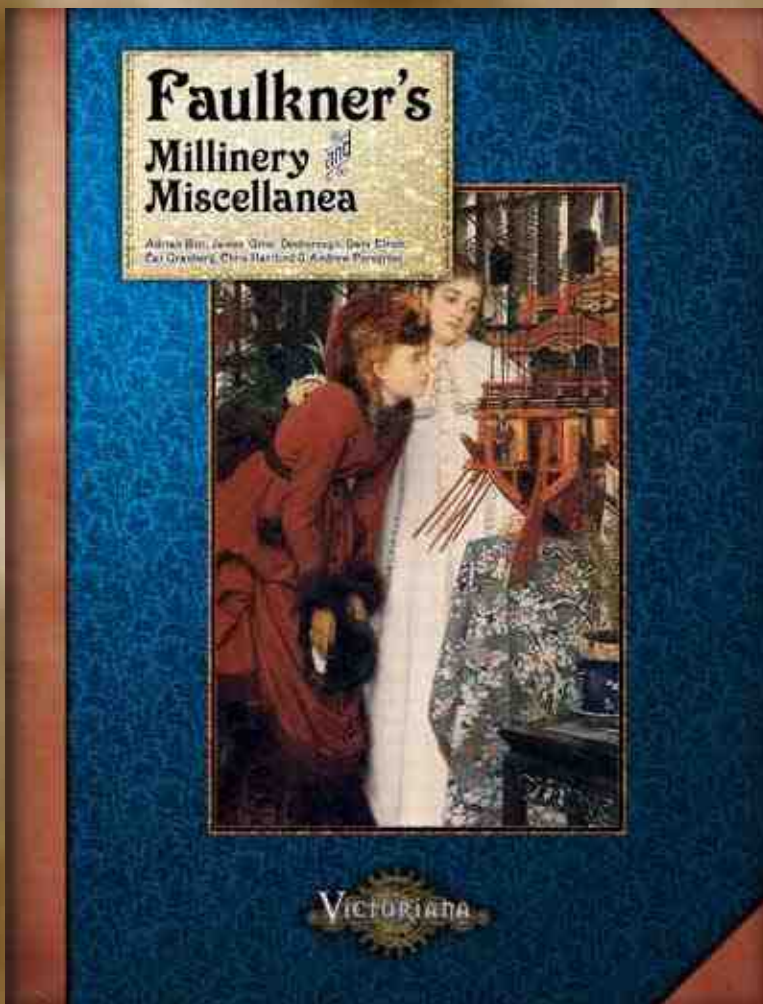
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ALSO BY "CAPTAIN" ROBERT BROWN

THE WRATH OF FATE

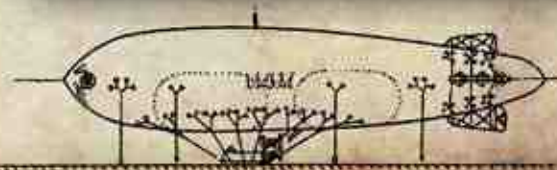
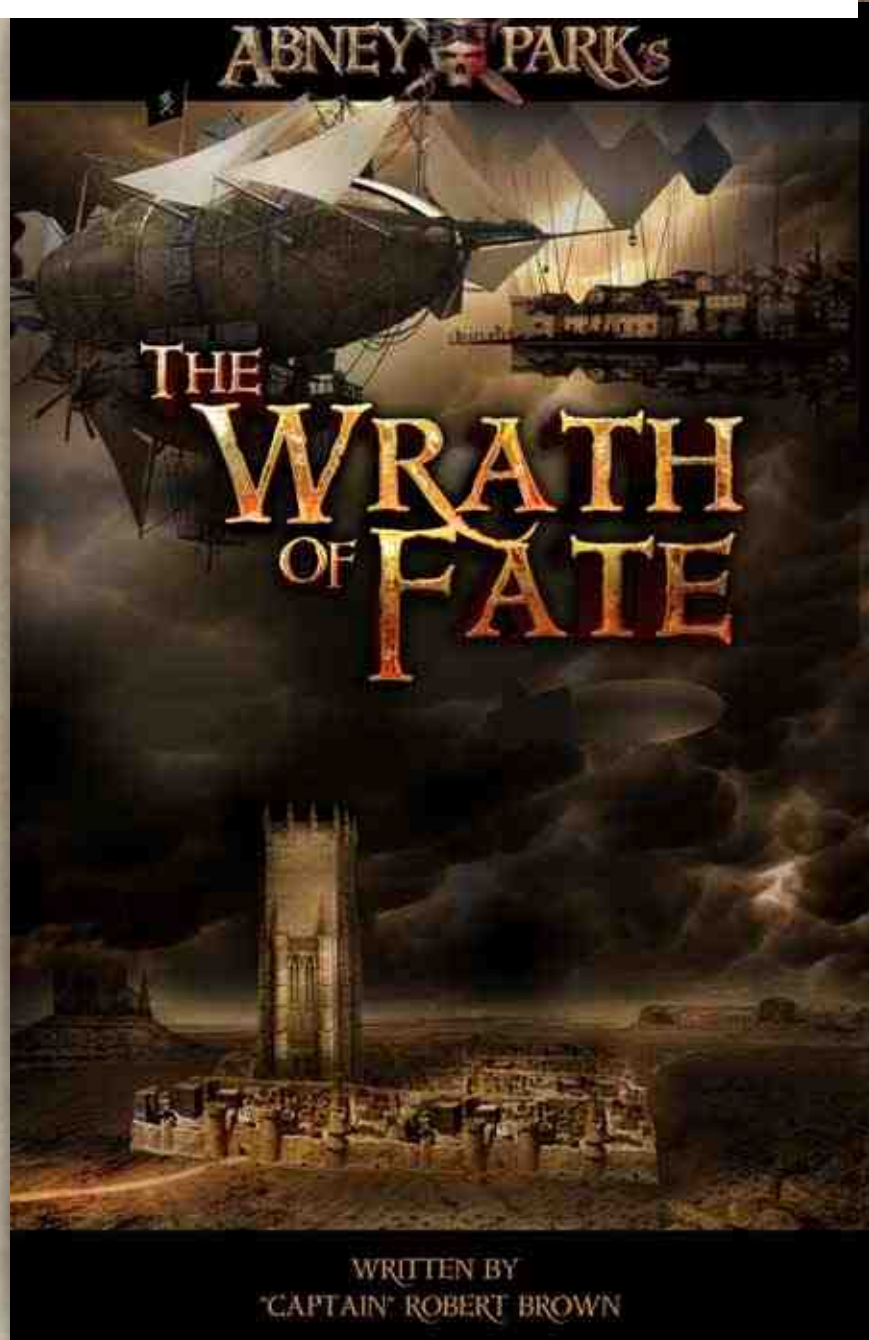
The Wrath of fate is a novel 20 years in the making. It's the cumulative story of all the songs of Captain Robert, from the very first steampunk song, The Change Cage, all the way to the The End Of Days. *The Wrath Of Fate* tells the story of the crew of the legendary HMS Ophelia, and how they inadvertently created this world, in the bumbled attempt to be heroes.

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You can find these albums on iTunes, or better yet, buy directly from the band at:

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AIRSHIP PIRATES



ABNEY PARK



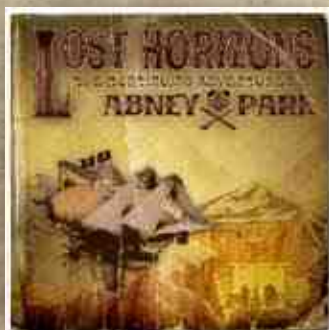
THE END OF DAYS
Released Oct, 2010

TAXIDERMYY
Released 2005



AETHER SHANTIES
Released Dec, 2009

**FROM DREAMS
OR ANGELS**
Released 2002



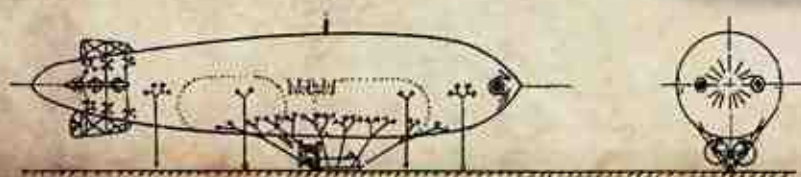
LOST HORIZONS
Released 2008

**CEMETERY
NUMBER 1**
Released 2000



**THE DEATH
OF TRAGEDY**
Released 2005

**RETURN TO THE
FIRE**
Released 1996



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