

GURPS[®]

Fourth Edition

STEAMPUNK SETTING

The Broken Clockwork World[™]



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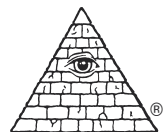
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INTRODUCTION

There are two worlds that once were entirely separate. One is ours (or very like it), and the other blends fantasy and steampunk elements. Now, they’ve come into dangerous contact.

This is a “portal fantasy” setting, as described in *GURPS Fantasy: Portal Realms*, but drawing heavily on the *GURPS Steampunk* series. By default, PCs are expected to be from our world – explorers or people who’ve blundered into the situation. However, it’s also possible to play visitors from the other world, or people on either world concerned with dealing with the fallout of the situation.

Any of the story types discussed in *Portal Realms* (*Exploring the World, Self-Discovery, Saving the World, and Thresholds*) are possible here. Most trips will be *Brief Visits*, but *Long Stays* are possible. Motives will typically be *Chance* (falling through Gates) or *Push* (exploring out of curiosity, on behalf of a government, or for profit).

The Reference Society will usually be our TL8 world; PCs from the TL(5+2)^ Clockwork World will need a level of Low TL (p. B22) and *perhaps* an Unusual Background (p. B96) if they have access to knowledge or powers that give them dramatic advantages over other adventurers.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Phil Masters is the author of numerous *GURPS* books, including *GURPS Banestorm*, *GURPS Thaumatology*, and the Fourth Edition *GURPS Steampunk* series – as well as of several books for other games and a roleplaying game of his own creation, *The Small Folk*, which can be found at warehouse23.com/products/the-small-folk. Quantum physics still works for him, and his house is mercifully free of steam robots.

CHAPTER ONE

TWO WORLDS IN COLLISION

The two worlds are versions of Earth with very different histories, though one of them can no longer really be classed as a coherent *world*.

THE UNBROKEN WORLD

The world which appears to be our own is referred to among those in the know as the “Unbroken World,” sometimes implying nervousness that it, too, might be susceptible to breakage. The term originated among denizens of the *other* world, where it is often spoken in tones of envy. When running an extended campaign, the GM may allow the publicly visible geopolitics of this world to diverge from our own as secrets seep out and mysteries and dangers become public knowledge.

THE CLOCKWORK WORLD

The other of the pair was very different even before it was broken. It originally resembled our Earth until some point in the Bronze Age, but it possessed a whole pantheon of immanent, interventionist gods. Possibly belief shapes reality on that world, creating those gods, and the claims of their temples did more.

Whatever the case, and despite its roots as a low-tech world with supernatural powers, it was capable of technological progress, and the nature of that technology seemingly came to influence the very nature of reality. Although society froze in a Bronze Age configuration of city-states ruled by priests and kings, with each having a patron deity who wanted to keep things that way, technology advanced to clockwork and steam power (TL5). But then, rather than following our world’s path into industrial chemistry and electronics, it persisted with steam and heavy machinery. The physics of this Clockwork World are TL5 by nature, Newtonian and deterministic; quantum physics and relativity are *not true*, and although electricity is real, semiconductors don’t function.

In other words, this is a “steampunk” reality. Scientists from our world have difficulty determining how its physics work partly because a lot of their instruments are built assuming the laws of our world (and so don’t operate properly in the other world), but also because reality was broken before they got there. The Clockwork World’s

natural philosophers have a *theological* viewpoint; they *know* that their world is a great clockwork construct.

Clockwork Civilization

While industrial technology made the cities and their steam-powered industrial society culturally dominant, surrounding rural areas were divided into large farms run by aristocrat-landlords. That said, the global civilization was quite varied, with some cities being theocracies, others monarchies, and a few crude, corrupt democracies. In some, society was rigidly hierarchical, with a proletariat, a managerial-merchant class, and an aristocracy. Others had more social mobility, with opportunities for profitable trade, artistic success, or ascension through the priesthood.

Relations between neighboring cities were *usually* peaceful, with a few bitter rivalries; the occasional would-be conqueror could be restrained by alliances of neighbors. Trade networks used roads and canals before steam power enabled the growth of railways. (There were a lot of incompatible rail gauges, though.)

THEOLOGY

Although the supernatural was always present in the Clockwork World, it didn’t feature spell-based magic. Rather, the priests could occasionally contact the gods and petition for assistance. The disappearance of those gods might have destroyed the priesthood’s social power, but many people are clinging desperately to old beliefs, and some priests somehow still manifest strange abilities.

The Vanished

These gods do not correspond directly to any mythology from our history but may represent a syncretistic development of ancient Sumerian beliefs. Each city had its own parochial god, but there was also a pantheon of globally revered deities, primal and fearsome.

The rulers were *Arn-Oda*, a dour sky god, and his consort *Kijgee*, a nature and earth goddess. *Zin-Sel* was the ever-changing lunar god-goddess, *Reshki* was goddess of death, and *Ajta-Zel* was the goddess of secrets and the planet Venus. The rise of technology was accompanied by growing influence for *Ink-Thur*, “the hammer god,” traditionally invoked by artisans and philosophers, and sometimes seen as equal to *Arn-Oda* in recent times.

The culture was diverse, with an astonishing variety of art forms, though generally conservative; most patrons were aristocrats who didn't have much taste for innovation.

THE BREAKING

But recently, something *very bad* happened. Physicists from our world semi-seriously suggest that the contradictions of TL5 physics finally gave way under the strain; a popular idea on the Clockwork World is that there was a war in Heaven or a demonic invasion. However it happened, the world-clockwork *broke*.

Somehow, the laws of nature persisted on a local level, but beyond that, space itself became an incoherent patchwork, with fragments a few miles or tens of miles across. The gods died, fled, or were forced beyond human reach. The literal clockwork substructure of reality became visible, with parts of the sky taking the appearance of a shifting mass of cogwheels and levers. Civilization shattered as communications and religious observances ceased to function, but societies just about held together. And then something punched holes in reality.

Life in the Ruins

Perhaps, the priests say, the gods made a heroic last-moment effort to keep reality human-habitable. A sun no longer shines in the sky, but days and nights still follow each other as the cosmic machinery glows and dims regularly; likewise, the climate stays tolerable. Travel remains possible, though maps are always provisional; the fragments of the world occasionally judder and shift. Cities survive and can



interact well enough with rural areas that mass starvation has *mostly* been avoided.

Humanity is hanging on. However, priests and philosophers fear that this is temporary; a final, total reality failure might happen at any time. Heroes talk of repairing the damage, while more practical thinkers consider escape.

CROSSOVER: *INFINITE WORLDS*

This campaign framework can be combined with the "Infinite Worlds" structure (see Chapter 20 of the *Basic Set*, and *GURPS Infinite Worlds*). The two realms become a "miniature skerry" (*Infinite Worlds*, p. 89) on Quantum 3, formed when the reality quakes that ripped the farther parallel "Clockwork" apart punched nexus portals through to "Unbroken," a close parallel. Both will be declared closed as soon as Infinity appreciates the

situation, although if Unbroken is discovered first, it may initially be classed as a protectorate.

With The Secret deeply compromised and reality quakes of unknown origin still occurring, this situation is an I-Cop nightmare. Any Cabalists discovering it will, of course, want to conduct research; I-Cops will want to stop them from infiltrating local agencies and research projects.

CROSSOVER: *THE MADNESS DOSSIER*

This campaign framework can be combined with the one described in *GURPS Horror: The Madness Dossier*. In this case, the Clockwork World isn't truly an alternate universe. Rather, a massive Anunnakku plot to restore History B was foiled at the last moment by a Sandman counterstrike, leading to the manifestation of a compromise reality, "History C," blending Anunnakku influence with human agency and technology. History A has reasserted itself, but History C has a semi-stable secondary existence, allowing its human denizens to enter our world

as irruptors, while its quasi-Anunnakku gods have been suppressed.

So Project SANDMAN's secrecy is falling apart, mundane agencies may blunder into their operations at any time, and elements in History C are trying to reawaken their gods, who would then have access to History A through the Gates. However, the Breaking has played havoc with Anunnakku operations. Surviving History B elements want access to the Clockwork World, which would be highly vulnerable to their manipulations.

CHAPTER TWO

INTERACTIONS

After jagged fragments of cosmic clockwork ripped through the fabric of reality, it became possible to walk between worlds, and yet there were no floods, climatic disasters, or huge earthquakes; priests claim that their gods must have worked to moderate the effects. Any significant side effects were just part of the chaos in the Clockwork World and were disregarded as meteorological oddities in ours. The first Gates opened within days, perhaps instantly, but were not discovered immediately. Many Gates are short-lived, and fortunately, none are in overly obvious places in our world.

Nonetheless, people and creatures on both sides soon started passing through.

*Every indication of contrivance,
every manifestation of design, which
existed in the watch, exists in the works
of nature . . .*

– William Paley, *Natural Theology*

FIRST CONTACTS

Contact between the two populations was always difficult, for reasons that merely start with the lack of a mutual language. Early Gate-travelers were prone to being taken for lunatics, and panicking visitors, wildlife, or automatons proved dangerous. However, some visitors survived and learned something about the situation. Some were scared, some were curious, and some thought of ways to profit.

And then things got complicated.

Authorities on both worlds learned about the Gates. Through a combination of luck and quick thinking, those on our world comprehended and believed the truth before the news could leak out, and set to work keeping things secret, as a first response and then as policy. On the Clockwork World, governments' reactions were less consistent.

THE GATES

The parameters governing world-travel are *not* fully understood, whatever individuals in both realms *claim*. Transitions between worlds go through *Gates* (the capital letter has become traditional) – roughly circular portals, between 8' and 30' in diameter, much as discussed in *GURPS Fantasy: Portal Realms*. How many Gates exist around the worlds is unknown – certainly dozens, maybe hundreds, possibly thousands.

About two-thirds of Gates permit two-way traffic; the others only allow passage in one direction. A Gate usually glows

softly. On a side at which travelers can only arrive, it may be invisible, or show a dim image of the other world. In some cases, Gates display images of spinning cogs and gears. The edges appear indeterminate but aren't sharp; if someone sticks an arm through and then moves it sideways, they encounter increasing resistance until further movement becomes impossible, rather than cutting that arm off.

To pass through, one simply steps through the circle. Those who start to move through a one-way Gate but then try to stop are gently but irresistibly drawn the rest of the way.

Transient Gates last from minutes to hours to a few days, and then vanish forever. *Intermittent Gates* appear and disappear at random. *Periodic Gates* are similar but follow a predictable pattern. The rare *Permanent Gates* seem to last indefinitely, though they may just be transient with very long durations. The GM should have Gates behave however suits the plot.

Transition Rituals

For further complications, a few Gates respond to patterns of human activity, thought, and words. This is *partly* understood by a few Clockwork World priests, who say that these “transition rituals” are related to the rituals of their faiths, adapted using theological principles and intuition. A ritual may work to open or close a Gate, or both; many can only be used on one side or the other. Any ritual takes 2d×10 seconds to perform, and only functions within a couple of hundred yards of one specific location. When it is done, make an IQ roll to determine if it works, with a critical failure causing a Fright Check (p. B360) at -5 from psychic trauma.

In game terms, knowledge of a transition ritual is usually a plot device, not worth points, but might rate as a perk. If anyone wants to work out a set of general principles for designing rituals, treat this as Ritual Magic skill (p. B218); how well it functions is up to the GM, but basically, roll against the skill instead of IQ to get a ritual to work, with modifiers depending on time taken and local conditions (other requirements and effects are as above). Sometimes, priests who have developed rituals that can only be used on *our* world transmit the knowledge through psychic communication (see below), hoping that whoever receives it will act on it.

PSYCHIC INTERDIMENSIONAL COMMUNICATION

Not all contact between the two realms is physical. Occasionally, people in one realm find they can contact people in the other *mentally*. Some Unbroken World researchers refer to this as “telepathy,” but there's little evidence that “psionics” research was onto anything about the Clockwork World.

Crucially, mind-to-mind contact *only* appears to be possible *between* the two worlds, not within either one. Clockwork World priests say that the effect is akin to communion with their gods; only the maddest suggest that the Unbroken World is the realm of the gods. Also, communication often requires one or both participants to be asleep, transmitting thoughts in what feel like lucid dreams.

This effect can often be used as a plot device and left unspecified in game terms; someone on our world receives details of a transition ritual, or someone sends a desperate call for help in their sleep, using a latent talent. Adventurers who have this as a reliable ability should buy Telecommunication (Telesend) (p. B91), with the modifiers Universal (+50%), World-Spanning (*GURPS Powers*, p. 109, the +50% version), and usually an Accessibility limitation such as “Sender must be asleep and make a Dreaming skill roll” (-40%) and/or “Recipient must be asleep” (-30%). The range penalty for this purpose is usually -5, but if the two people are both within 10 miles of the same Gate (open or not), the effective distance between them is the sum of their respective distances from that Gate. Sending “blind” and hoping that there is *someone* within range gives another -5 to the roll; the GM chooses the recipient at random or decides who would make for an interesting story.

UNBROKEN WORLD OFFICIALDOM

Unbroken World authorities tend to maintain strict secrecy about the Gates. Even in open, democratic nations, they’ve decided to keep things quiet “for now.” Telling the public that “there were gods but not the one you worship, and they weren’t interested in you, and they’re dead, and your home might be invaded by clockwork robots” is a task that nobody really wants. In some cases, law enforcement and intelligence agencies haven’t even told their political masters what is going on yet; they don’t need *politicians* panicking or trying to exploit the situation while they’re still determining the facts.

Occasional intruders are just a minor containment problem, and private individuals trying to conduct trade or exploration need to be restrained, dissuaded, co-opted, or locked up. Research into Clockwork World technology *might* prove profitable, while the existence of extradimensional governments suggests a need for diplomacy. But some people beyond the Gates already see our world as a haven from their disaster, which could lead to a *huge* refugee crisis. Also, Gates located close together on the Clockwork World sometimes lead to completely different locations on ours, implying that they could be used for infiltration or even invasions of other nations. The most terrifying possibility of all is that the Breaking could spread to our world.

Agencies deploy investigative teams to map known Gates and discover any underlying patterns, as well as conduct scientific research and establish tentative diplomatic relations. Most also know that other governments have some knowledge, and many are trading information on a provisional, *ad hoc* basis. But many officials are unsure about *everything*.

COG-FINDERS

Not every Gate comes under government control as soon as it manifests, and the policy of secrecy is deeply compromised. In the age of the Internet, rumors and whispers spread *fast*. Any number of secret discussion boards and mailing lists are dedicated to this subject, usually propagating about 40% truth and 60% misinformation, and to a developing subculture of “cog-finders.” Reports of Gates, steampunk-style machinery, confused Clockwork World denizens, and official cover-ups are mixed up with old-style UFO stories, Bigfoot sightings, paranoia, and hoaxes.

A lot of semi-serious hobbyists are mostly just amused, but “serious” cog-finders include arm-chair conspiracy theorists, confused dream-sending recipients, amateurish sensation-seekers (who eventually either get bored and move on or find something and vanish), semi-smart investigators who are out of their depth, and a few deeply worried scholar-analysts. Official agencies find the amateurs ridiculous, although the crazies can serve to generate smokescreens around the truth. Sometimes they detect events before the authorities do.



CHAPTER THREE

THE BROKEN REALMS

Anyone from our world who travels through a Gate encounters skies full of phantom cogwheels, clouds of choking oily vapor, a surreal landscape of steampunk-style wreckage, farms and villages protected by improvised walls and paranoid peasants speaking unrecognizable languages, steam-powered vehicles, and gas-masked cavalry patrols riding robot mounts or horses also fitted with gas masks.

Clockwork World communities and governments *are* pulling themselves back together; the fact that the world was always a patchwork of city-states helps, as many of the cities are intact enough to recover. However, these cities are frequently on the brink of starvation, and are ruthless about asserting control over nearby farmlands, whether or not they were adjacent before the Breaking. If off-worlders visit a city openly or are captured by patrols, they will be taken before the local rulers; if they are lucky, these will include priests with the Gift of Tongues (p. 10). Good rulers are worried for their citizens or fear invasion; bad rulers dream of conquest. Both want information. Unfortunately, the Clockwork World has never had much conception of universal human rights.

TECHNOLOGY AND TRANSPORT

In *GURPS* terms, the Clockwork World is TL(5+2)^, with very odd “superscience” based on different laws of nature. Mechanics and steam power are very advanced, and electricity is somewhat understood, though semiconductor-based *electronics* just don’t work. Because city-states often forbid philosophers and inventors from releasing new ideas to rival states, not all technology is globally distributed, but the world has been at this tech level for some centuries, so most basic ideas have spread.

There are also technologies that defy Unbroken World comprehension. Local engineers make clockwork springs that can store *incredible* amounts of energy, though steam engines are still better or cheaper for large tasks. Also, intricate clockwork control mechanisms for automatons frequently incorporate something called “mind metal,” which somehow gives them a degree of artificial intelligence, though usually non-volitional (*GURPS Steampunk 2: Steam and Shellfire*, p. 11).

Almost anything described in *GURPS Steampunk 2* and *GURPS Vehicles: Steampunk Conveyances* could show up here. However, heavier-than-air flight is unknown (possibly the gods prohibited it), though balloons and small airships are

in use. (Balloons are much more common.) Unfortunately, weird storms since the Breaking have made flight significantly more dangerous.

The metallurgy behind the stranger devices may involve divine intervention. Although these devices work on the Unbroken World, they become increasingly less reliable there. Their HT (and anything else that determines rolls to avoid malfunctions) falls by 2 the moment they pass through a Gate, and by a further 1 for every three days they spend away from their home world. (Assume that devices start at HT 11 if this isn’t listed.) When their HT reaches 0, devices fail and fall apart. Taking them back through a Gate before the gear fails lets them recover 1 point per minute, but once their HT has fallen to 0, they are beyond recovery.

Beam Weapons

A few cities on the Clockwork World can build etheric shock weapons (*GURPS Steampunk 2*, p. 34-35). These don’t work at all on the Unbroken World, which lacks luminiferous ether. There are no classic rayguns.

Electricity and Electronics

Semiconductors don’t work on the Clockwork World. Unfortunately, pretty much all TL8 electrical devices include semiconductors. Official teams may be issued with TL6-equivalent equipment based on vacuum tubes and be given crash courses in the relevant skills. Clockwork World engineers can understand this gear after examining it.

ENCOUNTERS AND AUTOMATONS

The inhabitants of the Clockwork World are (mostly) human and can be designed as such in *GURPS* terms. Where full character sheets are required, the templates in *GURPS Steampunk 3: Soldiers and Scientists* can be relevant; see p. 9. However, there are also some mechanical beings. Most of these have non-volitional AI, but some have become erratic, almost willful, and some are dangerously confused. The type names given below are slang terms used in the cog-finder underworld.

Assassin Doll

The most common type of automaton is a spindly humanoid clockwork servant; use the details for the dancing doll (*GURPS Steampunk 2*, p. 16), but they only need rewinding once a day (Reduced instead of Increased Consumption) and can't pass for human (replace Secret with Social Stigma (Valuable Property)). These automatons are usually harmless, but a few are built as assassins. These gain Per 9, Ambidexterity, Catfall, Combat Reflexes, Acrobatics-15, Knife-14, Main-Gauche-14, and Stealth-13, and don't suffer from Bad Grip. They typically wield a pair of large knives (1d-3 cut at reach C, 1 or 1d-2 imp at reach C; Parry 11), sometimes poisoned.

Cog Dog

Aristocrats, successful merchants, and small temples employ cog dogs for security and personal protection. These "steampunk robot wolves" are powered by compact oil-fueled steam engines and are highly obedient to their programmed controllers. They slip into paranoia and bursts of aggression if left without instructions.

ST: 12	HP: 24	Speed: 5.50
DX: 11	Will: 6	Move: 5/10
IQ: 6	Per: 11	Weight: 210 lbs.
HT: 11	FP: N/A	SM: 0
Dodge: 9	Parry: N/A	DR: 6

Bite (12): 1d-2 cutting. Reach C.

Slam (12): Collision damage and possible knock-down; see p. B371.

Traits: Automaton; Cannot Float; Cannot Learn; Combat Reflexes; Doesn't Breathe (Oxygen Combustion); Doesn't Sleep; Enhanced Move 1 (Ground); Fragile (Brittle); Indomitable; Machine; Mute; Night Vision 2; No Sense of Smell/Taste; Photographic Memory; Quadruped; Reprogrammable; Sharp Teeth; Social Stigma (Valuable Property).

Skills: Brawling-12; Stealth-10.

Iron Lion

Iron lions are combat automatons with polished brass bodies and dark iron "manes" and claws. They are usually found guarding major temples, palaces, and the estates of merchant-lords, or serving as bodyguards for powerful individuals or as shock troops. They tend to single-minded behavior; in the absence of orders, they can be mistaken for statues.

ST: 17	HP: 34	Speed: 6.00
DX: 11	Will: 8	Move: 6/12
IQ: 6	Per: 10	Weight: 600 lbs.
HT: 12	FP: N/A	SM: +1
Dodge: 10	Parry: N/A	DR: 10

Bite (12): 1d+1 cutting. Reach C, 1.

Claw (12): 1d+1 cutting. Reach C, 1.

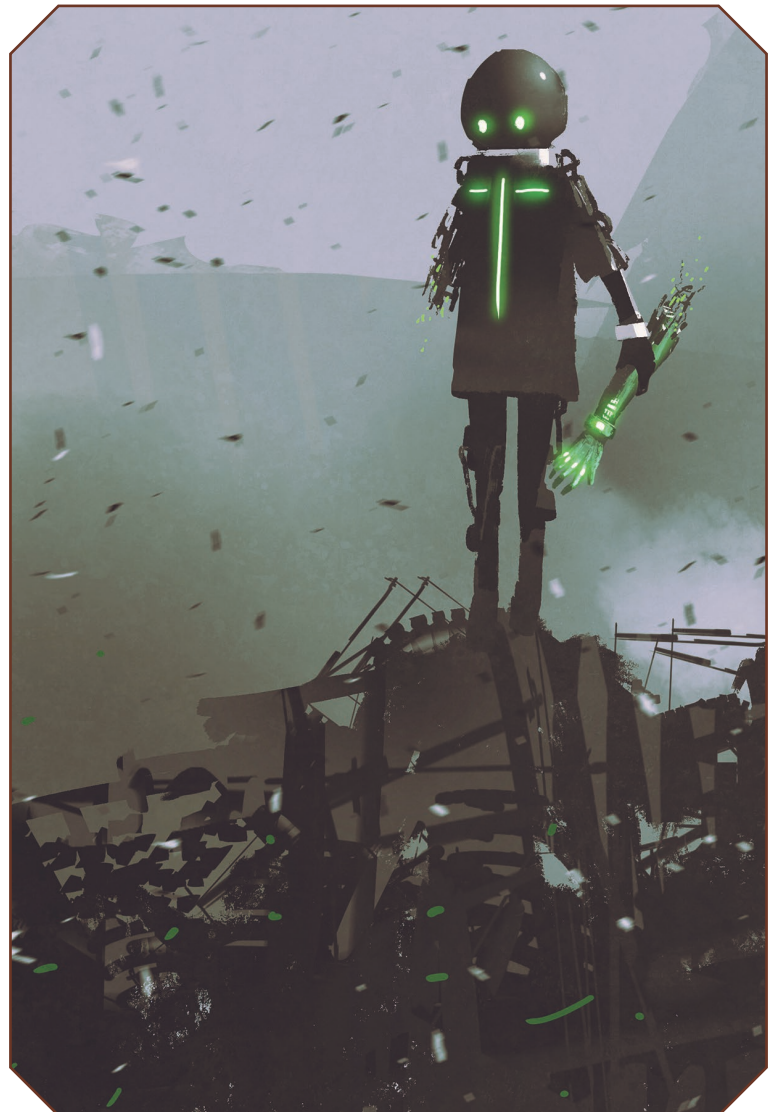
Slam (12): Collision damage and possible knock-down; see p. B371.

Traits: Automaton; Cannot Float; Cannot Learn; Combat Reflexes; Doesn't Breathe (Oxygen Combustion); Doesn't Sleep; Enhanced Move 1 (Ground); Extra Attack 1; Fragile (Brittle); High Pain Threshold; Indomitable; Machine; Mute; Night Vision 4; No Sense of Smell/Taste; Photographic Memory; Quadruped; Reprogrammable; Sharp Claws; Sharp Teeth; Social Stigma (Valuable Property).

Skills: Brawling-12; Intimidation-12.

Steam Worker

This type of automaton, described in *GURPS Steampunk 2*, p. 16, is widely used for construction work, but a few are employed by the military. Their lack of initiative limits their usefulness, but if they are sent to destroy a target, they *will not stop* until they succeed or are destroyed. Because they generally lack military "training," steam workers in a combat role typically use great axes with All-Out Attack (Determined), giving them effective skill 9 and damage 3d+3 cut but no defense rolls. A few may be given very heavy firearms such as anti-tank rifles (*GURPS Steampunk 2*, pp. 31, 33), to unnerving effect if with limited accuracy. A very few are "trained" with combat skills.



CHAPTER FOUR

CAMPAIGNS

This setting supports a range of campaign types, which in turn require PCs of different power levels. Also, there are a few setting details to bear in mind during character creation.

Language and Culture

The Clockwork World has dozens of living languages, but one serves as a trade and ritual tongue – *Eme-Goma*, a descendant of Sumerian with Proto-Indo European loanwords, written in a hybrid of cuneiform and runic script. Local people usually speak it; some have it as their native language, while others are brought up speaking something else and learn *Eme-Goma* later. Likewise, although there is considerable cultural diversity, a single **GURPS** Cultural Familiarity (“Clockwork World”) covers everything.

Visitor Features

If the campaign is going to be based entirely or mostly on the Clockwork World, adventurers from our world *might* be permitted or required to take Mundane Background (p. B144) without it necessarily counting against disadvantage limits; if they do, the GM should enforce the problems of unfamiliarity with steampunk technologies and supernatural powers. The travelers might also have one level of High TL, as they’ve moved from TL8 to TL(5+2)^, but if they’re not going to get much benefit from this, the GM may choose not to require spending the points.

GURPS Horror

Campaigns in this setting can feature overtones of horror. In **GURPS Horror** terms, this might encompass Fear of the Universe (reality behaving incomprehensibly), tainted with Fear of Others (the inhabitants of the other universe), Fear of Technology (neither population understanding the other’s tech), and Fear of the Apocalypse (the Breaking). See also that book’s notes on *Narrative Structures* (pp. 100-101), *Design Parameters* (pp. 105-109), and anything in its Chapter 4.

TEMPLATES

Templates from some other books may be useful in this setting.

GURPS Fantasy: Portal Realms: The *Transmundane* meta-trait should *not* be used, reducing the cost of all templates by 20 points or more. Aside from issues with Mundane Background and High TL, characters from our world don’t necessarily get Charisma.

GURPS Horror: Occultism and related skills will be of limited use here. Traditional occult ideas have nothing to do with the Breaking, and mystic powers are based entirely on Clockwork World religious disciplines.

GURPS Steampunk 3: Soldiers and Scientists: Most of these templates are suitable as Clockwork World characters, aside from some explicitly mystical or “native” types. The society is not exactly similar to our Victorian era, but veers close enough; it even has newspapers and revolutionary movements, though both tread carefully given the power of the ruling classes.

CAMPAIGN TYPES

Random Teens (0-50 points): Ordinary people from our world may encounter weirdness or blunder through a Gate, leaving them confused and maybe desperate for a way home. These accidental adventurers don’t *have* to be kids, but there is a tradition of stories about plucky teens fascinated by, say, the strange junk found in someone’s basement or a “magic spell” learned from a crazy street person. Hopefully they’ll not see any shame in *running away* a lot. Actual teens probably peak at 25-30 points, maybe using the child templates from **Portal Realms** and **Horror**. For 50-point PCs, 60- and 65-point templates from **Horror** might serve with some trimming, say by reducing the amount of points in advantages. Possible templates to use include academic, criminal, journalist, occultist, police officer, retired soldier, tech, and writer.

Freelance Risk-Takers (50-150 points): Cogfinders vary enormously, from smart and well-organized, through obsessive (“My son is there somewhere!”), to delusional. A satisfying campaign probably needs a party nearer the competent end. Many **Horror** templates can be used with a little adaptation, and the explorer, outcast, and trader from **Portal Realms** also fit.

From the Government (125-200 points): Official investigations will be well-resourced, presenting to outsiders as hard-eyed men in black. In truth, they’ll be mixed bags of unnerved spies, soldiers, academics, and diplomats, trying to fulfill contradictory assignments from managers and politicians. A team scrambled together in the early days might consist of 125-point characters with a Duty and some points spent on Patron, Rank, Security Clearance, etc.; elite problem-solvers might be 200 points each. The academic, detective, explorer, retired soldier, slayer, and tech from **Horror** are especially appropriate; the individuals could have been selected for their potential (that is, high attribute scores), so raising their point values shouldn’t be difficult.

Scouts and Refugees (0-150 points): PC groups could also come from the Clockwork World. Roleplaying their confusion at TL8 society may be challenging; they'll have some understanding of technology but often think more like fantasy heroes. They can be built using templates from **GURPS Steampunk 3**. Random desperate civilians are 0-25 points, but the Clockwork World has plenty of 150-point heroes. Wilder games might feature characters made using the clockwork automaton or steam-powered mechanical man racial templates with a little adjustment, though these will be considered strange and frightening even in the Clockwork World, where free-willed AIs remain rare.

SCENARIOS AND OBJECTIVES

The basic Broken Clockwork World scenario involves a Gate opening and something weird falling through, or some unfortunate stumbling into the Clockwork World. The PCs then turn out to be the people best placed to resolve things. If the Gate then closes, the story is over for now, but it may reopen.

This simple premise is fine, especially as the basis for a one-off game, but the challenges of the setting are *not* inherently one-off. There are many Gates, and factions on both worlds know about them. The Clockwork World is desperate; the Unbroken World fears the Breaking; scholars on each world argue that knowledge from studying the other may be a matter of life and death; and some people just think about profit.

Hence, while it'd be possible to keep a "Random Teens" campaign rolling along for years, with the kids dealing with minor weirdness, making friends on the "other side," and fending off adults, the natural arc of a game runs higher and wider. Indeed, random teens could mature into cog-finders, then be recruited by an agency and given some funding. Likewise, the scale of the problems they face could grow from



isolated weirdness to full-scale interdimensional invasions, while many players will want to work toward a *conclusion*.

The two obvious successful endings would be closing the Gates or keeping them open but stable. It would be satisfactory enough for the Unbroken World if the Gates were sealed, but that would leave the Clockwork World in decline and chaos, so restabilizing reality on that side would be ideal. The closure might not be 100% final, leaving the option of epilogues or occasional sequels featuring incursions, missing people, dangerous schemes, or cosmic mysteries.

Ending with open-but-stable Gates has more radical consequences. It would demand either a dramatic improvement in conditions on the Clockwork World, or our world finding a way to deal with millions of refugees, as well as interdimensional diplomatic relations and trade agreements. Furthermore, realistically, when two large urbanized populations come into contact for the first time, they *will* transmit whole families of diseases to each other, potentially leading to huge plagues. Tech level 8 medicine on one side and priestly healing powers on the other may moderate this at first, and limited initial contacts may avoid disease transmission, but that's temporary.

To accomplish either of these results, someone will have to make breakthroughs in practical theology or dimensional physics. Direct dealings with cranky deities might be involved. While academic research is generally best conducted offstage, adventurers may be required to gather data or conduct experiments. Or perhaps the solution turns out to depend on a large energy release somewhere.

Finally, why should there be only *two* worlds? It's possible that a campaign ending could leave the PCs aware of the existence of yet more worlds and how to reach them. This could lead into a variant **Infinite Worlds** campaign of reality stabilization, negotiation with cosmic powers, and study of alternate histories.

PRIESTLY POWERS

This setting also allows a few exotic abilities; see *Transition Rituals* (p. 5) and *Psychic Interdimensional Communication* (pp. 5-6). In addition, Clockwork World priests can qualify for at least two other abilities, though only a minority has them.

Healing Gift: Healing (Only on faithful believers in your religion, -20%; Own Race Only, -20%) [18]. This is technically Faith Healing, but doesn't gain the inherent benefits of that enhancement. Its existence partly compensates for the Clockwork World's patchy grasp of medical science. *18 points*.

Gift of Tongues: Affliction 1 (Advantage, Spoken Accented Eme-Goma, +20%; Based on Will, +20%; Extended Duration ×10, +40%; Touch-Based, +150%)

[33] + Mind Reading (Hearing-Based, -20%; Only translates words spoken – doesn't determine truth, -40%; Universal, +50%) [27] as an alternative attack (p. B61). If the target chooses not to resist, the Affliction's duration is based on the priest's margin of success on an IQ roll, while the Mind Reading succeeds automatically if the priest makes their IQ roll to use it. Note that this is not perfect two-way translation; a priest can *either* grant a visitor the temporary ability to speak Eme-Goma and then hope they use it, *or* pull the meaning of foreign speech out of the speaker's mind, but not reply to them. *39 points*.

Priests can also buy a *power Talent* (5 points/level); add the level to the relevant attribute when making rolls to use priestly powers.

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