

IN THE BLEAK MIDSUMMER

An Adventure for Cogs, Cakes & Swordsticks



LYNNE HARDY

It's a tad nippy out there...

London is suffering from the worst recorded weather in history – and for the capital of her Majesty's Empire of Steam, that's really quite an impressive feat. Not only is the centre of the city gripped by unseasonably cold weather, but a strange new species of robin (or something that looks very much like one) appears to have taken up residence.

Yet what does any of this have to do with a commission from the Royal Zoological Society, a disappearing toymaker and a positive surfeit of mince pies?

In the Bleak Midsummer is a short, seasonally-themed (well, mostly) adventure for the *Cogs, Cakes and Swordsticks* roleplaying game of steampunk pulp adventure. We hereby invite you to curl up with a nice glass of mulled wine and enter perhaps the oddest summer in living memory..



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Adventure

In the Bleak Midsummer

The British do love to complain about the weather - either it's too hot, too cold, too wet or too dry. Extremes of weather in Britain are nothing new, mind you; during the Little Ice Age (which lasted for at least three hundred years before finishing in the middle of the 19th Century), it got so cold that the tidal sections of the River Thames in London froze over to such a depth that funfairs could be held on its surface.

It is these Frost Fairs, as they were known, that have provided the inspiration for the following scenario. The version of the story here presented is relatively light-hearted but could be run with a much darker tone, if required. There are no scenes within the acts as, after the initial setup, it is up to the characters to determine which direction their investigations take. At the end of the adventure are a few additional suggestions in case you would like to continue the "chilling" excitement.

So grab your mince pie and a nice, toasty mug of mulled wine - it's definitely time for adventure!

LET IT SNOW

This summer has to be one of the strangest on record; after all, no-one expected to be knee-deep in snow in the middle of July. Despite Mr. Bazalgette's lovely Victoria Embankment,

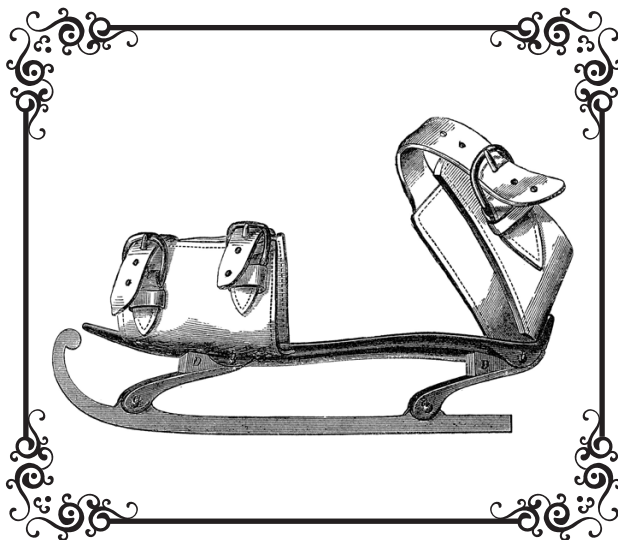
which is supposed to help stop this sort of nonsense from happening, the Thames has well and truly frozen over again, to an even greater depth than it did in 1814 (the last time it was solid enough to hold a Frost Fair on it). Although it's hardly fair to blame the great engineer entirely - there's no way he could have predicted it would turn so cold - when even the much vaunted Ministry of Meteorology has been taken somewhat by surprise by the unseasonable frosts.

The current cold snap began about four weeks ago, around the beginning of June. One day, everyone woke up to one of the thickest, murkiest fogs London had ever seen (and that's saying something); in fact, it was so thick, you could feel it enfolding you in a clammy embrace whenever you had to walk through it. Two days later the fog had gone, only to be replaced by blizzards and icy conditions. The river froze practically overnight between Blackfriars and Tower Bridge, and the traders soon took up position on the ice, selling over-priced souvenir tat to tourists and hot food and beverages to everyone who wanted them.

Oddly, though, not all of London is affected. Only an approximately five mile wide circle covering the centre of Her Majesty's great city is suffering from the inclement conditions. Outside this area, the weather is behaving far more normally...

ACT 1: RED, RED ROBINS

Something else appeared along with the snow, something which has the Royal Zoological Gardens in Regents Park quite excited: big, fat robins. Normal British robins (*Erithacus*



IT'S A DATE!

This scenario is set some-when after 1878. The exact date has not been fixed so that you can fit it into your ongoing *Cogs, Cakes & Swordsticks* campaign, should you so wish.





rubecula) are diminutive, if feisty, birds, but the current crop of sightings involves something the approximate size of a pigeon and coloured more like our robin's transatlantic cousin, the American robin (*Turdus migratorius*; a thrush with Christ-massy pretensions).

Always keen to bag a new specimen for the collection, the Royal Zoological Society (which owns and runs the Zoo), has assembled a crack team of experts to track down one of these unusual avians and bring it in for further examination (preferably alive, but they're not going to be too picky about such minor details).

Four sample characters are provided on pp.9-10, but this scenario can just as easily be run with your existing adventurers, or any others who may have an interest in odd occurrences.

A HUNTING WE WILL GO

It is relatively straightforward for our heroes to track down a giant robin – after all, they have been seen all over the inner city, as far afield as Shoreditch to the north and Camberwell

to the south. Those who have seen them are more than willing to describe the birds' routes.

A successful Medium difficulty (4+) dice roll when questioning observers reveals that the birds' flight-paths seem to be remarkably regular, with them coming to roost in a particular tree for a few minutes before flying back the way they had previously come. On the roll of a natural 6, it will become obvious to the characters that the birds are never seen flying beyond their roost trees.

Having identified a suitable spot at which to bag a robin, it is up to the players to decide precisely how their characters will achieve such a thing. As mentioned previously, the Royal Zoological Gardens would prefer a live specimen, but they'll settle for whatever they can get. Don't forget that the weather is particularly cold and snowy at the moment, which is bound to make the proceedings far trickier than they would be otherwise.

A SURPRISE

However the characters go about acquiring a robin, on closer inspection it is clear to all who see it that this is not a real bird, but a very cleverly constructed automaton. A thorough examination of either the whole bird, or any parts of it still remaining (should the poor creation have met a rather unfortunate end), reveals a maker's mark: an intertwined J and N inside what looks like a representation of a mountain-peak.

It is possible that Miss Carshalton or Mrs. Westinhope (pp.9 & 10, respectively), or any other natives of London, will recognise the insignia as that of Jakob Nussbaum, a toymaker based just off Covent Garden. Herr Nussbaum is fairly well-known for his clever toys and clockwork replicas, and either lady may have seen, or owned, one during her childhood. But why has a toymaker released giant robins into London in the depths of a miniature (and highly localised) ice age?

This is not the only intriguing thing about the bird. As well as the maker's mark, it appears to contain a small glass receptacle, connected to what can be identified as something remarkably similar to a perfume atomiser hidden in its beak. A small bellows system appears to distribute the receptacle's contents out through the bird's mouth, using the pumping motion of the wings in flight to drive the mechanism. The tank is empty, but there are sufficient traces left of the milky fluid it contained to have analysed by a friendly technician at the Royal Society.

Of course, if the robin has been blasted into pieces, there will only be fragments of the internal mechanism left, and the characters will need to find an equally friendly specialist in clockwork automata to help them examine it if they lack the expertise themselves (the Royal Society should be able to provide aid in this department also, and will readily identify Herr Nussbaum if the characters have not).

ACT 2: EVERY CLOUD...

It is now up to the characters, should they wish, to solve the mystery of the giant robins flitting about London's streets, and to find out how they are connected to the Big Freeze. There are several avenues their investigations could take, which are detailed below.

A STRANGE BREW

The Royal Society currently resides within the east wing of Burlington House, Piccadilly, just inside the western edge of the snow's grasp. A friendly technician there will happily analyse the contents of the robin's "stomach" for the characters (if required) and, in true pulp-adventure style, they will achieve a result in double-quick time (none of this faffing about waiting for things to boil or distil malarkey).

The chemist is intrigued by what he finds - an odd mixture of water, kaolin (china clay), finely ground silver and icing sugar, with a dash of nitric acid thrown in for good measure. He is at a loss as to what the combination could possibly be used for, but he knows someone who might: Sir Charles Bryson, FRS.

SIR CHARLES BRYSON, FELLOW OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY, EMINENT CHEMIST

Cogs Bangs and Smells (expert in chemistry) +3

Cakes Old Peculiar (rather old-fashioned in his attitude) +2

Swordsticks Sneaky Blighter (underhanded fighting methods, brain over brawn) +2

Background Cracking on a bit, and slightly strange thanks to all those chemicals he's accidentally inhaled over the years, Sir Charles nevertheless knows his stuff. He recalls corresponding with "some foreign chap" earlier in the year about a chemical formula that contained several of the ingredients identified in the robin's stomach. He had forgotten all about the letters but now he's intrigued, especially given the sudden climate change and what he recalls of their epistolic discussions regarding making snow on demand. His personal assistant will be able to provide the characters with the name and address of the man involved: one Jakob Nussbaum, late of Covent Garden.

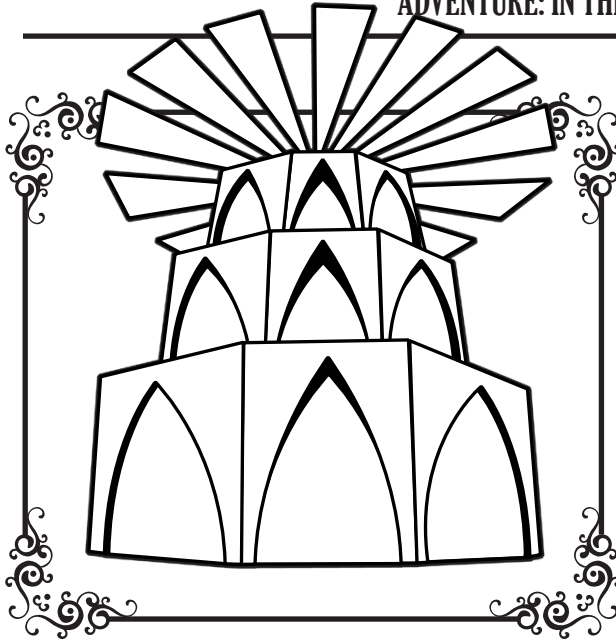
THE WORKSHOP

However the characters find it, all roads should lead to Nussbaum's toyshop, nestled in a minor street just off Covent Garden. It is obvious that the shop has not been open in some time, a fact which can be confirmed by canvassing the locals and other shopkeepers in the area. They all agree that Nussbaum simply vanished one night several months ago, and no-one has seen or heard from him since.

It shouldn't be too difficult for the characters to find a way into the shop, although they might want to take precautions to avoid getting caught by any local bobbies on the beat (after all, breaking and entering is illegal). They could, of course, just track down the key that's hidden in the sole flowerpot in the yard to the rear of the premises and go in through the back door, which would be much easier, never mind safer.

The main shop is dusty and still contains displays of toys from Christmas last - carved wooden nutcrackers, birds and animals; clockwork toys and gizmos; and numerous other small trinkets and decorations that all clearly show their German heritage.

Behind the shop are several other rooms, the largest of which is Nussbaum's workshop. It is full of half-constructed toys, working prototypes and plans, including the large snow globe (see below). On the wall are posters and a framed photograph of two men standing awkwardly next to each other in front of a large building. Questioning the locals further will identify the other man as Wilhelm, Jakob's younger brother, a baker located somewhere south of the river. According to gossip, the two men weren't really all that close.



There are also letters from Sir Charles, a Lincoln school-teacher called Gorringe, and various other correspondents on a variety of topics, but mostly to do with chemistry, the weather and the finer points of automaton design. There is even a note from the Ministry of Meteorology, proclaiming that with current understanding, it would be totally and absolutely impossible to control the weather in order to prevent it from ruining the summer's sporting fixtures. Most importantly, tucked into a battered notebook, there appears to be a recipe for a mixture suspiciously similar to what was found in the robin's innards.

ON RECEIPT

The ingredients in the robin's mixture can all be tracked down, should the characters feel the need to do so. The technician at the Royal Society can point them in the right direction regarding the chemical supplies, and following that up will allow the characters to determine who in the city has been buying the items on the list.

Most of the purchasers seem to be relatively innocuous, but one thing should catch the characters' eyes: just why is the Nut Tree Pie Company in Southwark ordering large quantities of china clay?

FLAPPING ABOUT

Of course, characters being characters, they may decide to skip any investigation and just follow the robins. From their examination of the bird(s), it should be clear that they can only fly for a limited distance before they have to turn around and head for home to be rewound and refilled (which is what they must be doing, seeing as no-one has reported "dead" robins piling up around the city). Although the weather conditions will make tracking the birds back to their roost Extremely Tricky (6+), it is do-able.

Tailing the birds in this way will take the characters south across the Thames and, as a cheery distraction from their investigations, provide them with a chance to partake of the delights of the first Frost Fair in over sixty years. The frozen

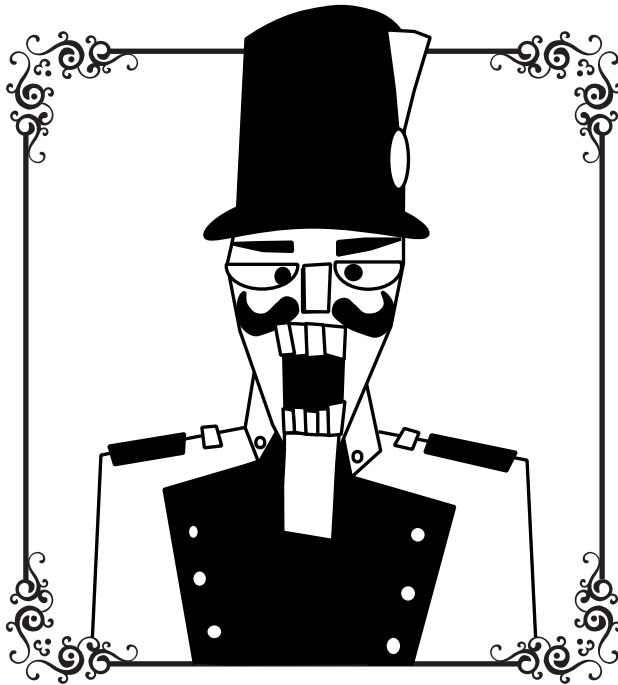
MINCEMEAT MAKETH MAN

Brothers Wilhelm and Jakob Nussbaum came to England many decades ago from the Erzgebirge (Ore Mountains) in Saxony. The elder brother, Jakob, was a toymaker of some repute, specialising in carved wooden toys and Christmas decorations. His younger brother, Wilhelm, was a budding baker, who honed his craft after they arrived in London, eventually building a pastry factory in Southwark. The brothers, whilst both craftsmen, differed in one fundamental respect: Wilhelm believed in progress through mechanisation, whereas Jakob clung to tradition, using machinery and clockwork purely to power his elaborate toys.

Wilhelm was also never quite as organised as Jakob, and last autumn he made a catastrophic mistake: he fudged the settings on his mixing machine and accidentally prepared a gigantic batch of sweet mincemeat (based primarily on Eliza Acton's superlative recipe, but with additional Saxon flair). Although his mince pies sold well over the holiday period, he still had a mound of the sticky, sweet stuff and decided to take drastic action to rid himself of it.

The same winter that Wilhelm got slightly over-enthusiastic with the pie-filling, Jakob devised his greatest Christmas toy to date: a snow globe, based on ones he had seen at the Paris Universal Expo of 1878, but much, much larger. The globe was sufficiently big that a child could enter it and play in the "snow" it contained. The local children loved it, especially the way the traditional Erzgebirge Christmas Carousel at its heart blew the tiny fragments of white paper up into the air around them.

Jakob, always keen to try new things, decided to improve his design further by seeing if he could create real snow inside the globe. After corresponding with several leading chemists and specialists in automata, he drew up plans for a new globe. Unfortunately, he showed the plans to his brother who, staring financial ruin in the face, promptly kidnapped his brother and locked him in the Southwark pie factory, forcing him to build a truly monstrous version of his snow-making apparatus. By causing winter in the depths of July, Wilhelm is sure that he can shift his surplus mincemeat by creating the perfect environment for mince pie consumption (after all, no-one eats them in the summer, do they?).



surface of the river is thickly lined with all manner of stalls, some selling gewgaws and tacky trinkets to visitors, others printing commemorative verse from actual printing presses set up on the ice. There are a plethora of food stands, including one (“Sweet William’s Pastries”) selling the most amazing mince pies. And if they need something more warming, roast chestnuts and mulled wine are all available – for a price, of course. There’s even a Big Top (admittedly, not a very big one) on the river, with three daily performances from acrobats, jugglers, clowns and a dancing elephant, no less!

**“SWEET” WILLIAM NUT,
AKA WILHELM NUSSBAUM,
OVER-ENTHUSIASTIC BAKER**

Cogs Done to a Turn (superb baker) +3

Cakes Jolly Gent (jovial, friendly &, when necessary, obsequious) +2

Swordsticks Fisticuffs (adept at hand-to-hand combat) +2

Background Sporting gigantic facial whiskers and an equally impressive tummy, William has worked hard to project the image of a jolly baker. More of a plodder than an innovator, he is (without the shadow of a doubt) very good at what he does, although his current business methods leave much to be desired.

ACT 3: A STICKY SITUATION

Eventually the characters should find themselves in Southwark, in front of an innocuous-looking industrial building. It sounds like a very busy place, but oddly there are very

few people about. If the characters have been following the robins to get here, the birds can be seen flying into a large coop on the building’s roof.

The sign on the front of the structure states that it is the Nut Tree Pie Company, “Home of Sweet William’s World Famous Pies and Pastries”. As already noted, the area is oddly devoid of people.

NOT QUITE THE SUGAR PLUM FAIRY

Inside the factory is a variety of pie-making machinery, chugging away contentedly making what look like mince pies. In the middle of all the culinary creation sits a gigantic, multi-tiered carousel – a vastly inflated version of the decorations the characters found in Jakob’s toyshop. As with the robins, there appears to be a set of bellows built into the contraption, and the propeller blades that sit atop the mighty engine seem to be part of the factory’s ceiling. Their constant whirring has set up a strange humming vibration within the building.

There is something waiting to greet the characters on the factory floor: a horde of unfriendly guards – six-foot tall, carved nutcrackers painted up as soldiers, all with large, snapping mouths.

**NUSSKNACKER,
GIANT ANGRY TOYS**

Swordsticks Krick Krack (biting, clubbing & kicking) +3

Special As the nutcrackers are automata, they do not have either **Cogs** or **Cakes** Attributes. They have been programmed to defend the factory from strangers, and that is exactly what they will do. They will attempt to bite their foes (although this is a little tricky given their limited flexibility), club them with their stiff wooden hands, or kick them with their shiny black, painted boots.

As they are largely made of wood, the Nussknacker can be smashed or set on fire, but the only way to fully stop them is to destroy the mechanism powering them. There are as many as there need to be to give the characters a good fight, but not so many that the characters will ever be in real trouble (four to six should do it for the pregenerated characters provided).

PROOF OF THE PUDDING

There are several things the characters can achieve once they have defeated (or otherwise incapacitated) the Nussknacker. First, they can attempt to turn off the carousel. To do so successfully will be a Dramatically Tricky (7+) task for anyone without engineering skills (it’s still Tricky (5+) even if they do). Of course, they could just break it, which would have the same overall effect...

Searching the building identifies a locked door, which can be opened either with brute force or other appropriately nefarious, not-strictly-law-abiding skills. Behind the door is a workshop not dissimilar to the one off Covent Garden, and an old man with strangely-coloured skin: Jakob Nussbaum. He is

suffering from argyria, a non-lethal, blue-grey skin condition caused by prolonged exposure to the silver dust used in his snow-making machines. Jakob can explain to characters what has been going on, and where his brother is (Sweet William's Frost Fair stall, selling his extremely tasty pies).

JAKOB NUSSBAUM, TOYMAKER EXTRAORDINAIRE

Cogs Not Mere Playthings (artisan craftsman and toymaker) +3

Cakes Snow on Top (old, quiet & thoughtful) +2

Swordsticks Surprisingly Nimble (what it says) +2

Background Although taller and thinner (and, regrettably, bluer) than his brother, Jakob shares Wilhelm's love of prodigious facial hair. The more imaginative of the two, Jakob's flights of fancy have been delighting children for more years than he cares to remember. His latest, greatest (albeit reluctant) work has the robins and the carousel as two parts of a complex chemical weather control system, with the robins' stomach contents mingling with the mists put out by the carousel, and thus causing the snow to fall. Unfortunately, as well as the blue tinge to his skin, his chemical dalliances have also left his fingers somewhat stained with iodine (another component of the mix).

It is up to the characters what they wish to do now: do they report Wilhelm to the authorities, or do they find him themselves? Do they attempt to cash in on their discoveries (blackmail, steal the technology, etc.), or do they act as heroes and save the day? That is, of course, entirely their decision...

OPENING THE FLOODGATES

Although the scenario, as written, is reasonably light-hearted, there are darker possibilities for the GM with an evil glint in their eye. Breaking or disabling the machine may actually trigger an unfortunate chain reaction that only makes matters worse, as the now unregulated weather goes completely out of control. Even if that isn't the case, there's still all that melting snow and ice to deal with...

FORECASTING THE FUTURE

The scenario described herein may just be the start of poor old Jakob's problems - after all, he has now successfully proved that the British weather can be coerced into behaving in interesting and unusual ways.

With this in mind, allow us to present three situations that might develop as a result of Jakob's meteorological meddling being well and truly out of the bag. Each of them is designed to serve as a hook for your characters' ongoing adventures.

CHRISTMAS EVERY DAY

Ill-fated toymaker Jakob Nussbaum really doesn't have much luck. Only recently liberated from his incarceration at his brother's pie factory, he has now been snatched by the Honourable Nicholas Saint-Claire, a dotty peer of the realm with a (relatively harmless) Christmas obsession.

Inspired by Mr. Clement Clark Moore's popular verse *A Visit From St. Nicholas*, the Royal Family's trend-setting celebrations and what kind people might describe as an excess of character, Lord Saint-Claire has decided that every day should, indeed, be Christmas Day, at least for the time being.

In his mind, not only would this mean that the slaving masses would enjoy the luxury of an extended holiday, but it would also permit him to enjoy an endless round of social gatherings, gift-giving and pantomimes (of which he is a particular fan).

Not renowned for his ability to think things through, Lord Saint-Claire hasn't really considered the consequences of his actions, although they are kindly meant. He intends to indulge his philanthropic nature by giving toys and sweets to the urchins of London, thereby bringing a touch of Christmas cheer to their humdrum lives.

Jakob has been ensconced in Lord Saint-Claire's town house, not far from St. Paul's, where part of the attic and servants' quarters have been converted to accommodate the gigantic Christmas Carousel. Although somewhat bemused, he is unharmed. So far, the staff have avoided developing argyria, but Lord Saint-Claire may be starting to look a little blue-grey around the gills...

THE HONOURABLE NICHOLAS SAINT-CLAIRE, MISGUIDED PEER

Cogs Never a Dull Moment (imaginative, if wayward, planning skills) +2

Cakes Joy to the World (generous & enthusiastic) +3

Swordsticks Right Royal Knees Up (dancing) +2

Background Getting on in years, Saint-Claire's snowy white whiskers and respectable paunch are well on the way to making him a dead ringer for what is becoming the image of jolly old St. Nick. He really doesn't mean any harm with his harebrained schemes, which rarely go as planned.

PRUSSIAN BLUES

Another alternative is that the dastardly Order of the Blue Eagle (those dreadful Prussian troublemakers!) has stolen Jakob's research and is using it to bring London to its knees by crippling river trade.

Using the purloined equipment, the OBE has frozen the Thames at a crucial point, so that barges and cargo ships cannot make it to the docks below Tower Bridge for fear of becoming trapped in the ice. On top of that, the boats can't get upriver to serve the various factories above it.

The only other option would be to use airships, but the weather in general is so foul within the affected area that commerce has ground to a halt as no-one is foolhardy enough to risk flying in such conditions.

In this case, the Order of the Blue Eagle has the carousel in an abandoned warehouse opposite the London Dock. As well as the Nussknacker, there will be the obligatory OBE goons and a moustache-twirling villain to deal with...

**HERR CAROLUS SCHNEE,
MOUSTACHE-TWIRLING VILLAIN**

Cogs Wheels Within Wheels (political acumen) +3

Cakes Evil Glint of Genius (cold and calculating arrogance) +2

Swordsticks Knifed in the Back (underhanded blade fighting) +2

Background Tall, aristocratic and with a very fine moustache, *Herr Schnee* has no great love of cold weather and would much rather be furthering the OBE's cause in one of Her Majesty's warmer colonies. His haughty nature no doubt upset someone higher up the chain of command, hence his current posting. Even though he thinks the plan is beneath his considerable talents, that won't stop him from prosecuting it to the best of his ability.

**OBE GOON,
HENCHMAN**

Cogs Now You See It (deception and camouflage) +2

Cakes Look Both Ways (two-faced; outwardly friendly, inwardly conniving) +2

Swordsticks Rough and Tumble (brawling) +3

Background Low down in the ranks of the OBE, as per usual, these goons have been hired for their ability to strong-arm people and get the job done rather than for any endearing personality traits.

Further information on the Order of the Blue Eagle can be found in the *Adventure in the Clouds* scenario (*Atlantis - City in the Clouds* supplement pp.18-28 or the *Collected Edition* rulebook pp.64-74).

**THE MEN FROM
THE OTHER MINISTRY**

Prompted by the potato famines in Ireland and Scotland and shipping losses from unexpected storms, it was decided that accurate information on the weather was essential to the survival of the Empire of Steam. And thus, the Ministry of Meteorology (MoM) was established in late 1846 to provide Her Majesty's government, armed forces and citizenry with round the clock weather forecasts.

Headed up by the Captain of HMS *Beagle* (yes, that one) and keen weather-watcher and scientist, Robert FitzRoy, the new body made great strides in predicting appalling weather, although they could do nothing to prevent it.

The fact that they rely so heavily on the number-crunching abilities of the Empire's Babbage engines does rankle with the MoM's staff, particularly as the MoCS takes every opportunity it can to remind them of it. As a result, the MoM is always on the lookout for ways in which it can outshine its elder sibling.

STORMY WEATHER

And then there's those odd boffins at the Ministry of Meteorology. What if, after years of frustrated research, Jakob's queries sparked the very discovery one of the Ministry's scientists had spent his entire life attempting to achieve - a genuine, honest-to-goodness mechanism for controlling the weather.

No more would the cricket be rained off or the Derby postponed because the course was waterlogged. Snow would fall precisely from Christmas Eve to Boxing Day for the most convenient festive effect and farmers need never worry again about droughts affecting their precious crops.

Having purloined Jakob's ideas, the Ministry has created their own weather machine in their Potter's Field workshops (in the shadow of Tower Bridge); one that is far less decorative in nature than the toymaker's own design. Built by scientists rather than engineers, it is, perhaps, more than a little ramshackle in appearance.

Determined to score points in their ongoing battle for dominance with the Ministry of Computational Sciences, the meteorologists have, unwisely, activated the machine without properly testing it first. Let's just say things haven't exactly gone as well as they were expecting. Now, they're at something of a loss as to how to shut the machine down and have dispatched agents to find Jakob so he can help them put it right (hopefully without the MoCS ever finding out)...



Appendix

Dramatis Personae

We here provide four pregenerated characters for you to use in this scenario. If using your own characters, perhaps they have witnessed the robins for themselves and are intrigued by what they might be, or perhaps they have responded to an advertisement from some collector wanting to add one to his collection (if they have no immediate relations with the Royal Zoological Society.)

**MR. JAMES “DEADEYE” MCPHERSON,
RENOWNED HUNTER**

Cogs Sporting Life (skilled tracker) +2

Cakes Supremely Certain (highly confident in his own abilities) +2

Swordsticks Bang! Bang! It’s Dead (crack shot with all firearms) +3

Background An Anglo-Métis tribesman (or Country-born) from the Red River Valley in Canada, McPherson’s Scottish ancestry is clear in his lustrous, dark red hair. His natural confidence has carried him a long way from home, and his reputation as a sharpshooter and hunter is well-deserved. He has taken on many assignments for the Royal Zoological Society in the past.

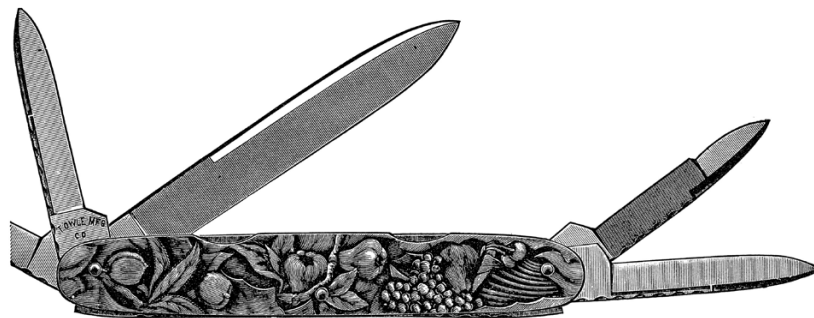
**MISS SELINA CARSHALTON,
KEEPER OF BIRDS**

Cogs Bird Brained (expert on ornithology) +3

Cakes Passionate Advocate (keen & eager, especially on her favourite topic) +2

Swordsticks Dainty but Dangerous (quite capable of looking after herself, when required) +2

Background Fascinated by our feathered friends since childhood, Miss Carshalton has followed in her father’s footsteps as one of the head aviary keepers at Regents Park. Her knowledge of the bird world is superlative, and she is thrilled at the prospect of discovering (and potentially naming) a new species right on her own doorstep. Her delicate frame belies a passionate nature, especially when it comes to her favourite topic: birds.



SWEET MEATS?

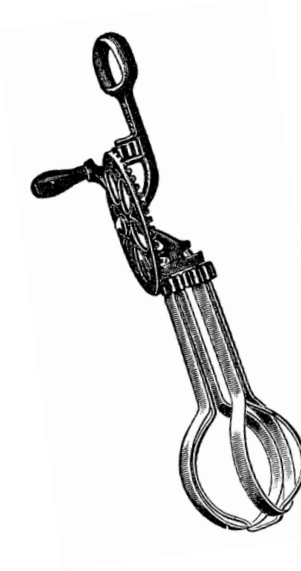
Possibly dating all the way back to the Thirteenth Century, mince pies did, once upon a time, actually contain minced meat. Making mincemeat was a convenient preservation method which didn't rely on smoking or salting (as well as proving just how posh you were because you could afford the necessary expensive spices). As cheap sugar became available from the West Indies in the Eighteenth Century the pies became less savoury and, by the Victorian era, the meat was gone (although beef suet still formed part of the recipe).

**MR. PETER GILLFRAY,
ASSISTANT**

- Cogs** Wherever I Lay My Hat (wide-ranging knowledge of various cultures) +2
- Cakes** Method in the Madness (surprisingly organised, although it never looks like it) +3
- Swordsticks** Put 'Em Up (boxing) +2
- Background** Every respectable gentleman should have a batman to support him in the field, and Mr. Gillfray fulfils this role for his friend and fellow traveller, Mr. McPherson. There are various tales as to how the two met, none of which have ever been confirmed, although there may be some truth in the rumour that Gillfray once saved McPherson from a rampaging buffalo. Apparently absent-minded on first acquaintance, Gillfray is, in fact, a very efficient organiser and manager of his friend's business affairs.

**MRS. THEODORA WESTINHOPE,
RESIDENT ZOOLOGICAL ARTIST**

- Cogs** Almost Real Enough to Touch (gifted & accurate illustrator) +3
- Cakes** A Watchful Eye (quiet & observant) +2
- Swordsticks** Trip the Light Fantastic (greatly enjoys dancing) +2
- Background** As a child, Theodora's artistic talents made her the toast of the town, and regular displays of her work were staged in private galleries by her proud parents. Married young to a much older friend of the family, she was (possibly unsurprisingly) also widowed at an equally tender age. It was then that she began spending time at the Zoological Gardens, re-honing her illustrative skills and becoming one of the Society's resident artists, involved in producing accurate drawn records of their specimens.



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