

# The Case of the Kidnapped Sergeant

## Announcement

*In a steampunk London where clockwork devices may have minds of their own and mad science threatens to run amok, you are a band of investigators and consulting detectives dealing with the kind of problems that leave Scotland Yard baffled. Your latest case appears relatively simple, though; Sergeant John Cruikshank, recently honourably discharged from the Army, has gone missing. He's probably sleeping off a couple too many whiskies somewhere.*

*But his wife insists that's not like him. Mind you, she also insists that her house is being haunted by a phantom with her husband's voice... Perhaps this is another strange case after all.*

*An introduction to the new/upcoming **HARP Steampunk**, from Iron Crown Enterprises.*

## The Setup

Explain a bit about the game (HARP) and the supplement (*HARP Steampunk*). The book could be used for all sorts of steampunk games, but this demo is set in a weird version of Victorian London, infested with mad scientists who can create clockwork and steam-powered automatons and conduct all sorts of bizarre experiments on living things. Indeed, one of the available PCs is the product of weird science...

Which is a cue to distribute the PCs and explain a bit about the character sheets and the mechanics; it's a class-and-level system, and character creation is a bit complex, but the mechanics are quite straightforward. Pretty much everything is a percentile roll, add your skill Total Bonus, and the higher the better. Very low rolls (01-05 for non-combat skills, specific ranges for weapons) may be fumbles; very high ones (96-00) may be open-ended – roll again and add.

One specific thing to mention: I didn't bother going into detail on the characters' money and equipment, but on the basis of the rules, Captain Fortescue has 10x Base Wealth and a vehicle – the team's steam car – while the Lewisons have 4x Base Wealth. If anyone has any specific extra gear they think they ought to have on hand, do just ask.

Talking of which – **The Steam Car**: 2.5 tons, 7 passengers (including the driver), 1 cubic metre of cargo space, speed 120 kph (75 mph), Range 320 km (200 miles), Init -12, Hits 8, Armour 2, Manoeuvrability Rating -8.

## Background (GM's Notes)

What hasn't been mentioned above, though some of the PCs may know it, is that the advanced mechanical devices in this setting are based on the phenomenon of **Odic Energy**, a kind of "life energy" which can be technologically manipulated and transmuted to magnetism. An **Odic Modulator** even imbues a mechanism with limited consciousness – so somewhat self-willed automatons can exist.

**Doctor Angus Stewart**, a mad scientist, has achieved an impressive advance in self-aware Odic Modulation, but at (of course) a considerable ethical cost. This hardly matters to him, though, as when he rules the world, he'll be the one defining what is ethical. His Advanced Odic Modulator can be made to "echo" the brain of a human "model", gaining slightly greater initiative and some of the skills of the model. The fact that the resulting "clockwork personality" is a tormented and confused shadow of the original doesn't seem like much of a problem to Doctor Stewart. He regards the fact that the process induces mild short-term amnesia in the subject as a positive boon.

However, he is vaguely aware that he can't conduct his work under the gaze of a silly and ignorant public, which is especially inconvenient as it requires resources that are often in limited supply. Hence, he's acquired a warehouse in the East End of London, constructed a workshop/laboratory on the top floor, and set to work taking control of the neighbourhood as stage one of his masterplan.

For now, he has a small force of clockwork automata with "personalities" modelled on the brain of a low-grade rogue who he hired, and a personal steam-powered bodyguard modelled on another, marginally more competent fellow. But these aren't really suited to become a force of conquest; Stewart wants *soldiers*.

For this reason, he used his automatons to kidnap **Sergeant John Cruikshank**, a recently retired soldier of proven competence. Cruikshank was working as a hotel porter on the evening shift; Stewart's automata waylaid him on his way home and dragged him back to the laboratory, where Stewart strapped him into the Odic Recorder and started making models of his mind. However, whereas Stewart's previous models were at least semi-willing, and were low-grade thugs whose emulations reacted to their confusing situation by doing what they were told, Cruikshank was a strong-willed ex-soldier whose mind was outraged by what was done with it, even while it was confused. Hence, shortly after the first experimental automaton awoke with Cruikshank's personality, it grabbed a screwdriver, laid Stewart's face open, and fled.

However, it regards itself more as Cruikshank's messenger than as a separate individual, and at the same time it remains confused and fearful of how Cruikshank's family might react to it – so although it has returned home, it is hanging around the outside of the place, hiding and watching. It has the clockwork automaton's agility and knows the layout of the house, so it is able to get up to the bedroom window at the back of the house and peek in through the windows. So, when Cruikshank's wife, **Harriet Cruikshank**, retreats there to compose herself and cry, the automaton sees and is upset, and occasionally speaks her name and tells her not to cry. She is too confused to notice that the voice is coming from outside, and in any case the heavy Victorian curtains in the room muffle the voice and hence make it hard to sense where it's coming from.

Meanwhile, Stewart has other problems. Building all these Odic Modulators requires a lot of Odic-sensitised mercury – a substance which has to be imported from Germany at some expense. Stewart has finite funds, so he has minions (mostly clockwork) pilfering the stuff from the East End docks. The docks patrol of the Metropolitan Police are on this case, and just beginning to note a pattern to these thefts, but haven't got very far yet, because Stewart's automatons have more-than-human agility, are small and flexible, and are willing to take exceptional risks, while Odic-sensitised mercury is a specialist product and not the sort of thing that is usually pilfered. (Yes, Scotland Yard is baffled.) However, these weird agile figures running round the rooftops and back alleys of the East End docklands have been noticed by some of the locals, generating some strange rumours.

So Stewart has Cruikshank tied up and in a bad way and periodically clamped into the Odic Recorder as he tries to create a compliant but skilled minion-image – without success so far. (The Recorder tends to drain its subject of a certain amount of life energy with each use, so Stewart can't run experiments as often as he'd like.) The PCs need to locate him there, defeat his squad of clockwork and steam guards, and free Cruikshank.

### Initial PC Briefing

The Lewisons and their associates are approached through Captain Fortescue by an old army acquaintance of his, **Major Kingsbright**, who's heard that Fortescue is associating with some detective chappie and would like to put some work that chap's way. Kingsbright has himself recently

been approached by a couple of former sergeants from his regiment; another of their number, one John Cruikshank, may be in trouble. Cruikshank, an excellent sergeant, left the army when his term of service was up, and apparently went home to London and took some kind of civilian job. However, two nights ago, he seemingly disappeared – didn't come home from work. The police aren't taking this terribly seriously yet; they say there's no evidence of foul play, and they assume that Cruikshank stopped off somewhere for a drink or two and has been sleeping things off since, perhaps in some place where he'd be ashamed to be found. However, Kingsbright finds this a little unlikely; Cruikshank was always a very reliable fellow, and a couple of other fellows from the same regiment who are living in the same area don't buy that story. More to the point, Cruikshank's wife is apparently in quite a state about it, thinking that something terrible must have happened to him.

So, out of regimental loyalty, Kingsbright is prepared to pay Lewison's standard rates for an investigation. He himself can't provide much more information – what he's said so far is all hearsay – but he can give the PCs an address for Cruikshank's home, which turns out to be on a street in one of the more respectable parts of the East End. Oh, and he can show the PCs a daguerreotype with the sergeant in it, and give them a note vouching for them to Mrs Cruikshank. The PCs can pile into the steam car and head for the East End.

### Mrs. Cruikshank

Mrs. Harriet Cruikshank is initially a little confused when the PCs arrive, but Major Kingsbright's letter reassures her; John always spoke well of the Major, who indeed came by this morning to ask if he could help. She also says very forcefully that it's *important* that her husband should be found, and soon. It soon becomes obvious that the local mutual support network has sprung into life, and a couple of other women of the area are in the kitchen making tea and casting puzzled glances at the newcomers, though Harriet Cruikshank herself is reflexively polite, offering everyone tea.

She will freely tell everyone the basic story. Her husband works as a porter at the **Folgate Commercial Hotel**, a respectable place about twenty minutes walk from here. (A Hard, i.e. -20, **Lore: London** or Medium, i.e. +0, **Lore: The East End** roll will confirm that – it's a known place, mostly serving commercial travellers and the like.) He was working on the evening shift, which meant that he was expected to arrive home just after 11pm – but he didn't arrive at all. Naturally, Harriet was worried, and visited the hotel herself early the next morning, only to establish that her husband finished work and set out for home at the usual time. She then went to the police, but they don't seem to be willing to take this seriously, for reasons previously mentioned.

However, although success on Medium-difficulty (i.e. -0) **Interrogation** or **Vocation: Copper** rolls will give no-one any sense that they should doubt Mrs. Cruikshank, they will also pick up a sense that she's leaving something unsaid. Also, if anyone says anything about her husband possibly being injured or dead, Mrs. Cruikshank will say no, she's sure that he is still alive, though he really needs to be found soon, in an oddly certain tone of voice – at which point, the neighbours will look at each other and say something about the visiting gentlefolk not needing to be bothered with that...

This will enable the PCs to get the remaining detail from Mrs. Cruikshank; she's been hearing her husband speaking to her when she's been alone from time to time since he disappeared. All he says is that he is alive, but he must be found, and soon. If anyone questions whether it was definitely him, Mrs. Cruikshank will say firmly that she knows her husband's voice well enough. This sounds crazy, though Mrs. Cruikshank otherwise seems quite rational, so hopefully the PCs will take a further interest. They can also be told at this point that, while they've encountered quite a bit of mad science, they have seen no evidence of the supernatural. A bit of polite questioning will determine that she has only heard her husband's voice when she's been alone in her room, late at night. Fill this

in if necessary with some backchat from the neighbours about her dreaming, (which she of course denies).

*The Bedroom:* Hopefully, the PCs will ask to see the room; if they're being tactful, Beatrice will take the lead, but in any case, at least one of the neighbours will come along in a vaguely chaperone-ish way. It seems like a normal respectable-working-class bedroom, with rather heavy decoration, curtains, etc. If none of the PCs ask directly, a Medium (+0) **Forensics** roll suggests that the heavy decor would tend to baffle sound and make its origin uncertain; it could even be coming from outside the window...

Which, on inspection, proves loosely-fitted enough that a voice could come through from outside. It overlooks the back yards of the terrace, which backs onto an alleyway between this and the next terrace; this is all private enough that someone could come and go that way. The back wall of the house looks rough enough and has a few handholds; it'd be climbable for someone who knows what they're doing, though Mrs. Cruikshank fervently denies that her husband would go scrambling up and down outside his own house like some sort of burglar. If anyone successfully tests the climbability of the wall, or opens the window and leans out (hopefully with someone else holding their legs, or reserve the right to roll for unfortunate accidents), a -20 **Forensics** roll will note recent scratches on the paint on the window-frame, consistent with ... some kind of metal tool being used to grasp the frame? Also, someone with **Enhanced Scent** (e.g. **Harry**) will get a +20 **Perception** roll to notice a faint but distinctive scent here – some kind of high-quality mineral oil, perhaps? However, finding out more about all this will require a bit more investigation and observation.

It may be helpful to follow some other leads at this point. Maybe a visit to where the missing man was last seen?

### Retracing the Sergeant's Steps

Staff at the Folgate Commercial Hotel will freely confirm what the PCs have learned; Cruikshank was taken on only a year or so ago, but was a reliable employee, and they too are concerned for him. They can talk to the clerk who was working on the front desk that day, and he will confirm that Cruikshank seemed untroubled that evening, and set out at his usual time, saying that he was going home.

The route from the hotel to Cruikshank's home is quite direct and simple, so the PCs may try to retrace his footsteps. Mostly this means following main roads, which in this part of the East End are not *unduly* dangerous or ill-lit, even late in the evening. However, assuming that Cruikshank took the most direct route, there is one stretch of the route that does take one through a rather shadowy alleyway. Looking round here allows some options:

1. It's an urban alleyway, and a couple of days have passed since anything happened, but it's always worth trying for an open-ended result... A **Tracking** roll at -40 (which can use scent) detects rubbish scattered, pushed aside, and stamped on here, in ways that would be consistent with a scuffle involving several people. It looks like several people scragged one person and dragged them over to a rough wall... and then the tracks just stop.
2. A successful +0 **Streetwise** roll notes that this is the kind of back alley that is often used as a place to slump by gin-soaked alcoholics, and if something happened here, there's a fair chance it was observed – albeit by an unreliable observer. A brief search round the neighbourhood does indeed turn up a drink-sodden vagrant who can be easily induced to talk. Ask if the PCs present have any specific skills that they're like to use, but be quite generous in getting results. *"Was a fellah went down that alley las' night or the night afore..."*

*Then three of **them** jumped 'im..." "Them?" "Aye – the spiders. Big spiders, size of a man! Folk say as they've been seen around the docks, runnin' over roofs in the dark. I'd not seen 'em afore, but I seed 'em that night! Three of 'em jumped that poor blighter an' dragged 'im up an' away. Reckon they've got 'im trussed up somewhere an' are a-suckin' 'is bood!"*

3. Ascending to the roofs of the workshop buildings overlooking the alleyway requires successful +0 **Climbing** rolls or some special arrangements (a little ingenuity will easily get a +20 bonus on the Climbing), but once up on the roof on the east side of the alley, **Forensics** or **Tracking** at +20 (but not using scent) spots clear signs of someone having been here, in the form of broken tiles and scuffed moss or dirt. Someone with **Enhanced Scent** (e.g. **Harry**) will get a +20 **Perception** roll to notice that same faint scent of high-quality mineral oil (they can have an additional +10 if they're specifically looking for that scent). The trail heads east; **Tracking** (using scent if the oil scent has been picked up) suggests that the group headed south and east, towards the docks, but the trail eventually gets lost in the maze of roofs, alleys, and walls.
4. Taking a few hours and applying either **Contacts** (no roll required) or **Streetwise** (at +0) confirms that the boozier's wild stories of giant spiders coming running round the docklands are indeed current, though most people haven't heard any suggestion of them wandering further afield, and not everyone thinks they're spiders; the more rational belief is that there's some gang of burglars, with the skills of circus acrobats, on the loose. Quite what they're up to, other than unnerving people, is an open question in this part of the city.

## The Steel Ghost

Alternatively or additionally, the PCs may want to investigate the mystery voice at the Cruikshank home. This implies staking the place out; if the investigators want to operate from inside the house, Harriet Cruikshank will have to be induced to allow this, and she will find the whole idea a little distasteful; a successful **Charm** roll at +40 will be needed with her. Lurking outside may require the consent of one or more of the neighbours, but as the PCs have been introduced to some of them, and they are frankly curious about what's been talking to "poor Harriet Cruikshank", no roll is required there.

Let the PCs set up as they see fit, and then tell them that they're in luck; it doesn't actually rain that night. Then, a little under an hour after nightfall, the automaton approaches the scene, scrambling along the roofline of the houses and climbing down to the bedroom window. Anyone watching from outside at the back of the house gets a +0 **Perception** check to see it arrive, and a -10 **Perception** check to hear it when it starts talking. Anyone inside the room hears it automatically; if they think it may be coming from outside the window, that's automatically confirmed – otherwise, a **Perception** check picks up the fact.

The automaton doesn't say much to begin with – it spoke in the past in a desperate attempt to reassure Harriet Cruikshank – but it wants to encourage people to look for the real Sergeant Cruikshank, and something might trigger it to talk to Harriet again; improvise. Its voice is like a scratchy phonograph recording of Sergeant Cruikshank's, while anyone with **Enhanced Scent** will automatically pick up the recognisable faint scent of mineral oil in its presence.

It will flee if it thinks it has been spotted; it has **Perception** +26 if anyone attempts to use **Stalking & Hiding** to sneak up on it, and **Acrobatics** +20, **Climbing** +35, **Jumping** +25, and BMR 2.5m for purposes of running away. It is agile but oddly ill-coordinated; if it succeeds on a manoeuvre, it's less likely to be a graceful leap than an unbalanced spring and a quick recovery. This is a chance to demonstrate the movement and combat rules, while hopefully the PCs grapple rather than striking

(using **Brawling** as the appropriate skill); it has **Initiative** +8, **DB** 20. If the PCs do use direct violence, it collapses the moment it takes a hit that does it 5 or more points of damage, and they only get a few minutes to interrogate it. Hanging onto it once they've grabbed it requires two successful contests using 2x the character's **St** bonus against 2x its **St** bonus (2x +1 = +2); after that, it gives up.

If it does get away by dint of dice luck, the PCs can use **Tracking** to keep on its trail, though at -40 (Very Hard) because it's night and cities aren't the best environment for this. Alternatively, a +0 **Streetwise** success can find passers-by who'll answer the question "Which way did it go?" At the very least, the PCs should get the idea that the thing headed southeast – towards the docks.

If and when it is caught, it is self-evidently a piece of hand-made, *ad hoc* clockwork engineering, but it talks like a confused, half-sapient being. This bit has to be roleplayed out; it's actually very easy to convince that the PCs want to help, but if they insist on being antagonistic, they'll have to use **Interrogation** against its **Resistance: Will** of +40. It may taunt them; "*You can't break me – I'm a British Army sergeant, damn your eyes!*" The best way to get it to break down emotionally is to confront it with Harriet Cruikshank.

It is in fact very confused about its own identity; sometimes it thinks of itself as Sergeant Cruikshank, but then it catches itself and insists that it's just "*a brummagen copy*". Asked what happened to it/him, it comes up with an answer:

*"Grabbed by those little metal monsters – chloroformed and dragged off – woke up in that bastard's workshop. He stuck me in his damn machine. Then I woke up again, but I wasn't me, I was this thing. But he couldn't hold a British Army sergeant, not even a poor imitation of one! Laid his face open and got away. Was down in the docklands – one o' them warehouses down by the wharfs. Got clear – had to see if Harriet was okay..."*

It also really, really wants someone to rescue Sergeant Cruikshank. "*He... uh... He's me, isn't he? If a fellow can't help himself to escape summat like this, what can he do? And that bastard has him trussed up like a goose at Christmas.*" Unfortunately, it can't provide an exact location for the place it escaped from; it evidently escaped in some haste and while very confused. All it can say about its captor is that "*He was a plain-looking cove. Red hair. Think I caught a touch of a Scottish accent.*" What's worse, it soon becomes clear that the stress and violence of the preceding scene has triggered a final breakdown in its experimental mechanisms; its voice becomes increasingly scratchy and its replies increasingly slow and confused, until it just stops working.

The PCs should be bemused by this thing; a successful **Re/In**-based roll at +35 tells them that, while clockwork automatons have been around for a few decades now, they're notoriously unintelligent, obeying simple sequences of instructions, often with hilarious and/or tragic consequences. Giving one the personality of a real human being is a new and radical accomplishment, think what you will about its morality.

If they take the thing somewhere where they can dismantle it (using some vaguely appropriate skill and the tools they have in the steam car, they will mostly discover that it's an insanely, incomprehensibly complex clockwork mechanism; however, they also find several small compartments holding *mercury*. A **Physics** roll at +40 will tell them that this is consistent with a work of very advanced technology; using certain modern industrial techniques, mercury can be sensitised to **Odic Energy**, the fundamental force associated with life and consciousness, and applied correctly, can channel that force to useful effect. Hence, it's often found in the most sophisticated modern clockworks, though rarely in the quantities seen here. It enables such clockworks to function for



extended periods, and can be used for complex control effects, though it doesn't provide very large amounts of energy.

### Into Docklands

By this point, the PCs should have one or more clear pointers towards the docklands, and the chances are they'll head down there next morning. Note: London is currently the world's greatest trading port, and the size and scope of the docks reflects this. Whatever the clues they've picked up, they need some kind of plan.

### The Law

The PCs may decide to approach the **Docklands Police**, a famously hard-working and tough unit; the docks are big and *busy*, and pilferage is a major criminal industry. There's a substantial station on the edge of docklands which isn't hard to find. However, they will be brushed off unless they use skills; ideally **Vocation: Copper**, with which a +20 roll tells them the correct line to take. Alternatively, an **Etiquette** roll at -40 lets a character act so posh that a desk sergeant will automatically escalate the problem to a senior officer – a harassed-looking inspector. However, the PCs' information at this point is vague and probably doesn't seem like much to act on; *"A clockwork doll with a phonograph recording of some old soldier?"* However, the inspector will let slip one key clue:

*"I suppose I should see what people may have picked up, but we're very busy just now. As if the usual pilfering and drunk brawls weren't enough, we've got a bunch of mystery burglaries to deal with. Some kind of cat burglar, getting into warehouses and ships. I could understand if he was lifting something fencible, but flasks of mercury? Where's the market for that?"*

The PCs may have a partial answer for him on that, but again, their information is vague – though he'll listen, and say that if they can come up with more evidence, he'll thank them. For now, all he can say is that he's not got much information on the burglaries so far, apart from wild stories about people running around rooftops down on the **Baltic Docks**. But that's as much as he can manage for now.

### The Streets

Using **Contacts: London Underworld** will get some automatic access to words on the street; alternatively or additionally, a successful use of **Streetwise** at Medium (+0) difficulty can cultivate a few loafers and boozers. Either will take a few hours but will pick up some useful hints.

It's an open secret on the shady side of the docklands that there's something strange going on, though nobody is very clear on the details. Shadowy figures have been seen running round on rooftops, and the coppers are going spare trying to solve a bunch of burglaries – from ships as well as warehouses – which don't fit the usual pattern for these things. Individual responses are all rather vague, but the oddities all seem to centre on the area of the **Baltic Docks**.

Taking a stroll round that area suggests that it's just a typical working wharf-and-warehouse district, but successful +0 **Streetwise** rolls allow PCs to strike up conversations with workers who are between jobs. If the PCs fluff too many of those Streetwise rolls, throw in an accident on the dock front, allowing Beatrice to provide **First Aid** and earn the group some practical gratitude and a fresh chance to strike up some conversations. Whatever the excuse, it turns out that, in an area where most workers are hired by the day on piecework rates, it's rather easy to find people who are prepared to talk about places where no work is being offered.

The docks are, it seems, currently reasonably busy, but there are too many slow days for most of the stevedores' liking, which makes them wonder when whoever took over **Warehouse 4, Middle Dock**

will start hiring. The place has been locked up since someone took over the lease a month or two ago, and no one seems to know what kind of business the new owner is in. Some people have noticed a few comings and goings there; there was some building work done by a gang of fellows from out of town, and a few deliveries of crates, and one or two local people were subsequently taken on for a few days – rather shady types, in truth, but it's all a bit unclear. Yes, some people have wondered if there's something criminal going on, but dockers aren't the kind of people to report vague suspicions to the police.

If the PCs try to track down the people who were employed in the warehouse, that requires several hours, a -20 **Streetwise** roll, and then a +0 **Charm** or **Duping** roll to get them to open up. There are just a couple of these people, both clearly shady sorts (no roll required to recognise that), and all that getting them to talk determines is that they honestly can't remember much about that employment. Even they are inclined to blame the booze for that, but a +0 **Medical Practice** roll will confirm what anyone may think; that the forgetfulness is remarkably convenient and specific.

#### Warehouses and Official Records

It might also occur to someone that if the person they're pursuing has set up operations down here lately, in a warehouse, this may have been noted in official property records. This implies a trip to the local property records office, and success on one of **Diplomacy** at +60 (it's a routine request), **Charm** at +0, or **Duping** at -10. Then, looking through recent records of leases in the docks, an **In/Re**-based roll at +20 notes, among all the other routine transfers, that **Baltic Docks, Middle Dock, Warehouse 4** was taken over a couple of months ago by one **Doctor Angus Stewart**. (No, he doesn't bother much with subterfuge.) This may link to previous hints about red hair and a Scottish accent; a successful +0 **Biology** or **Physics** roll recalls that name – Angus Stewart was a respected scholar at Glasgow University until two or three years ago, when he left under a cloud of undiscussed scandal.

#### The Warehouse

At this point, the PCs should have plenty of clues where to go next. The climax of the scenario comes when they locate and assault Dr. Angus Stewart's warehouse HQ/workshop. The place seems quiet and locked up; Stewart has hunkered down while he struggles obsessively to resolve his current technical problem, only slipping out every few days for minimal supplies. Unfortunately, the PCs still don't have enough evidence to get official backing, but if they can find evidence within the building, law enforcement is unlikely to worry too much about the details of how they got it – and finding Cruikshank is supposed to be urgent.

Getting in by picking the lock is perfectly feasible; the doors have Medium (+0) difficulty locks, so they take four rounds to pick using **Locks & Traps**. (See the notes on that skill.) Alternatively or additionally, someone could scale the walls; the frontage of the building makes this a Hard (-20) **Climbing** feat, but with just one roll required to reach even the second, highest floor. The place initially seems unoccupied, but with a sense that it's occupied; there seem to be lights on in the top floor.

Inside, the ground floor seems pretty much empty, but in fact, Stewart has rigged the place with alarms in case of intruders, in the form of floorboards that shift when trodden on to ring bells. If the PCs specify that they're checking for such things, detecting and avoiding them is a +0 **Locks & Traps** roll; otherwise, everyone in the group gets a -20 **Perception** check to hear the distant sound of a bell ringing.

This will bring a group of four **Clockwork Ruffians** assigned to investigate. Two will approach the party frontally; the other two will flank the intruders on either side. All will be using **Stalking &**



**Hiding** skill (resisted by **Perception**) in an attempt to gain surprise, following up with **Ambush** if they can attack undetected; two of them have clubs and two have knives.

**Clockwork Ruffian 1 (Club) Endurance: 62**

**Clockwork Ruffian 2 (Knife) Endurance: 62**

**Clockwork Ruffian 3 (Club) Endurance: 62**

**Clockwork Ruffian 4 (Knife) Endurance: 62**

Defeating these four brings the PCs into confrontation with Dr. Stewart himself. He has the recognisable but badly drained and confused Sergeant Cruikshank strapped into a mad science machine, and of course his last line of defence; his **Steam-Powered Thug**. Stewart himself is basically useless in a fight (Initiative +0, DB +0, Endurance 50, if it matters), but that's barely the point, as the steam-powered monstrosity will more or less go berserk if he is disabled or killed. It will certainly use a lot of Charge attacks; given that one wall of the warehouse overlooks the waters of the dock, this implies one way in which it could be very satisfactorily defeated. Meanwhile, Stewart will rant a lot in best mad scientist mode, filling in any plot details that the players haven't worked out for themselves.

After which, it's all just the clear-up. Cruikshank will be okay, though he's in a bad way and won't remember much of his experience; a successful -20 **Medical Practice** roll will help a lot...