Dr. Keeton's Machine

A Victorian era-steampunk adventure

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Introduction

The automaton answered the door at the first knock. With a whirring of gears and several clicking noises, it turned and ushered me into the study. The doctor had apparently not heard my arrival, as he had not yet come down. With another little clacking noise, the automaton arrived and brought with him a tray of tea and biscuits. I drank little, and ate only one of the biscuits. The doctor was nearly always punctual, and had in fact never before been tardy to any social event. I was beginning to worry for my friend. Finally, I turned and enquired of the automaton as to the whereabouts of my friend. His expressionless face turned to stare at me. He said nothing, for of course Dr. Keeton had not yet found a way to embody his mechanical creations with the power of speech. We both stared at each other, the automaton and I, neither moving. The only sound was a slight whirr of motors as the doctors mechanical bird flew in small circles around the study ceiling. At length, the door opened and the doctor appeared through the doorway. At first sight of my longtime friend, I was shocked at his appearance. Though normally very well kept, he was unkempt. His clothing was dirty, and his scraggly beard unshaven. His gray hair was matted, and full of dust. Even his ice-blue eyes, normally bright and shining had lost some of their luster. At length, he spoke. “I have desperate need of your help,” he said. “I created a computing machine, with the intent to compute human nature. Unfortunately, I succeeded.”

“How is that bad news?” I enquired. “To calculate true human nature, it would take an incredible computing machine. There are far too many variables for most scientists to even contemplate creating such a device, and you have done so yourself!”

Before I could carry on, he gave me such a look that I froze. He gave me such a smile that for one moment made me feel as though I was looking at death itself. He then said in a single tone: “I have learned much about humans in this venture. I entered the machine to learn what truly lies inside. All that I discovered was death. This machine must be destroyed, for the world must not know the truth. All that lies inside ourselves is the death of all.”

YOUR MISSION

Your goal, as a good friend of Doctor Keeton's, is to go inside his infernal machine and destroy it. Once you go inside, there is no way out but to destroy it.

Good luck. Don't die.

YOUR CHARACTER

The game is meant to be played with two to four players. You will use a different starting character for either occasion. Each player character has four attributes. Strength, accuracy, toughness, skill, attacks, and hit points. Strength is how strong the character is. Accuracy is their ability to hit with a missile weapon. Skill is how much ability they have in hand to hand combat. Toughness is the characters ability to block wounds. Attack is how many times they may strike in mêlée combat, and hit points are how much punishment the can take before going down. For a two player game, with one player taking the roll of the game master, use the following starting character.

Capt. John C. Patton

Strength:	12
Accuracy:	12
Toughness:	22
Skill:	14
Attack:	3
Hit Points:	4

For games with three or four players, each player chooses one of the following.

Elijah Burne

Strength:	8
Accuracy:	14
Toughness:	20
Skill:	10
Attack:	2
Hit Points:	3

Davis Connery

Strength:	11
Accuracy:	8
Toughness:	20
Skill:	12
Attack:	3
Hit Points:	3

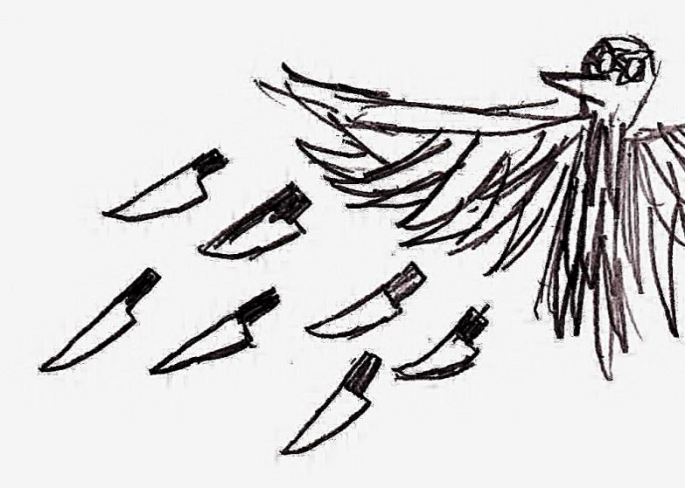
Robert Colton

Strength:	10
Accuracy:	10
Toughness:	20
Skill:	12
Attack:	2
Hit Points:	3

Each player starts with a dagger and a revolver. They may also wear a cool hat, which has no effect on gameplay, but the character on the cover has one, so you can too.

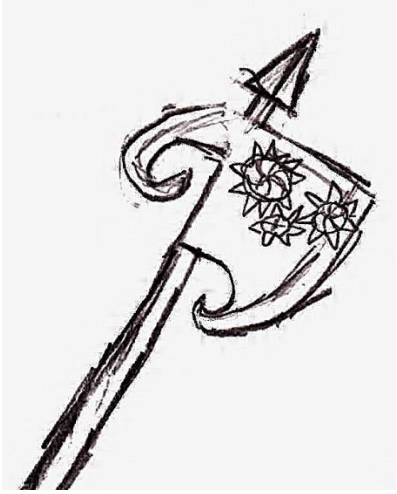
Gameplay

The object of the game is to destroy the heart of the computer. To do this, you must past through several rooms, destroying the robots and other menaces you meet along the way. Once you destroy the heart of the computer you are free to go, but just as in life, while the computer still runs, you can only go forward, not back. No matter how long you try, the door will not open.



COMBAT

Your main goal, being as it is to destroy the heart of the computer, is not appreciated by the computer itself. It will send waves of robots to kill you. Combat is going to happen often, and be very bloody. (Or in the case of the machines, oily.) There are two main types of combat, shooting and hand to hand.



Shooting

To shoot, you must first pick a target that you can see. Then, to hit, you must roll a D20 and add it to your accuracy score. If the result is greater than or equal to 20, the shot hits. Then you must roll a D20, add the weapons strength (not your strength), and compare it to your opponents toughness. If it is greater than or equal to it, they lose a hit point. When HP is drained to zero, the character is dead. You may shoot as many times at the weapon allows.

Hand to Hand Combat

When two characters are close enough to fight in hand to hand combat they must do so and may not shoot until one or the other is dead. (Or if one flees.) You attack in hand to hand by first rolling a D20 and adding your skill score. If it is greater than or equal to 20, the attack gets past the targets defenses and hits. Roll an additional D20; add the characters strength and the strength bonus of the weapon. If it is greater than or equal to the target's toughness, it hits and wounds. You may make as many attacks as there are in your attack profile.

LEVELLING UP

You level up every time you get past a room and before you enter the next one. You get 3 points, with which you may add to your strength, accuracy, toughness, or skill attributes. You must add to at least two, but you may add to three. Every other room, (the 2nd, 4th, 6th, and so on) you receive a point which may be added to either your attack or hit point attributes. Lastly, after every odd room, (1st, 3rd, 5th, and so forth) you get to roll on one of the following weapon charts, (either hand to hand or shooting) you may choose to either keep your old weapon or use the new one.

Example: Elijah Burne just finished room one. He decides to add two points to his skill, to make it 12, and one point on his toughness, to make it 21. If he had finished an even numbered room, he would be able to add one to either his attack or hit points. He would have chosen hit points, and update it to four. Also, because he finished an odd room, he gets a new weapon. He rolls for a halberd and throws away his long knife for it.

HAND TO HAND WEAPONS

Weapon	Strength Bonus	Toughness bonus
1 Dagger	0	0
2 Sword	+1	0
3 Axe	0	+1
4 Mechanical sword	+2	0
5 Warhammer	+1	+2
6 Halberd	+2	+2

SHOOTING WEAPONS

Weapon	Strength	Shots per turn
1 revolver	7	2
2 dueling pistol	10	1
3 rifle	10	2
4 blunderbuss	13	1
5 Automatic weapon	8	5
6 Disintegrator	14	2

BESTIARY

Lesser Robot
Revolver or dagger

Strength:	6
Accuracy:	8
Toughness:	17
Skill:	10
Attack:	2
Hit Points:	1

Normal Robot
Sword or Revolver

Strength:	7
Accuracy:	8
Toughness:	19
Skill:	11
Attack:	2
Hit Points:	1

Greater Robot
Mechanical sword or rifle

Strength:	8
Accuracy:	10
Toughness:	21
Skill:	12
Attack:	2
Hit Points:	1

Gun Drone
Automatic weapon, dagger

Strength:	6
Accuracy:	12
Toughness:	18
Skill:	8
Attack:	2
Hit Points:	1

Mechanical Raven
Dagger

Strength:	5
Accuracy:	6
Toughness:	15
Skill:	8
Attack:	1
Hit Points:	1

Mechanical Spider
Sword

Strength:	7
Accuracy:	4
Toughness:	15
Skill:	9
Attack:	1
Hit Points:	1

Walking Dead
Dagger

Strength:	8
Accuracy:	6
Toughness:	18
Skill:	11
Attack:	1
Hit Points:	1

Dr. Keeton
Sword, Rifle

Strength:	11
Accuracy:	11
Toughness:	23
Skill:	12
Attack:	3
Hit Points:	4

APPENDIX

Shooting Weapons

Weapon	Strength	Shots per turn
1 revolver	7	2
2 dueling pistol	10	1
3 rifle	10	2
4 blunderbuss	13	1
5 Automatic weapon	8	5
6 Disintegrator	14	2

Hand to Hand Weapons

Weapon	Strength Bonus	Toughness bonus
1 Dagger	0	0
2 Sword	+1	0
3 Axe	0	+1
4 Mechanical sword	+2	0
5 Warhammer	+1	+2
6 Halberd	+2	+2

Leveling Up

3 points may be used on strength, accuracy, toughness, or skill, must be paid into at least two categories.

Odd levels, roll a D6 on one of the two weapon charts, may use either new weapon or old one.

Even Levels, an additional point which may be used on either attack or hit points.

Combat

Hand to Hand

D20+skill ≥ 20 to hit,

D20+strength+weapon strength ≥toughness

Shooting

D20+accuracy ≥ 20

D20+ weapon strength ≥ toughness

GAME MASTER'S SECTION

As the Game Master, your job is to create a fun and exciting world for the characters to play in. Although the best teacher for this is experience, the following section, a collection of information about the computing device and the world inside it, should be very helpful.

Setting

The inside of Dr. Keeton's computing machine is a bizarre place. There are several small interconnected rooms, full of robots and other mechanized creations. The walls are full of gears, engines and wires, all disappearing somewhere inside the machine. At the very heart of the labyrinthine computer is a steam engine, powering its infinite calculation. Your goal is to destroy this and end the threat once and for all.

Plot

As was read in the introduction, your friend, Dr. Keeton, has built a device to calculate the true nature of humans. Unfortunately, all he found was death. You need to go inside and destroy the heart of the computer, a powerful steam engine. As you journey through the rooms of the computer, strange mechanical creations will attack you. Dr. Keeton will remain outside the computer to make sure none of its evil escapes. There is only one entrance, and once you are inside, the only way out is near the steam engine powering the machine. When the PCs finally reach the steam engine, there should be a final confrontation. Dr. Keeton has in fact journeyed through before, but in the process he is now insane. His only true goal now is to show humanity its true nature. Death. Needless to say, the PC(s) don't want to die. They must finish off Keeton and his robots. Or die.

Timing

A decent game that can fit within an evening, (2-3 hours of playing) should have 9-12 rooms in it. A shorter game, (within an hour or so) should have 4-6 rooms in it.

Character Name_____

WARGEAR

Hand to Hand

Name

Strength Bonus

Toughness Bonus

Shooting

Name

Strength

Shots per turn

ATTRIBUTES

Strength:

Accuracy:

Toughness:

Skill:

Attack:

Hit Points:

NOTES

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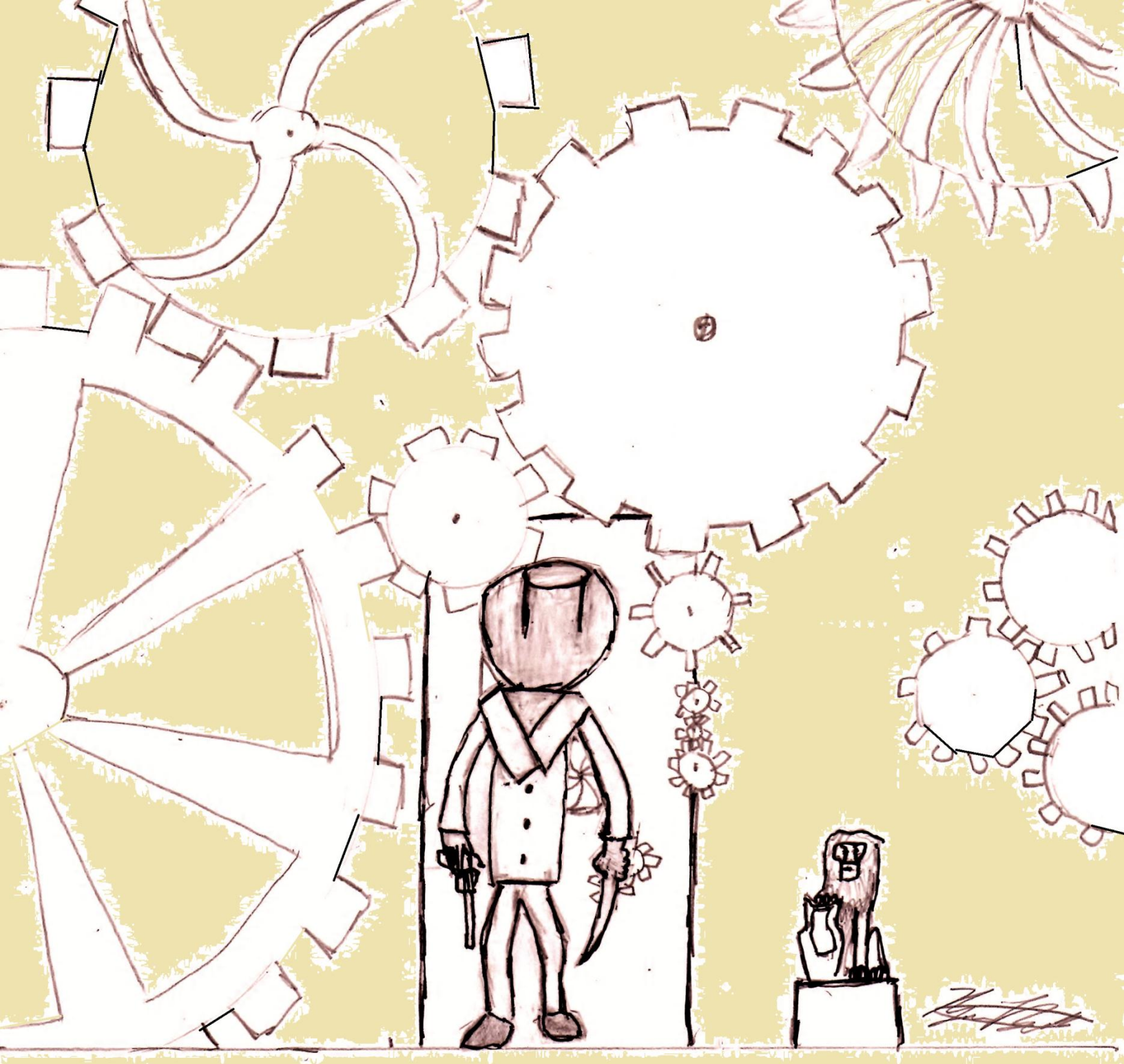

Thank You For Playing