

JAILBREAK by greg stolze

UNKNOWH



"POWER COMES FROM THE END OF A GUN."
-ELDRIDGE CLEAVER

"OUT, AWAY FROM ALL—THAT'S WHERE TERROR AND BEAUTY MERGE.

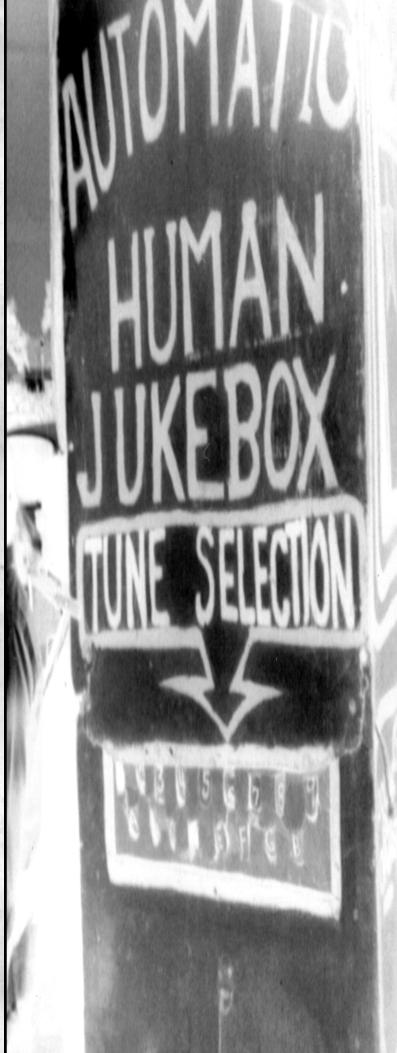
DON'T LOOK FOR THE OCCULT IN THE CITY, SURROUNDED BY COUNTLESS

PRYING EYES AND NOSY NEIGHBORS. LOOK IN ISOLATION,

WHERE IT CAN GROW UNDISTURBED . . ."

—URIEL STERNE

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This adventure may be a departure

from the typical RPG scenario. Usually, the players are a coherent group, working together towards some shared goal. In "Jailbreak" this is assuredly not the case. Some of the PCs are escaped prisoners, and others are their hostages. The convicts want to get away clean and evade capture, while the hostages want to be freed from the convicts.

It's more complicated than dividing the players up into two teams, however. Some of the convicts may be sympathetic to their prisoners. They might even like their hostages better than their allies. As for the law-abiding citizens, they're a mixed bag. At least one (a captured prison guard) will probably want to confront the convicts. The others might agree, or they might just decide to go along with their captors in order to escape with their lives.

It is essential that your players understand that the action in this adventure comes from them interacting with each other. If the hostages don't try to escape, or the convicts are uncharacteristically friendly and kind, this can be a damn boring scenario. On the other hand, if you get your players scheming against each other, this can provide a very taut and suspenseful evening's play. After all, players know the GM really should be fair to them: they have no such guarantees with each other.

If the players are sitting back and passively waiting for you to entertain them, you may want to show them the nearby boxed text labeled "Helpful Hint."

The first step to running "Jailbreak" is to assign characters to players, or let them pick. The choices are:

- Steve Updike, a wife-beater and the leader of the escaped prisoners.
- Jake Spundie, a corrections officer captured by the cons.
- Uder Krazmersky, the aged owner of the farmhouse where the cons hide out.
- Morton Willits, a quiet convict with a firm set of moral standards
- Ella Krazmersky, Uder's lovely wife.
- Juan Riccinto, who was falsely convicted and is looking out for himself.
- Janet Mattice, a lawyer and one of the hostages.
- David "Icepick" Leyner, a con man and small-fry hood.
- Donna Ngwashi, Janet Mattice's client.

If you're going to assign the characters to your players, I recommend assigning them in the above order, starting with the unsavory Steve Updike. The first three characters have the most ob-

Helpful Hint

Bored? Then do something!

vious conflicts with each other: Steve leads the cons, Jake won't rest until they're stopped and Uder just wants to be left alone—possibly to the point of being willing to kill everyone.

If you let your players pick, don't worry too much if Jake, Steve or Uder doesn't get picked: that just means you can run the odd man out as a GMC, pursuing his agenda and possibly screwing with both sides. The only pitfall to avoid at all costs is having one player be against all the others. If one player picks a convict and the rest of your players have chosen to be hostages, it's going to be very hard to run a fair, balanced game. Ask your players to reconsider and if they hesitate, explain the problems of having three (or whatever) players gang up on one poor lone soul.

This brings up the question of how you're going to handle the PCs scheming against each other. You can do this one of two ways: transparent or opaque. If you run this scenario with transparent actions, everyone stays at the same table and announces their actions normally. This means that if the hostages are down in the basement picking the locks on Spundie's handcuffs, the convict players can hear it. It would be dishonorable of those players to take advantage of this "out-of-character" knowledge, and GMs may have to keep players in line to prevent such cheating.

In an opaque game session, when PCs are separated and doing things that the other players shouldn't know about, the GM has to maintain an "information quarantine" between the separated players. It could be that the players all stay at the same table, but when one wants to take a secret action she writes it on a piece of paper and slips it to the GM. (In some opaque games I've played, the PCs eventually started handing messages to the GM that said "I don't want to do anything secret, but I want people to suspect that I am.") Another option is to take the players into another room and resolve events there, out of earshot of the other players.

A transparent session has the advantage of moving fast: the GM can go back and forth between different (but simultaneous) actions easily and use this transfer of attention to build suspense. For instance, if the hostages in the basement have said they're picking the handcuff lock, the GM could have them roll... and then switch to the other group without telling them if they failed or succeeded. Similarly, if the convicts go upstairs to investigate the peculiar thumping noise, the GM can cut out at a suspenseful moment and go to the other group.

Of course, an opaque scenario can have the same kind of switching, but the difference is that when the GM leaves the room, the tension is usually broken. In a transparent game, all the players are immersed in the game at all times, even when their characters are "offstage." In an opaque game, there's some unavoidable down time: the payoff is the genuine suspense of wondering what the cons or hostages are up to . . .

Transparent scenarios are best for players who have a firm sense of the boundary between player knowledge and character knowledge, and for players who are interested in creating the most diverting story overall. Opaque scenarios are

CHAPTER ILLO BY BRIAN SNODDY

Running "Jailbreak" as a Conventional Scenario

If the idea of pitting your players against each other doesn't sound like fun to you or them, you can easily run this in the standard RPG style: just have them all play convicts or all play hostages. There are only four convicts, so if your group is large they may be stuck in the role of the hostages. To make the conversion, all you have to do is assume the roles of the "other side" characters.

best for players who tend to identify strongly with their characters and have an intense drive to get their own way. Neither way is better or worse, they're just different. That said, opaque scenarios tend to be a little easier to run and play.

Setup

The setting of "Jailbreak" is a small farmhouse close to the (fictional) Surrey State Medium Security Penitentiary. Some of the characters are prisoners who've escaped from Surrey. Others are simply caught up in the action.

Surrey isn't a jail for hardcore, violent criminals. Mainly it's filled with an uneasy mix of nonviolent repeat offenders, first time violent criminals (usually crimes of passion), and drug users serving mandatory sentences. It was recently the home of "Father Freedom," a cult leader convicted of fraudthough he was guilty of a great deal more than that. In any event, one of his followers drove a truck full of dynamite and blasting caps into the wall during his exercise time, and he escaped into a waiting car driven by three other devotees. Four other prisoners (Morton Willits, Steve Updike, Juan Riccinto and David "Icepick" Leyner) escaped in the confusion—taking Corrections Officer Jake Spundie with them as a hostage.

They made it to a highway just as an unseasonable hailstorm began. At the highway, they commandeered a car driven by Janet Mattice and her client Donna Ngwashi. They immediately took to the back roads—not noticing how low on gas the car was. When it ran out, they approached the nearest farmhouse, where Morton cut the phone lines. They plan to hide out until the heat dies down, then take off in the morning. The house is home to Uder Krazmersky and his wife Ella.

The Weapons

The Gun

It's a 9mm Colt. It holds seven shots, and currently has five left. It's got a damage maximum of 50. The gun starts out in the possession of Steve Updike.

The Stun Gun

It's a normal Struggle roll to hit someone with the stun gun. The stun gun does no damage, but the target automatically loses their next two actions while jitterbugging around uncontrollably. The victim also has to make a Body roll; failure means they pass out. Being knocked unconscious by the stun gun lasts anywhere from fifteen minutes to an hour. The Stun Gun starts in the possession of David "Icepick" Leyner.

The Pepper Spray

Hitting someone with pepper spray takes a successful Struggle roll, which cannot be Dodged. A person who gets hit by the pepper spray must make a matched, successful Soul roll or lose their next two actions while clutching their face and howling. Someone in this state is not a sitting duck: rolls still have to be made to attack him, but the spray victim can't use the Dodge skill because he can't see what's coming. Failing the Soul roll is a rank-3 Helplessness stress check. Janet Mattice starts out with the pepper spray; it is only good for one shot.

The Farmhouse

The action takes place in the Krazmersky home just as a thunderstorm starts turning dangerous. The house is in the middle of some desolate, abandoned-looking land, just off a rural route in the middle of nowhere. The Krazmerskys own a thin parcel of land that lies between two large industrial farms. Though the Krazmerskys themselves don't farm, this is not immediately apparent, especially in the autumn when the fields are bare.

The house is two stories tall and spacious, but a little run down—it could use a good coat of paint (or even an average one) and the weather stripping on the windows is so loose that the glass panes rattle with each thunder crack. Uder and Ella are in the living room, reading and listening to records, when the action begins.

There are many rooms in the house, and a brief description of each is given, along with items of possible interest to the PCs. Many rooms contain examples of Uder's clockwork craft. These gadgets appear normal to a cursory glance, but anyone who pays attention to them as they operate has to make a rank-2 Unnatural stress check. If Uder can get his hands on any clockwork, he can rapidly take it apart and construct a makeshift lockpick out of the components. (When picking locks, Uder can use his Tinker skill.)

The Living Room

There's something vaguely mittel-European about this room,





but nothing you could exactly point out. There are bulgy, overstuffed chairs and sofas, lamps and end tables, a big old-fashioned record player and several bottles of brandy, schnapps, and vodka. The most unusual item is a toy boxing ring with a windup gorilla and bear wearing boxing gloves. When wound up, they fight. Close inspection reveals that they don't just "mechanically" throw punches: they dodge, weave, and react to each other.

The Dining Room

There is a large, heavy table in the center of this room, supporting a candelabra on a nice lace mat. There are heavy, stout chairs arranged around it. The family china and good silver is in an armoire nearby. People looking for weapons can find the heavy candelabra (+3 damage), steak knives (+3 damage), and a huge carving knife (+6 damage). Tucked behind the good silver is a little clockwork doll shaped like a grotesque old peasant woman with a bucket full of silver polish. When wound up, she sighs a tiny sigh and polishes the silver with an air of spiteful resentment. If anyone is watching her work, she periodically turns and glares a tiny glare at them.

The Utility Room

This room is cluttered with tools, junk, and an aged washer and dryer that show signs of having been repaired by Uder. People looking for weapons can easily find them among the rakes, shovels, and garden hoes here (+6 damage). In one corner behind the washing machine (it takes a Notice roll to spot it) there's a large axe. It's rusty, but still plenty sharp (+9 damage). In one of the cabinets, there's a coil of clothesline that can be used to tie people up. (If tied up, the rope can be broken with a General Athletics roll that succeeds and beats a 20.) There is no lock on the door between this room and the living room, but there is a lock between the Utility Room and the stairs down to the Cellar.

The Pantry

This is full of dry goods and canned food. There's a clock-work can opener here that's shaped like a man in a tuxedo. When you put a can between its hands, it gazes passionately at the can, then begins a series of dance moves with the can–first a deep dip, then a tango with many spins and turns. At the end of the routine, the dancer whips off the lid and gazes lustfully within. The dancer has many different dance routines, depending on the size of the can. This door has no lock.

The Bathroom

It's a bathroom. There's nothing much of interest here, unless you're fascinated by Uder's old hernia truss. The door here locks, but can be kicked in by a successful Body roll.

The Kitchen

The kitchen is spacious and well-appointed. The gas range is a little old-fashioned, but there's a huge freezer/'fridge (one of Uder's few concessions to modern technology). There's no dishwasher, but by the sink there's a bizarre Rube Goldberg clockwork contraption that washes dishes "by hand" in an elaborate and entertaining fashion, then dries them and puts them away where they belong.

People looking for weapons can find several regular knives (+3 damage) as well as a butcher knife and a 10" slicer (+6 damage).

There is no lock on the door between the kitchen and the stairs up to the second floor.

The Closet

The front closet is large enough for one hostage, two with some stuffing, three if all the old coats, boxes of worn shoes, and other assorted closet crap is taken out. However, there is no lock on the closet door.

The Unused Bedrooms

Upstairs there are three bedrooms that show no sign of being used for years. Two don't even have beds, just boxes of old junk. It's up to the GM to decide what's up here; the dueling pistol used to kill Bors (see p. 11) might be around somewhere. It's got a maximum damage of 40, if it even works. The doors to these bedrooms all lock, but the locks are flimsy and can be forced with a simple Body roll.

The Master Bedroom

This is where Uder and Ella sleep, and it has their bed, a few chairs, lamps, and bookshelves. The most notable thing about the room is what appears to be a lovely young girl (maybe 14-15 years old) in a blue velvet dress, sitting in a chair and holding a violin. This is a clockwork, but it's amazingly lifelike. She seems to breathe and make minute shifts of balance like a real girl. If anyone addresses her or looks at her for more than thirty seconds, she says "Would you like me to play for you?" Her voice, like her face and hands, is completely lifelike. However, she can only speak that one phrase, and any sicko who tries to pick her up or look under her skirt will see nothing but cogs and gears. This clockwork can play any music put in front of her, and can modulate her playing according to the commands of her listeners ("louder," "slower," etc.). She has no other function.

Interacting with this frighteningly realistic clockwork is a rank-4 Unnatural stress.

This room has a sturdy door and lock. Trying to break this down with just Body requires a matched success.

The Upstairs Bath

The medicine cabinet here is full of various headache remedies, salves, and stale prescription meds. On the counter is a little clockwork fat man holding Uder's straight razor (+3 damage). Whenever the razor is put back in his hands, the fat man cleans and sharpens it. If anyone other than Uder or Ella tries to take the razor, the fat man slashes at them with it. It automatically hits the first person that tries to take the razor; it does no damage, but it's a rank-3 Violence challenge.

The Locked Store Room

The door to this room is extremely thick and there are two deadbolt locks. On the inside, the door is reinforced with iron plates.

This is a dim, creepy attic full of old furniture, crates of clothes, old memorabilia, and, in the center, a big, heavy steamer trunk. Inside the trunk is Bors (see p. 11) who will start to thump against the inside of the trunk once he hears someone enter.

The Cellar

This is Uder's workshop, where he constructs his miracles. It's cluttered with every imaginable type of old-fashioned tool. Along one wall are countless coffee cans, all meticulously ordered, containing different sizes and shapes of nuts, bolts, cogs, wheels, chains, nails, screws, *etc.* Hanging from the ceiling and along one wall are racks of what appear at first to be body parts—heads, hands, eyes, breasts, legs—but on closer inspection, they're just very good counterfeits. The overall effect is a cross between an ancient repair shop and a morgue.

The Rack (see p. 11) lurks in one corner, awaiting its master's word. When it hears people entering the cellar, it will scuttle towards them, hoping to be of service.

There are all kinds of light tools like hammers and chisels (+3 damage), mallets and buzz saws and pickaxes (+6 damage), and similar makeshift weapons. There are also lengths of chain and spools of wire that can be used to tie people up quite effectively.

This can be one of the spookiest areas in the house if handled correctly. It is completely dark in the cellar at first—there are no windows to the outside. The only light source is a single bulb that hangs from the ceiling, turned on with a pull switch. This means that unfamiliar people are going to have to feel around the walls and ceiling looking for the light switch—the same walls and ceiling that have fake body parts strung around them.

Here are some fun ways to freak out your players in the cellar:

- Emphasize the darkness.
- · Periodically mention a hesitant, scuttling, rasping

- sound—the Rack moving around, trying to be helpful without getting in the way.
- When people feel along the ceiling or wall, have them bump into dismembered hands, faces, legs. In playtesting, when one player was feeling around the ceiling, I said, "You feel this" and dragged my own limp fingers across his.
- It's perfectly possible that people feeling along the wall or floor will knock over a tin can full of bolts, creating a loud racket. This can be surprisingly spooky if you don't tell anyone what the sound means for a second.
- The workshop is full of sharp, dangerous implements, so feeling around the walls in darkness isn't the smartest possible option. If you're feeling nasty, you can ask for a Speed roll: failure means that the PC has just felt something cold and metal slice into his skin. Success means they felt the touch of something sharp and pointy and yanked their hand back in the nick of time.
- Finally, there's the Rack. It's harmless unless provoked, but your PCs have no way to know that. If they see a big metal spider covered with tools and pointy things scuttling towards them, what's going to be their first reaction? Seeing the Rack is a rank-2 Unnatural challenge, incidentally.

Outside the House

There's a garage and a toolshed with more of the same mundane stuff that's in the Utility room and the Cellar. There's an old De Soto up on blocks in the garage, as well as a rattling Dodge Dart with half a tank of gas. The Dart barely runs: anyone with a Drive skill over 15% who even starts it is going to realize this thing is a lemon with a top speed hovering somewhere around the speed limit. Plus it's nowhere near as inconspicuous as Donna Ngwashi's minivan.

Anyone who wants to siphon gas from the Dart into Donna's van is going to have to walk it out to where the van stalled out—that's about a mile hike in baseball-sized hail. Give them a die of damage every five minutes, and it's a half-hour hike to the van. People can safely dash from the house to the garage or shed with only minor bruises, but going anywhere else is going to be a chore.

Starting Out Through Finishing Up

Because I'm a laid back guy who likes to offer options, I'll give you two good ways to kick this adventure off. One is to get characters to players in advance so that they have a chance to get accustomed to their history and personality. That way they'll have a better idea of what's going on and can react more easily when the action starts with the "Canned Intro" boxed text on the next page.

The other way to do it is drop them in cold: read the canned intro and then let them select characters, or just assign them or whatever.



Canned Intro

It was not a quiet night: a sudden storm blew across the farmlands, bringing thunder and lightning. An old man and his wife looked out at the storm as it turned to hail. They discussed going to the cellar, deciding to do so only if the weather became more extreme.

They did not listen to the radio, so they didn't hear the news. They didn't try to call anyone, so they didn't know their phone lines had been cut. They did not know there had been a jailbreak. They did not know a guard had been taken hostage by four convicts, convicts who had then seized a van on the highway.

Maybe the wife briefly saw a face at the window and dismissed it as a trick of the light and her own fancy. Maybe the husband squinted his aged eyes into the storm. But their dog was quiet, their house was secure from the storm and neither really suspected.

They had no clue until they felt a cold draft from the direction of the back door, until they turned and saw a large man pointing a pistol at them. He was soaking wet, dressed in orange coveralls with "Surrey State Penitentiary" stenciled on the front and back. His eyes were wide but his voice was calm as he said "Do what we say and no one dies." Then he looked over his shoulder and said "Icepick, bring in the others."

One quick note on the canned intro: don't feel like you have to read this verbatim. Change it however you want or just put it in your own words. The sense of the scene is what matters. If you can describe it more smoothly in your words, ignore mine.

Thus the scenario begins: the convicts bring in their hostages (Donna, Jake, and Janet) and the players can start interacting. Jake is handcuffed and lightly injured (he's taken 5 points of damage to his back), the two women are untied and unharmed—so far. Uder and Ella are in the living room with Tristan the dog as the convicts file in.

Unless someone immediately tries some fancy maneuver, there's probably going to be some talking (or screaming), along with discussion and debate. One thing that makes this phase of the game much more interesting is not allowing the convicts to plan their next move out of character. If one convict's player says to another "We could just kill them all," the hostage players are going to hear it unless those two characters go off somewhere alone—leaving two convicts to watch over five hostages and a dog.

Some important facts to remember (and to remind the players, if appropriate):

- The convicts are tired and hungry, not to mention cold, wet and disorganized. This whole jailbreak was a spur of the moment thing; they may be repenting at leisure . . .
- Morton Willits is going to feel very protective towards the hostages. If he deliberately does nothing while Ella, Uder, Janet, or Donna is harmed, be sure to stick him with a Self check.
- Although Ella's player does not know it, she is herself
 a clockwork automaton. This means that if she's hit
 with a bullet, it does damage like a hand-to-hand attack. It also means that damage from her Struggle attacks are resolved like handgun attacks with no damage cap.

The convicts are probably going to want to try to restrain the hostages one way or another and wait out the storm. If they all decide to sit and watch over them, have them make Soul or Body rolls to stay awake while watching. If the convicts decide to tie them up or lock them in somewhere, that gives the hostages a chance to plot their escape. It's also quite possible that the convict PCs may come into conflict with each other, especially if Steve and Morton play their roles to the hilt.

As GM, you have to roll with a few punches and react to the actions and interactions of the PCs. However, if things seem to be bogging down or getting too dull, you can throw in a few changeups:

To Serve and Protect

Did the convicts change out of their prison coveralls? A pair of state troopers (use the cop statistics from p. 211 of *Unknown Armies*) knock on the front door. They're warning people about the dangerous, armed, escaped convicts. They've got grainy pictures, so they know what the cons look like. If the convicts have things really under control, you can decide the cops spotted Donna's van and are now very suspicious. A distraction involving the cops can give the hostages time to do something, so be sure to give them a chance to react.

Bors Returns

You can use this at any slow point, but it works particularly well if the convicts are in charge (or think they are). The storm lightens up for a moment, and then there's a loud noise from the attic. This wasn't the clatter of hailstones on the roof: it was closer and heavier. This was a thud like something big, moving suddenly . . .

This sound was, of course, the Bors Slavandrov clockwork (see p. 11). It managed to knock its trunk over onto

For the Ella Player: Ella's Realization

It can't be true . . . but somehow you know it is. You're not really you, you're one of Uder's clockwork *things*. And in a paralyzing instant, you realize you've known it all along. That's why you haven't aged. That's why you don't sweat, or shit, or dream anymore: because Uder built you not to.

A hazy memory is coming back . . . terrible, terrible pain, you remember begging Uder to take you to the doctor. The steps, that's it, you fell down the stairs . . . and he wouldn't. "This will be better, don't you see? You'll live forever, darling! You'll never have to grow old, your beauty will still be fresh in a thousand years! You will have the perfect health you deserve, the unfailing perfection of a body without age . . . No, you don't need the probing fingers of some Yankee doctor, I can give you all you need . . ."

The agony. Now you remember the agony as he gutted you, put gears in the place of tissue and bone. All the time telling you of his love, a love that would give life eternal.

And when he was done, you forgot about it. You forgot it because he built you to forget it. You stopped eating and never thought about it, because he built you to ignore it. He changed you, shaped you, made you in his ideal, and ever since then, you've been more than his wife. You've been his *creature*. You've been his *masterpiece*.

one side, and it can now roll a bit on the rounded top of the trunk, making a definite, repetitive sound. Hearing this sound is either going to prompt the convicts to interrogate Uder and Ella, providing more interaction, or they're going to go up and look around. If they go upstairs, that puts the hostages in a better position to try to escape and it also provides suspense if they release Bors the killer clockwork.

Ella Learns the Truth

Ella's a clockwork, but she doesn't know it, and neither does Uder. About ten or twenty years ago she fell down the stairs and broke her neck. She was in terrible pain, paralyzed, and she begged Uder to get her a doctor. He had a better idea, though: he decided to make her live forever. But to make the transformation, he'd have to give up a key, crucial memory. Well, what could be better than something he'd rather forget? Specifically, he chose to forget that he'd transformed her. It's taken a lot of self-deception to remain ignorant, but he's managed.

It's not hard for Ella's condition to come to light: for one thing, her aura is bizarre—Donna's never seen anything like it. More likely, if she gets injured, her skin tears and reveals the gears beneath.

Seeing the gears and oil underneath Ella's skin is a rank-5 Unnatural challenge to everyone but Uder. To him, it's a rank-5 Self challenge. For Ella, it's two challenges—the Unnatural and Self.

A boxed text (above) should give you an idea of what to tell Ella, but as always feel free to wing it.

Conclusion

No one can safely leave the house till morning. If the convicts can deal with Bors, the troopers, the hostages and each other, then they can siphon some gas and move on. If the hostages survive (or overcome the convicts) then they have the satisfaction of victory. Otherwise, it's up to the players to decide if their characters "succeeded" or not.

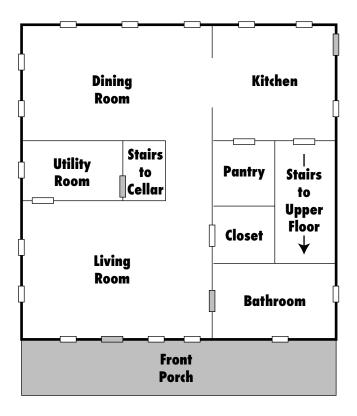
For the Uder Player: About Your Clockworks

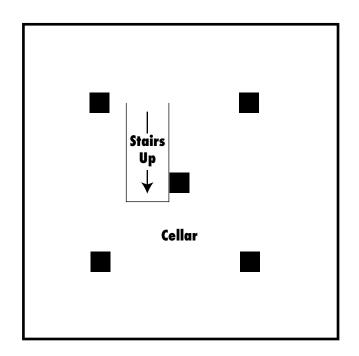
Bors has Speed 60, Body 60, and an attack skill of 60%. He takes damage from guns as if they were hand-to-hand attacks. (A bullet is likely to pass through a clockwork without hitting a crucial gear. A kick or a blow from a chair, on the other hand, is more likely to knock something loose.) His attacks (like your other clockworks) are resolved like a firearm attack with no maximum damage, but he cannot flip-flop rolls. His initiative roll is always a successful 60. He has to obey direct commands from you, but once he completes his orders he has free will. He is *very* dangerous and hard to control. He's dressed in his old military uniform and stowed in a trunk in the attic.

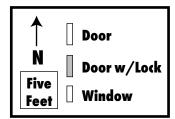
Tristan is a clockwork hound. He has Body 60, Speed 50 and an attack of 40%. His initiative roll is always a successful 50. He operates as a normal, well-trained dog, except he doesn't excrete and can't smell. He is otherwise completely realistic.

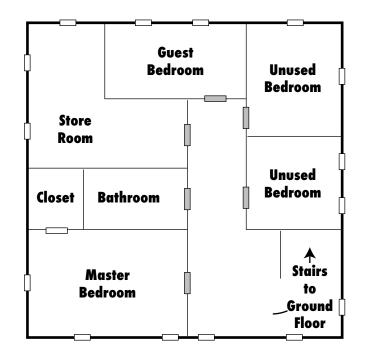
The Rack is your tool rack downstairs. It can't make it up the stairs on its own (and wouldn't fit) but can move around your workshop. It looks like a giant, black iron spider with various tools attached to its surfaces. It is capable of obeying simple commands, but cannot attack except in self-defense. It will obey only you and Ella. The Rack has Body 80, Speed 20, and an attack skill of 20%. Its initiative roll is always a successful 30.

The Krazmersky Farmhouse









Morton Willits—The Quiet One

You should never have wound up in Surrey prison; you should be somewhere much worse. You got convicted for breaking and entering because you hadn't had time to slit the throat of the Russian mobster who was moving in on your boss's territory. You've killed six people so far, two of whom didn't fight back. It's okay though; they were all bad.

You *don't* hurt or kill good people. It's sloppy, unprofessional, and you just don't like it. At least, that's what you tell yourself; but deep down, you suspect that it's because you like killing far, far too much. You've never had a sustained romance—in fact, the closest relationships you've had have been with six dead men . . .

People underestimate you. You don't talk a lot, and when you do, you have a hard time getting your point across. That makes them think you're dumb, which you certainly aren't. You're also not very large, and by the time you hit thirty-five you were completely bald—so people don't think you're trouble in a fight.

Most people at the prison didn't know you had to kill Don Braddock. It was self-defense—but the question of who left the prison's worst bully and sexual predator in a broom closet with a sharpened spoon in his eye was a hotly debated one in Surrey.

You don't blame the guards for watching you or the courts for imprisoning you. You've accepted that you're a bad man; some day you'll probably die like the bad men you've killed. But there are different types of bad.

You know you're on the dark side, but that doesn't mean you like to see people leave the light.

Obsession

You're morbidly fascinated by death. You never feel as alive as when you watch the light fade from a dying man's eyes.

Passions

Rage Stimulus: People who try to push you around because they think you can't fight back.

Fear Stimulus: (Violence) Losing control of the joy that you take in killing.

Noble Stimulus: Making sure the "good people" don't get pulled into conflicts between "bad people."

Stats

Body: 50 (Nondescript)
Speed: 70 (Quick)
Mind: 70 (Mechanical)
Soul: 30 (Inarticulate)

Skills

Body Skills: Athletics 15%, Climb 10%, Cut You Up 55% Speed Skills: Drive 15%, Dodge 15%, Shoot You 30%, Sneak 40% Mind Skills: General Education 15%, Get Past Alarms 40%, Notice 45%

Soul Skills: Lie 45%, Charm 15%

Cut You Up Cherries:

11 Re-roll damage

Take away opponent's weapon 33, 44 Immediately make another attack

55 Add an extra die of damage

Madness Meter

ViolenceUnnaturalHelplessnessIsolationSelf3 Hardened0 Hardened0 Hardened0 Hardened0 Hardened0 Failed0 Failed1 Failed1 Failed1 Failed

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Steve Updike—"She Was Askin' For It."

You don't think of yourself as a bad guy, not at all; you're a reasonable man who was pushed way too far by an unreasonable woman. If she'd just listened to reason . . . but that's water under the bridge now. She's got her divorce, her restraining order, half of all the money you worked like a slave to earn while she sat at home on her fat ass doing nothing but watching your three kids—who no doubt think you're some kind of *monster* now. Little ingrates.

Really, it just goes to show how much B.S. all that "women's lib" business was. If a man hits a man, both of 'em probably get charged with drunk and disorderly, if that. A man hits a woman, it's "assault and battery." How were you to know her jaw was so weak? It sure got plenty of exercise yelling at you. And then there's her claim that you broke her arm with a toaster oven, of all things—you sure don't remember that. Of course, a lot about that night is pretty foggy—you were awfully tired, after a hard day earning money for her and those three little chubbies. So you don't quite remember the blow by blow—you're sure she was faking that thing with her neck.

On the upside, you found out that guys in jail are just like guys everywhere—and you've always known how to talk to guys. Actually, you've always known how to talk to people in general, but guys especially.

Still, your boss fired you without giving you a chance to tell your side. And a jail term doesn't look good on an employment record. So when that truck crashed through the wall, you really didn't think about it before telling the other cons to grab that guard and make for the hole. Still, no one made them decide to follow you.

You're thinking about it now, though. Kidnapping is a federal crime. If there was some good way to sell them out . . . maybe make yourself look good in the bargain . . .

Obsession

You feel a deep need to make people see things *your way*. So much trouble and difficulty is avoided when you persuade someone that you're right. Much easier when they listen to reason.

Passions

Rage Stimulus: Uppity women.

Fear Stimulus: (Helplessness) Claustrophobia. Naturally this got a lot worse in the can.

Noble Stimulus: Loves animals. Maybe because what you see is what you get.

Stats

Body: 50 (Fit)

Speed: 50 (Confident Stride)

Mind: 50 (Articulate)
Soul: 70 (Charismatic)

Skills

Body Skills: Athletics 50%, Struggle 30%

Speed Skills: Dodge 30%, Drive 30%, Shoot Guns 20%

Mind Skills: General Education, Notice 15%, Run A Business 30%

Soul Skills: Alpha Male 55%, Charm 15%, Lie 30%

Alpha Male: A specialized form of leadership. People who don't like you are intimidated; people who do like you tend to feel submissive and obedient.

Madness Meter

ViolenceUnnaturalHelplessnessIsolationSelf1 Hardened0 Hardened0 Hardened0 Hardened1 Hardened1 Failed0 Failed0 Failed2 Failed0 Failed

Possessions

You're armed with a Colt 9mm pistol you took from the guard Jake Spundie. Its maximum damage is 50.

Juan Riccinto—"Hey, I'm Innocent!"

You were convicted on a DWH—Driving While Hispanic. Because you matched the description given for a suspect in a sexual assault ("Hispanic male in his twenties, medium height, burly, tattoo on hand") you were picked up and identified in a lineup—even though you never saw the woman before in her life. Since it was a sexual assault (meaning whoever really did it just groped her) and not rape there wasn't a lot of forensic evidence one way or the other. You got a dingbat public defender who rolled his eyes at you every time you said you didn't want to plea bargain 'cause you didn't do it. So you went to jail for a crime you didn't commit.

Before you fell down the rabbit hole of American Justice, you worked a lathe in a factory and had a girl you were planning to marry—that evaporated after her first couple visits. She believed you didn't do it—for a while. Her parents (who never liked you anyway) talked her around eventually.

So fuck it. Damned if you're going to do a term for some other asshole's sticky fingers. When the truck crashed through the wall, you figured it was Dame Fortune paying you back for piping your ass for a year and a half.

Still, you feel bad for the corrections officer. He always seemed like a decent type to you—never treated you bad, anyhow. Steve seems to know what he's doing, even if he is kind of bossy. You're not sure about that "Icepick" guy though.

Obsession

You're self-obsessed—Always Look Out For Number Juan. The downside of this is your tendency to think of everything in terms of yourself; at least you're honest about it. Plus you've got plenty of self-esteem, which means you don't feel a need to push people around in order to feel good about yourself.

Passions

Rage Stimulus: Anyone who tries to put you back in jail.

Fear Stimulus: (Helplessness) Dogs, ever since a mutt chomped your leg and got you a bellyful of rabies shots.

Noble Stimulus: Give people an even break. You're not the type to screw someone over for your own advantage.

Stats

Body: 65 (Burly)
Speed: 65 (Fast Feet)
Mind: 50 (Street Smarts)
Soul: 40 (Cynical)

Skills

Body Skills: Athletics 25%, Karate 55%

Speed Skills: Dodge 55%, Drive 25%, Shoot Guns 10%

 $\label{eq:mind_skills:} \textbf{Mind Skills:} \ \text{Fix Machines 20\%, General Education 25\%, Notice 35\%}$

Soul Skills: Charm 35%, Lie 35%

Madness Meter

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
1 Hardened	$0 \; Hardened$	0 Hardened	$0 \; Hardened$	1 Hardened
1 Failed	0 Failed	0 Failed	2 Failed	0 Failed

Notes

You've got a black belt in Goju Ryu karate, a style that concentrates on solid punches and low kicks, without a lot of fancy stuff. Your instructor mixed in some boxing and wrestling stuff too, but you still found out there's a lot of difference between a jailhouse brawl and a fight for a trophy. You were already good at not getting hit; now you're great.

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David "Icepick" Leyner—"Can't We Talk This Out?"

Know what the problem with people is? It's assumptions, that's what. People assume that just 'cause you're nickname is "Icepick," you're some kind of tough guy. (Actually, you got the name for being skinny and tall.) Similarly, some cops find pot in your car, they assume it's your damn pot, when in fact it belonged to your best gal Sally. Well, at least it was going to be after you sold it to her.

Whatcha gonna do? People just don't listen. So you might as well get with the program. Get off the tracks and get on the train. Roll with the punches. Get into it if you can't get out of it.

After all, possession of marijuana is a lighter charge than possession with intent to distribute. And Surrey wasn't the kind of place where tough guys were all the time fighting to be toughest guy. Hell, half the time you can get along just fine by going with the flow and letting people believe whatever the hell they want—encouraging them, even. After all, nobody ever went broke telling people what they wanted to hear.

You're generally an affable type, but if people want to believe the worst—well, you got a scar on your belly from falling out of a tree that looks just like a knife cut, and your badass routine has made a couple genuine hard-cases back off. You've been a pot seller, fence, telemarketer, bookie, used car salesman—basically, you can do okay at any job where you interact with people.

Obsession

People's expectations. You're always amazed at how much people prefer their own beliefs to reality.

Passions

Rage Stimulus: Anyone who *believes* (or acts) like they're open minded and fair when they're just as self-absorbed as everyone else. Fear Stimulus: (Self) People finding out how much of a fraud you almost always are. Sometimes you're not sure of your real identity. Noble Stimulus: Keeping an open mind. You know lots of other people are completely turned around about how things really are, so you realize you could be wrong just as easily.

Stats

Body:50(Slim)Speed:50(Jumpy)Mind:60(Plausible)Soul:60(Protean)

Skills

Body Skills: Athletics 15%, Run Away 35%, Struggle 30% Speed Skills: Dodge 45%, Drive 25%, Shoot Guns 10% Mind Skills: General Education 25%, Notice 35%, Short Con 30% Soul Skills: Believe Me 55%, Charm 35%

Believe Me: This is used any time you want to convince someone you're telling the truth—regardless of whether you're lying or not.

Madness Meter

ViolenceUnnaturalHelplessnessIsolationSelf1 Hardened0 Hardened0 Hardened1 Hardened1 Failed0 Failed0 Failed0 Failed1 Failed

Possessions

You've got Officer Jake Spundie's stun gun—you took if off him when you handcuffed him. You also have the keys to his cuffs.

Officer Jake Spundie—One Tough Screw

You were watching over the exercise yard. You remember that. Then there was a loud noise, smoke, fire . . . convicts running everywhere. You saw a hole in the wall with a truck halfway through it, cons running at it. You yelled at them to stop, drew your gun, yelled again—it's doubtful whether they heard you over the sirens. Your own ears were ringing from the explosion. You fired twice, probably killed someone . . . then something hit you in the back. You fell on your face and when you looked up, there was Steve Updike, pointing your gun at you.

It's a guard's worst nightmare: taken hostage by convicts. Soon they had you in your own cuffs, and were forcing you through the hole in the wall. You're not even sure if anyone saw you—there was so much smoke and confusion.

You've always tried to be a good guard—tough, but not cruel. Now you're the prisoner. Part of you wants to just go along, do what they say, hoping you can get home to your wife and children. The other part knows it's your duty to stop them, before they can victimize someone else's wives and children.

Obsession

To Serve and Protect. There's a thin line dividing good people from bad people, and you're part of that line. Sometimes people cross—both ways. It's important to recognize that. But it's also important to remember that most people stay right where they are.

Passions

Rage Stimulus: Disobedient convicts.

Fear Stimulus: (Helplessness) Disobedient convicts.

Noble Stimulus: Protect the innocent & obedient, including convicts who seemed truly sorry—and those who went along to get along.

Stats

Body: 70 (Buff)
Speed: 70 (Smooth)
Mind: 30 (Single-Minded)
Soul: 50 (Earnest)

Skills

Body Skills: Athletics 25% Subdue & Restrain 55% Speed Skills: Dodge 30%, Drive 15%, Target Shoot 55% Mind Skills: Criminal Lore 20%, General Education 25%, Notice 15% Soul Skills: Authority Figure 50%, Charm 15%, Lie 15%

Madness Meter

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
3 Hardened	$0 \; Hardened$	0 Hardened	$0 \; Hardened$	0 Hardened
1 Failed	0 Failed	1 Failed	2 Failed	0 Failed

Notes

Updike has your gun. It has five shots left. They've also got your taser, which is dangerous but probably not deadly. You're injured—one of the cons hit you with a brick from behind. Your back muscles are very sore, and your right kidney may be bruised. It hurts to stand up straight or run, but you can do it if you have to.

Janet Mattice—"Listen, I'm On Your Side! I'm a Lawyer!"

Ray Ngwashi's old lawyer really bungled the case. Clearly the little punk was guilty, but not a criminal—just another pothead teen. Not just that—a second generation pothead, a kid whose mom drilled a hole in her own fucking head—hell, you tell a jury that little factoid and they'll be all over themselves to acquit. Even if you got a jury of expatriate Texans or something, you'd probably wind up with a sympathetic judge putting the kid in rehab instead of jail. But no, the ding-dong had to go and stick with the facts of the case.

Never turn a case into a police procedural when a psychodrama will work. Who cares if the cops didn't dot every I and cross every T? Almost every jury is guaranteed to be packed with shiny-jawed, illiterate couch potatoes (at least they are when *you* get to pick 'em). They've been indoctrinated by Rush Limbaugh and the OJ trial to ignore a little police misconduct, but you give 'em a *story*—especially a weeper about a kid with cruddy parents, raised by drug fiends, probably beat up by one of mama's many boyfriends (something you can always imply, even if it didn't happen)—they'll fall over themselves to spring the little sprog. That F. Lee Bailey routine may work for celebrity show trials, but not for nickel and dime bags.

So now you're trying to open the case again, at the behest of Ray's wacky mom. You've told her it's a lot easier to do it right than to do it over, so she's primed to pay for a lot of hours . . . plus, you're fairly sure Donna Ngwashi still knows *lots* of people in the scene who are going to need a good lawyer some day. Springing her beloved dimbulb could be your ticket to a lot of low-level drug miscreants (your meat and potatoes), any one of whom might be your ticket to employment by a drug *kingpin* (your long-time ambition).

You were on your way out to Surrey to talk with Ray when suddenly there was a guy in the road waving a pistol at you. Now you're being held hostage by a pack of convicts, which means you can't even bill for your time. Still, think how good it would look to a jury if a hostage became the criminal's *lawyer*. Now there's a story. Juries eat that up . . . maybe the kingpin of your dreams would, too . . .

Obsession

You're fascinated by crime and punishment in America, and are increasingly certain that there will be real justice in the justice system about the same time there are real girl scouts in girl scout cookies. You get a weird thrill out of getting obviously guilty people off the hook, as long as they're not hardened criminals.

Passions

Rage Stimulus: Mealy mouthed do-gooders who get in your way. Fear Stimulus: (Violence) Real bad convicts—you've seen some scary sickos on the job.

Noble Stimulus: You like to get people off when they're guilty of breaking stupid laws, such as sexual practices and drugs.

Stats

Body: 50 (Heavyset)
Speed: 40 (Hesitant)
Mind: 60 (Articulate)
Soul: 70 (Crafty)

Skills

Body Skills: Athletics 25%, Endurance Run 40%, Struggle 15% Speed Skills: Dodge 30%, Drive 15%, Sprint 25% Mind Skills: Criminal Law 40%, General Education, Notice 15% Soul Skills: Charm 25%, Cold Read 50%, Lie 25%

Cold Read: The ability to instantly size people up—figuring out their personality, profession, and attitudes from little "Sherlock Holmes"-like clues.

Madness Meter

ViolenceUnnaturalHelplessnessIsolationSelf0 Hardened0 Hardened0 Hardened0 Hardened0 Failed0 Failed0 Failed0 Failed0 Failed

Possessions

In your pocket, you have a canister of pepper spray attached to your keychain.

Donna Ngwashi—Concerned Parent

You ran away from home when you were sixteen, in 1966. The next few years are blurry—whole lotta drugs, free love—it was a hell of a good time. Then in 1970 you met some unusual people. They explained that humans are born with an opening between the brainpan and the rest of the circulatory system, but this gap slowly closes as you age, sealing off at age 21 or so. Psychedelics cause temporary widening of the blood vessels in the brain, opening the "third eye" and allowing for enlightenment, but that's really only a temporary solution.

The permanent fix is trepanation—drilling a hole in your skull to relieve built up internal pressure and restore the blood flow to its natural levels. Something went wrong with your operation, however (possibly because you freaked out and started screaming); you got an infection of your optic nerve which left you blind in your left eye. Your friends vanished when you went into the hospital, the surgeon who operated on your head got you slung into detox, and when you came out you seriously re-examined your lifestyle.

You were back in school when you got knocked up. In the middle of your labor, the scar on your forehead popped open—and you started seeing things. Specifically, if you concentrated, you could see glowing paths and flows of color around people. You'd heard of "auras" but you never thought you'd see them. Soon you could tell someone's mood, health and general attitude just by looking.

You dropped out of school and found a guru named Lobsang Ramja, who was the real thing; you could see a red flame in his brain that no one else had. But one night you saw him using his powers on some of his acolytes, and you decided to get the hell out.

Since then you've been working at an organic food collective and raising your son. You were appalled when he got arrested for pot—you could have told him how to beat the drug tests! He got sent to Surrey, which didn't seem so bad . . . until you saw on the TV that a cult leader named "Father Freedom" had been sent there for fraud. When you saw "Father Freedom" on the tube, your blood ran cold. It was Lobsang Ramja. Right then you decided you had to get your son out of that prison, no matter what the cost.

Obsession

The power of human consciousness. You suspect your ability to see auras is just the tip of the iceberg . . .

Passions

Rage Stimulus: Hypocritical capitalist pig right wing cryptofascists. Fear Stimulus: (The Unnatural) The abuse of mystic power. Noble Stimulus: Enlightenment. You know you've glimpsed it, and you feel a duty to help others attain it as well.

Stats

Body: 50 (Fit)
Speed: 60 (Graceful)
Mind: 50 (Articulate)
Soul: 60 (Crafty)

Skills

Body Skills: Athletics 15%, RX Tolerance 50% Speed Skills: Dodge 40%, Drive 15%, Magick History 25%, Yoga 45% Mind Skills: General Ed. 15%, New Age Lore 25%, Notice 15% Soul Skills: Aura Sight 55%, Charm 20%, Lie 15%

Aura Sight: Allows you to evaluate a living being's physical, mental and emotional states—and also see them in the dark. RX Tolerance: This is your ability to ignore the effects of drugs and pharmaceuticals.

Madness Meter

ViolenceUnnaturalHelplessnessIsolationSelf0 Hardened2 Hardened1 Hardened0 Hardened0 Hardened1 Failed1 Failed1 Failed0 Failed0 Failed

Notes

Your Yoga skill can probably get you out of handcuffs or ropes.

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Uder Krazmersky-Immigrant Inventor

You're a clockworker—the last of them, for all you know. You first learned your trade from your father, who was killed by a mob of superstitious peasants. Then his brother took you in and taught you the rest of what he knew.

Clockworking is a type of magick; you have the power to give the semblance of life to animate collections of gears, wheels and drive shafts. There's a cost of course; to give life to an object, you have to give up part of what's made you alive. Specifically, you must give up memories.

You're an old man, so maybe your memory is failing on its own... but you know you must have done some powerful things in the past, since you can't remember your father burning to death (though you know you were there). You know you've turned a human into clockwork at least once; you still have him locked up in the attic.

His name was Bors Slavandrov, and he found out what you could do. Bors was a customs official, in a country where many wanted to leave and few were allowed. He took advantage of his position in ways you'd rather not think about, and he made you build him clockworks to help him. You wish you could forget them, but you haven't given up those memories—memories of creeping things to kill his enemies, slithering metal to hold people motionless, hooks and edges and a primitive desire to do harm . . .

But that's all in the past. Maybe those works are still back in the old country, but you're in America now, and Bors Slavandrov—or what's left of him—is locked upstairs in a chest. (Sometimes he still bumps around.)

He tried to do . . . something . . . to Ella. And she's everything to you. He had to be stopped, and the two of you stopped him. Ella was so brave . . . but then you had a dying man on your hands, and Bors had friends—or allies at least, brutal men like himself who would ask questions. You couldn't have Bors' death on your hands, or it would be your own as well—and Ella's. And from these men, beautiful Ella would not have had a quick death.

So you made Bors into a clockwork of himself. Obedient—for the most part. Able to get you past customs, certainly. Able to get you papers to America.

You've lived in seclusion since then. You managed to find some distant family members, who got you work building toys for the children of the ruling class. You don't dare use magick on them—they're only worthless things of tin and springs, but they pay enough for your meager needs. You have a workshop, you have Ella, and no one bothers you. That's just how you like things.

Obsession

Magick. There is a wall between the world we know and the mysteries behind it, and you have made a pinhole you can peer through . . .

Passions

Rage Stimulus: Anyone who tries to hurt Ella.

Fear Stimulus: (Helplessness) Being discovered as an adept. Noble Stimulus: Protect innocent women. You know you can never work off the debt you incurred helping Bors, but it would ease your conscience to know you'd done something.

Stats

Body: 30 (Frail)
Speed: 50 (Dexterous)
Mind: 70 (Sharp)
Soul: 70 (Penetrating Gaze)

The GM has another handout for you that describes your clockworks and their gameplay capabilities.

Skills

Body Skills: Athletics 15%, Powerful Hands 20%, Struggle 20% Speed Skills: Dodge 30%, Drive 15%, Throw Things 35% Mind Skills: General Education 15%, Notice 30%, Tinker 55% Soul Skills: Charm 15%, Lie 30%, Magick: Mechanomancy 55%

Madness Meter

ViolenceUnnaturalHelplessnessIsolationSelf1 Hardened2 Hardened0 Hardened0 Hardened0 Hardened1 Failed1 Failed0 Failed0 Failed1 Failed

Notes

Ella Krazmersky—Loving Wife

Back when you were a girl, you never had any lack of suitors in the Old Country. Your father was a wealthy man (if distant and eccentric), and you were a quite a beauty. As it happened, however, your father arranged a marriage between you and Uder Krazmersky, a strange little shopkeeper of disreputable aspect. Your father was an avid collector of clockwork, and Uder was recognized as a master in certain select circles. You strongly suspect your father traded you to Uder for a set of four full sized clockwork people—two soldiers, two damsels—who could dance five different dances. (Very well; your father was *very* distant and *very* eccentric.)

Uder treated you well—it was clear that he was deeply infatuated with you, and eventually you convinced yourself that you were happy and loved him as well. After all, it was a bad time in the Old Country, and Uder had powerful friends.

One powerful friend, anyhow. Well, not really a friend; Bors Slavandrov, an influential officer in charge of guarding the border. You're not sure to this day what went on between Bors and Uder, for your husband insisted that you hide yourself whenever Bors visited. You know that Uder didn't like what Bors was having him do—something to do with his creations.

Then one day Bors visited unexpectedly when Uder wasn't home, and . . . he wasn't very gentlemanly. You managed to get free from him and run into your bedroom, where there was one of your father's old dueling pistols.

Uder got home in time to find Bors dying on the bedroom rug, cursing and swearing revenge. That was when you learned the full extent of Uder's skills.

Somehow, he kept Bors alive—or half alive. He turned Bors into a clockwork—an automaton that looked like Bors on the outside, that had Bors' memories and spoke with Bors' voice, but inside it was only gears and parts. It had to obey Uder, though this new Bors didn't like it and would try to fight . . . but Uder's control was enough to get the three of you over the border to America.

Since coming to America it's been years and years of quiet. Uder makes toys. You work in your garden. Sundays you go to church, but you don't really visit much with people. You don't even have a TV set—Uder's uncomfortable around machines he doesn't understand.

Uder has explained something of his clockworking to you. You know it involves memory—sometimes losing memory. You wonder if his magick hasn't worn off on you a little. So many things seem hazy and faint . . . you know they're memories, but they seem more like dreams . . .

Obsession

People. You're very lonely with just Uder around.

Passions

Rage Stimulus: Rude men who try to grab at you. Fear Stimulus: (Helplessness) Rude men who try to grab at you. Noble Stimulus: You're kind to strangers, especially since you don't see too many.

Stats

Body:60(Healthy)Speed:60(Graceful)Mind:50(Polite)Soul:50(Sweet)

Skills

Body Skills: Athletics 15%, Gorgeous 25%, Struggle 40% Speed Skills: Dodge 30%, Drive 15%, Run 35% Mind Skills: General Education 15%, Notice 30% Soul Skills: Charm 55%, Lie 30%

Madness Meter

Violence	Unnatural	Helplessness	Isolation	Self
1 Hardened	2 Hardened	0 Hardened	$0 \; Hardened$	0 Hardened
1 Failed	1 Failed	0 Failed	0 Failed	1 Failed