

# Aurorea:

## CANTRIPS & CLOCKWORK

Much has changed in the Land of Light since The War 272 years ago. Something about the destruction of the nation of Tidera and the blight left upon the land after the final battle seems to have changed the people of the world. Perhaps it was the assistance of the exiles, Gnomes who had been rejected from their own society, which changed man's view of technology. Perhaps it was the wyrdstone, a powerful substance that could be used by those without magical talent. Perhaps it was simply the beginnings of some madness that has spread across the world. Regardless of the source, a returner may find that the world is different from what it once was, and it is not likely to go back to the way it was.

An industrial revolution has spread across Aurorea, and revolution is rarely peaceful.

### What Came Before

The end of The War was extremely successful, but only if you like a pyrrhic victory. The Tiderans, driven back to their capital in Parathoth, bunkered down behind magical shields to wait out a drawn out siege. With their high number of mages and clerics per capita, food and fresh water could easily be created to supply the soldiers and citizens of Parathoth, actually making a siege beneficial to them and detrimental to their enemies. Realizing the fruitlessness of normal siege tactics in this situation, the League forces combating Tidera gathered their magic users and began work on a spell that would destroy the Tideran defenses and allow the attack of the city. What they called this work of destruction has been lost to time, but their efforts created the most powerful eldritch working ever seen before or since. The attack shattered the Tideran defense, tearing a whole within the very fabric of Aurorea in the process.

Pouring from the wound as if decanting from an ocean, a dark and twisted realm invaded the streets and plains of Parathoth. As it spread like a virus, the darkness twisted the city of men in to a nightmarish landscape of flesh-eating fungus and gnarled, jagged trees. Creatures beyond dark imagination clawed their way into the world, creating greater havoc in the battle raging in Parathoth's streets. Aurorea stood balancing on the brink of destruction.

No one knows quite what stopped the advance of the dark realm in our hour of direst need, but stop it did. As if crashing upon an invisible wall, the change in the landscape halted. On one side of the line, Aurorea as it had been. On the other, the barren malice of what would become known as The Scar.

The Tideran threat was ended that day, but not without cost. Most of those men and women who were in Parathoth during the battle's climax were killed, civilian and soldier alike. Those that remained struggled to build new lives for themselves in the hinterlands surrounding the blasted waste where once a city of spires stood. The forces of the League retreated to their member nations now that their ways of life were no longer threatened by a powerful foe. Alliances splintered and broke. Armies crumbled and scattered.

With the destruction of Parathoth came a fear of magic. Where once spellwork was an accepted part of life, practitioners were now watched with paranoia and disgust. The bleak knowledge of what magic can wreak was plain to anyone; a simple look at the Scar sending clear warning regarding powers that are dangerous to tamper with. More and more, the people of Aurorea began to turn to the work of exile gnomes and inventors. Gears and sprockets became the new sign of power.

The wonders of new technology allowed a standard of life impossible for the common farmer previously available only to the magically gifted. Humans are nothing if not adaptable, and this new way of life spread faster than anyone thought possible. Hope rekindled. Perhaps, with technology, the people of the world could avoid the dangers that they had seen first hand with magic. Perhaps this new path would lead to a better, brighter, and peaceful tomorrow.

The first mass produced handheld cannon was created and brought to market barely 30 years later.

Ain't that a bitch.

### **What is Become**

A true industrial revolution has spread across Aureora. With the advent and acceptance of assembly line factory production, new products can be manufactured quickly and brought to market efficiently. Factories and factory working is common, but most cities still struggle with poverty and unfair working conditions in industry. Soot is common and streets of major cities are rife with horse drawn carriages, as well as other contraptions. Gaslight is common, and the recent invention of the dynamo heralds a coming age of electrical development.

### *Magic & Religion*

Magic is fading from the world. Many theories abound as to why this is, but it simply isn't as common as it was even 50 years ago. Perhaps magic is actively hindered by technology, or perhaps the stigma associated with mages and their decline in society has resulted in fewer trained and powerful wizards. Regardless, no one is paying too close attention, as magic is generally considered distasteful and its practitioners are often vilified outright.

While still retaining their rights as allowed by local government, mages are widely viewed as second class citizens. Those with magical talent often spend a great deal of effort hiding their abilities, which has become especially hard since the decline in magic has required that mages, even sorcerers, adopt the use of material components and reagents to cast spells. Since these components are normally difficult to come by, a small black market for them has sprung up in cities across the world.

To consolidate their power and prevent the persecution heaped upon arcane casters, the different religious orders have banded into a single religious entity known simply as "The Temple". As a single organization, the Temple now wields significantly more political and social power, which they have used to institute the creation of ministries and orders that assess and influence social norms.

Much of society's distaste for magic is likely to do with the Temple, as clerics have done their best to avoid sharing the fate of magicians by actively preaching against them and the danger they represent. Inquisitors and bounty hunters are quick to hunt down those who with magic that "step out of line", and most citizens of the world turn a blind eye even if the flimsiness of the "proof" is apparent.

Despite the new prominence of the Temple, divine power is on the decline. Where once each of the Priestlords controlled hundreds of paladins and god-gifted clerics in their orders, few now remain that actually have access to divine power. Unfortunately, those that do are not specifically trained or singled out by temple officials. Instead, all priests are trained as if they have the power to heal and cast divine spells through prayer *if their faith is strong enough*. As a result, any positive change in a situation that has been prayed for is taken as a sign of the gods' work in the world, and a show of faith and power on the priest's part. If one cleric's prayer's happen to be answered far more than others, it is believed that it is simply because he is a more pious man.

Worse, Priestlords are disappearing; some simply vanishing without a trace. Their absence has allowed the most political and bureaucratic priests to take control of the Temple. As a result, the Temple has become a more overbearing and controlling entity than it once was; its inner workings a maze of bureaucracy and shadowy intent.

Perhaps in response to the Temple's hard-line stance on prayer and the gods, the idea of "The Sovereign Mind" is gaining traction. Those who tout the philosophy of the Sovereign Mind state that only they themselves are in control of their destiny; their mind is "sovereign" and unassailable. Attributing actions to gods rather than measurable, repeatable scientific process is folly to these individuals.

In addition to the philosophy of "The Sovereign Mind" a new movement spreading among the religious has begun to see each god as only an "aspect" of one true god. Those that

follow “The One God”, often called “Aspecters” derisively, believe that “As man can have many aspects, so too must a god”. While this movement is relatively small, its followers are growing each year. This sect has broken completely away from the Temple, and formed their own hierarchy of hierophants completely separate from other organized religion.

### *Peoples of the World*

The world is in a state of change, and the people of the world are changing with it. While Humans have always been the dominant race of Aureora, their dominance has only grown since the industrialization began.

In sharp contrast, the elves of the world have retreated into their borders, the rate of change becoming too much for the long lived beings to bear. Those elves that decide to venture out into the world are declared “Wastrel”, their kin disgusted that they would waste their time in a world that is growing too fast for elves and with little interest in maintaining the natural environment. Wastrels tend to be young for elves, with a deep curiosity for the changes being wrought in the world.

Dwarves, much like their Elven cousins, feel that the rapid industrialization of the world is dangerous and wasteful. Conflicts with human developers who attempt to mine their mountains for iron and other raw materials has prompted the Idar dwarves to adopt their cousin’s policy of isolation. The gates to the Grand Avenue of Horidar were closed more than a century ago. While you may find an occasional dwarf merchant or trader in the world, these men and women tend to be from small clans or are dwarves who have lived on the surface for generations. Most have retreated to the deeps beneath their mountains.

Halflings, as ever, are a curious sort and have changed little since The War.

One would think that Gnomes would find the industrial revolution sweeping Aureora as a boon to their work, but nothing could be farther from the truth. To a gnome, it is important that a gadget be unique and handcrafted, its details and design lovingly crafted by an artisan. The process of mass-production is abhorrent to gnomes and most see the factories of the world as a perversion of their art. The fact that their clockwork inventions led to the revolution has been a source of great shame for the gnomes. Those gnomes that choose to interact with the world outside of Nomnelund are considered to be clinically insane by the rest of gnomish society... and perhaps they are.

Of all the races of the world the Gefkani have benefitted the most by the revolution. The world’s embrace of technology and manufacture ring required steel and other metals. Metals that the resource rich Kivran, homeland of the Gefkani, were able to supply for those with coin. With the strength of their arms and the lava fueled furnaces of their homeland, Gefkani struggled up from a low standing in society to the upper echelons of the world. The Antillarn Steel dynasty is only one a number of gefkani families that has become synonymous with wealth and privilege.

### *Science & Technology*

Due to the lack of reliable divine healing, medicine has begun a rapid advance. Chirurgeons are gaining notoriety and have even postulated the existence of germs, microbes, and viruses. Reliable anesthetic allows for a higher survival rate for invasive chirurgery, which has increased the number of people capable of living longer lives without magical intervention.

In addition, Tonic Salesman have begun to ply customers with promises of tictures and tonics that can alleviate or cure any ailment or state of being one can think of. Some of these concoctions legitimately provide healthful benefits, while others are simply mixtures of stimulant herbs and addictive drugs. Despite the hit or miss nature of the industry, traveling salesmen have become a common enough site in the world.

Heralding a new “Gearwork Age” the human cultures of the world have adopted a new system of time keeping that uses more accurate clockwork pocket watches. New firearms implement a rifling process to improve accuracy of shots, and transition from the pre-packed cartridges to the encased bullet has begun. While armor, swords, and other hand weapons are still common, a testament to the number of miss-fires or duds a firearm may experience during the course of battle, their popularity is *just* beginning to wane.

Engines in the Gearwork age are normally powered by steam, but this steam can be produced from a variety of ways. The most common engines are wood or coal burning, which use a kettle to heat water to steam, turning screws or turbines to produce power. Alternately, dynamos can be charged, their current stored in coils or capacitors until discharged.

The most expensive and powerful source of fuel currently available is known as wyrdstone. This material, which looks vaguely like jade, can store and release massive amounts of current or kinetic force. Wyrdstone is used as a direct power source, after charging, or as a battery to fuel an engine. Malcolm Wyatt Lordly, a famed inventor, has recently published a dissertation at Archlight College that proves that even a tiny amount of wyrdstone, crushed to power and missed into a gelatinous substrate, can result in an extremely efficient energy source or fuel cell for automatons and conveyances. Unfortunately wyrdstone is extremely rare, the only known source being a quarry on the outskirts of an old exile community several leagues away from Nomnelund proper. The power and rarity of this substance has made it quite desirable around the world.

### *Places of Interest*

A new age often means new places of importance, and the Gearwork age is no different. Portismouth in Magdriv has become one of the first cities with full gaslamp lighting each evening, as well as underground water and sewage lines. Many other cities look to Portismouth for direction on where future fashion and design is progressing.

Portismouth is also home to the premier Archlight University, so named for the famous wyrdstone powered Archlight, which projects a beam of light powerful enough to reach the heavens. Designed before the full power of wyrdstone was determined, the Archlight uses a disproportionately large chunk of wyrdstone in the shape of an eye to create its impressive effect. Some scholars have requested that the Archlight be refitted to create the same effect with a smaller power source but the deans of Archlight college have forbade this, noting the historical significance of the 150 year old device's role in creating the sprawling university campus that now surrounds the device.

Half a world away, Jetharka has become a haven of scientific progress and has recently reopened their defunct airship port to accommodate luxury dirigibles and propeller turned craft. The cosmopolitan nature of this city, famed before The War, has only grown since it fell into the hands of the Stewards Council after the destruction of its original Jetheriss builders. People stream to Jetharka from around the world for the Science Summit, held once every 5 years.

Finally, Imperial Antoch continues its march to expand across the globe, snapping up many territories and small fiefdoms without stopping. With the famed Antan Imperial Bjornsman uniform recognized throughout the world, it's unsurprising that army and navy forces of Antoch can be seen nearly anywhere one cares to travel. Whether their ships are supplying to take their military might to a new land, or if their men are enjoying some R&R, Imperial Antoch never seems to be far away.