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The Spring-Heeled Menace is an introductory penny dreadful into the seedier side of the Smoke; the adventurers take the case of a hermeticist waylaid in Whitechapel in order to recover his lost cane. Unbeknownst to the adventurers that cane contains a secret plan that could turn the tide in the Crimean War! This penny dreadful is designed for almost any association, but is particularly suitable for associations with an investigative bent.

Depending on the choices your players make, they may chance to meet Dr Victor Johanssen and Inspector Anson. These characters play prominent roles in Streets of Shadow.

Background
For months the Russians have had the upper hand in the Crimean War; the British government is scrambling to send reinforcements for their decimated troops and the French and Ottomans aren’t doing much better. Conscription is being debated in Parliament and causing general unrest amongst the lower class. If something isn’t done quickly to turn the tide, then at best Britain and its allies can lose the war and at worst may face a popular revolution at home.

Fortunately, prominent members of the London Guild have come up with a plan. They’ve devised a magical matrix that could make British aerostats invisible and enable them to get behind enemy lines for bombing runs while also plucking Russian wyvern riders from the sky. They’ve even considered the most efficient places to launch their attacks. All of this was detailed in the Thundercloud Proposal.

Sir Reginald Albertson, a hermeticist and physician, works in a Wapping clinic and sympathized with more radical members of the lower class. He decided that if he gave the plans to Russia, it would force an end to the war and any talk of conscription. He copied the plan and intended to hand it over to Russian agents who are waiting in a submersible beneath the Thames.

Unfortunately for him, Sir Reginald was waylaid by the Spring-Heeled Jacks, a notorious gang that uses technological marvels to commit robberies. During the robbery the Jacks took Sir Reginald’s ornate walking cane, which had the plan hidden in the hollowed tube inside.

As the Thundercloud Proposal has already been sent to the War Ministry, Sir Reginald doesn’t have the time or opportunity to make another copy. Unless he can manage to retrieve his copy and get it into the Russians’ hands now, Britain will be able to unleash its plan on the Russians and strengthen the calls for conscription. Desperate, he decides to seek discreet assistance (the adventurers) in retrieving his missing cane. Of course, he leaves out certain details...

Getting the Adventurers Involved
This penny dreadful is designed for investigative associations, although with a little work almost any Association can fit provided that Sir Richard believes that at least one adventurer within an association is useful to him.

Here are ways to adapt each of the Associations in the Victoriana Core Rulebook:

- **The Cobblestone Club**: Sir Richard has many friends within various socialist circles. He wouldn’t hesitate to reach out to associated adventurers.

- **The Havering Household**: Presuming that at least one member is an investigator of some stripe, Sir Richard reaches out to her and her associates.

- **Metropolitan Police, Aetheric Branch**: While it’s natural to go to the police, Sir Richard may be wary of any Aetheric Branch detectives. Still, time is of the essence and so long as his bluff holds Sir Richard may find them useful.

- **Royal Geographical Society**: Sometimes one must think outside the box. Sir Reginald is a member of the society, so perhaps he feels that the unique skills globe-trotting adventurers possess will be of use in this matter.
**Royal Steam Lancers:** The Spring-Heeled Jacks are obviously using marvels to commit their crimes and who better to defeat them than steam lancers? This is really thinking outside the box, but perhaps one adventurer is an old school mate of Sir Richard.

**The Selenium:** Sir Richard needs hunters to find intelligent prey; who better than the Selenium?

**The Society for Spiritual Repose:** While they generally assist the deceased, Society adventurers do spend much of their time investigating the living. Sir Richard has likely met with one or more of them before and now needs their assistance.

**The Star Chamber:** If there is one association that Sir Richard would rather not have involved, it’s this one. On the other hand, making agents of the Star Chamber unwittingly act as double agents would amuse him.

**Willowpin and Associates:** Sir Richard needs detectives. Who better to call than the professionals?

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### Scene 1: A Magician’s Request

Sir Richard seeks out the adventurers early in the morning. The pea-souper is especially horrid today and its yellow-green smoke seeps in through open windows and large door cracks. Where he meets them depends on their association; he might show up on the Havering Household’s doorstep, Willowpin’s office, or the Selenium clubhouse. If the adventurers are normally scattered about then he invites them to meet him at a local pub.

Sir Richard is a Gnome; his shock grey hair and craggly face suggests a man in his 80s, although Sir Richard is only just shy of his 60th birthday. He wears a green frock coat around his small, thin frame and has a pipe clenched between his teeth. He wears a matching top hat which helps cast a shadow over a blackened eye and bruised cheek; he also favors his right leg when he walks. In addition to his physical injuries (thankfully minor), Sir Richard is also a bit out of sorts for being up so early – Gnomes are night owls and generally sleep in.

In spite of his appearance Sir Richard tries to maintain a jovial expression, although it is painful for him to smile. He greets the adventurers warmly and begs them to entertain his proposition. Once he is suitably comfortable, Sir Richard explains his situation.

‘My name is Sir Richard Albertson, baronet, hermeticist, and physician. Last night I found myself traveling through Whitechapel – I volunteer my services at a clinic in Wapping, when I was accosted by ruffians that jumped through the air and demanded my valuables. I attempted to defend myself but one of the blasted gang knocked me senseless before I had much of a chance. When I recovered my senses, I realised that my cane was missing.

‘The grip of that cane has special properties. The emerald helps me to exorcise demons; a very useful trait when dealing with those too poor to receive proper treatment from an alienist. Unfortunately, in the wrong hands, it can be a powerful tool to bargain with demons, especially for those with little knowledge. I need to have that cane returned to me before it causes any trouble.

‘I’d like you to find it for me. I can offer you each £1 if you can find it for me within 48 hours; otherwise I can offer you as a group £1 a day. It’s imperative that the staff be recovered as soon as possible. Can I count on your services?’

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Cautious First Impression

While we’ve provided hooks for every association, some are better fits than others. The Cobblestone Club, the Havering Household, and Willowpin and Associates tend to have adventures just like this one, while it’s a bit more of a stretch for the Royal Geographical Society, the Society for Spiritual Repose, and most certainly the Royal Steam Lancers. While this is not to say that adventurers of such associations won’t enjoy this adventure, it certainly isn’t representative of their normal adventures.

If you are using this adventure for one of the latter groups, be sure to stress that this is an introductory adventure to the world of Victoriana and not necessarily representative of the types of adventures they’ll be having on a daily basis. You may even wish to run this adventure with the pregenerated adventurers provided and let your players begin the campaign proper with their own adventurers after concluding this adventure.
Sir Richard is sincere in his request, but not in his reasons. He is holding back the true nature of the cane, but he’s covering it with a bogus story about a demonic jewel. A suspicious adventurer may try to use Presence + Empathy against Sir Richard’s MC +2, or 14 (for being a Gnome), making it unlikely that she will discover his ruse. If discovered Sir Richard admits that there is something personal within the cane, which is true enough.

Sir Richard Albertson
Gnome Hermeticist Physician

Physical: 3 Initiative: 8
Mental: 10 Health: 8
Social: 7 Quintessence: 36

Armour Value: 7 (lined coat. Nah sigil)
Special Traits: Demonology (quiet), Sigil Magic (Enochian: Pe, Ged, Nah), Thaumaturgy (aetheric bolt, cure, darkness, ectoplasmic hand, hair of the dog, heal)
Complications: Zealot (Bolshevist)
Damage: Aetheric bolt (8)

If asked why Sir Richard simply doesn’t go to the police then he acknowledges that he was in Whitechapel to ‘sample the local flavour’ (a lie) and he can’t afford a scandal. He’s also heard rumours that the Metropolitan Police is giving a low priority to the Spring-Heeled Jacks. A relatively non-violent gang that takes a few baubles from wealthy victims visiting prostitutes and opium dens isn’t worth the manpower it would take to track them down.

Sir Richard describes the cane as oak, with entwined silver and brass dragons holding a large green quartz gem in the grip. Should the adventurers find the cane, then Sir Richard asks them to bring it to the clinic he works at in Wapping. Playing the role of ‘respectable’ physician during the day, Sir Richard works at the clinic late into the evening.

Scene 2: To Find the Jacks

Presuming that the adventurers take the case, then there are a number of avenues they may follow (don’t be afraid to improvise). First, they may case the local pawn shops, although smart robbers never dump the stolen goods in the neighbourhoods they stalk.

Secondly, they may use their contacts in the street to find out what they can about the Spring-Heeled Jacks. Finally, and perhaps ultimately, they bait a confrontation with the gang, whether through ‘playing victim’ or tracking one of them.

The quickest way to find out information on the Spring-Heeled Jacks is to pound the cobblestones with a Difficult (3 black dice) Presence + Streetwise roll (Criminology may be used as a complementary skill) or use an appropriate Contact in lieu of the skill.

Using a Streetwise roll takes the better part of the day as adventurers visit different neighbourhoods, pubs, pawn shops, and opium dens canvassing contacts and gathering information. Since it’s likely that the entire group will be involved in this process, the Streetwise roll can be resolved as a Group roll.

Adventurers getting a partial success learn that the Spring-Heeled Jacks tend to strike in the East End, while a few of their valuables have been discovered in pawn shops in the West End north of Hyde Park. The Jacks also tend to use non-lethal force such as smoke bombs laced with some sort of hallucinogen unless provoked. On a success, the
adventurers learn that the Spring-Heeled Jacks tend to target professionals, victims of a class that would rather lose a few valuables than admit to why they are in neighbourhoods like Limestone, Wapping, and Whitechapel.

On a good success (3 successes), the adventurers learn that the Jacks have been seen dumping goods into a coach a block or so away from their victims. No one has gotten close enough to identify the coach, but the driver seems to be a Beastman or Orc. On an impressive success (6 successes), the adventurers discover that someone has recently offered the cane to several pawn brokers. At least one street contact has identified the seller as an Orc servant of Mr Parsons, a Technologist that lives in Marylebone.

~Scene 3: Baiting the Trap~

Whether the adventurers learn about the coach or not, they’ll probably want to lay a trap for the Spring-Heeled Jacks. This is easy enough to accomplish, presuming that at least one of them doesn’t mind playing the role of a comfortable upper middle class or lower upper class gentleman or lady with coin to spend in a potentially scandalous manner. Unfortunately, this could trigger a Complication for some adventurers, but that is part of the risk and those with such Complications tend to play their roles well!

Should one or more adventurers decide to be the bait, then they’ll need to play the role. Again, appropriate Complications work here, but an adventurer might use Acting, Bluff, Charm, Conversation or other skills to play up her role. The Spring-Heeled Jacks have a number of spotters that comb the neighbourhood for victims; these spotters aren’t members of the gang, but informers that blend into the area being cased.

An adventurer ‘playing bait’ merely needs to make a Difficult (3 black dice) roll to attract the attention of a spotter (Hettie Trask, if appropriate). Note that it’s possible to identify a spotter with a Difficult (3 black dice) Wits + Perception roll, using Empathy as a complementary skill (this does not identify the spotter with the Jacks, only that the spotter has taken an interest in the baiting adventurer). As the spotters are unaffiliated, it’s a simple matter to Bribe the spotter into working for the adventurers by pointing the baiting adventurer out as a potential victim (although if the Gamesmaster is feeling particularly sinister the spotter could inform on the adventurers instead).

Once a potential victim has been identified, the spotter runs out and informs a nearby Huldu that is lurking in an alley on roller skates. Perceptive adventurers making a Difficult (3 black dice) Wits + Perception roll may spot a Huldu taking a particular interest in ‘the bait’ before running off into the shadows. It’s up to the adventurers whether they wish to follow, overpower, or ignore the Huldu (as he’s only doing what they want him to do).

Should they attempt to follow or overpower the Huldu then use the Chase rules. The Huldu starts at ‘Close By.’ They’d better be quick, for if the Huldu is using roller skates and, additionally, if he spots them he drops a smoke bomb in an alley to cover his escape. He also only has about 150 yards to go before he can inform a Spring-Heeled Jack on a nearby roof that he’s being followed. The Jacks protect their own, so adventurers chasing down the Huldu may find themselves in an ambush (there’s one Jack for each adventurer).

Should the adventurers manage to capture the Huldu runner then he first pleads innocence; failing that he admits he’s a pickpocket and claims it’s the only way for him to make money; Huldu labourers aren’t exactly in high demand. A character making a Presence + Empathy roll against the Huldu runner’s SC can determine that he’s lying. If they press with an appropriate social skill (Intimidate and Interrogation are especially useful), then the Huldu breaks and tells them that he can take them to the Jacks – he’s hoping that they’ll overpower the adventurers. On an impressive success, the adventurers learn from the Huldu that Jacqueline Parsons is the leader of the gang.

Hettie Trask
Dwarf Dollymop and Spotter

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Armour Value: 2 (lined corset)
Special Traits: Beautiful
Complications: None
Damage: Kick (3), concealed knife (5)

Hettie is an example of a spotter that might be found in a brothel, pub, or opium den.

Huttie is an example of a spotter that might be found in a brothel, pub, or opium den.
Peelers!

The East End maintains a police presence and this can complicate matters if the adventurers spend too much time chasing down Huldufolk or subjecting them to rather aggressive interrogations. Normally, any obvious actions bring two whistling peelers in 3d6 rounds, with a further 2 or more in 3d6 rounds after that. The Gamesmaster should modify the reaction time accordingly, especially if she wants to dissuade the adventurers from being too aggressive. At this point, the peelers are more concerned with breaking up fights rather than arresting people; the adventurers are only in danger of arrest if they brandish weapons on the peelers. This likely leads to an early interview with Inspector Anson (see SCENE 5).

### Police Constable – Human Peeler

| Physical: 6 | Initiative: 3 |
| Mental: 3   | Health: 8     |
| Social: 5   | Quintessence: 6 |

Armour Value: 2 (soldier’s coat)
Special Traits: None
Complications: Responsibilities
Damage: Punch (3), club (6)

Assuming that the adventurers go ahead and bait the entire gang, the Spring-Heeled Jacks lay in wait on the rooftops until the adventurer and any companions are relatively isolated. Spotting Jacks on the roof-top requires a Difficult (3 black dice) Wits + Perception roll (normally this would be a Very Difficult roll, but the adventurers are presumably keeping an eye out for them).

There is one Spring-Heeled Jack for each adventurer. In the surprise round, the Jacks use their dart guns on exposed and dangerous-looking adventurers (including any carriage drivers) while one of them tosses a pocket bomb filled with hallucinogenic gas into the coach (or crowd of adventurers, if they are walking). After this initial round the Jacks spring into action, leaping down and using their life preservers on anyone still resisting. They then grab easy valuables and leap away. Presuming they get away the Jacks head for a coach that is parked one street over. The driver is Thaddeus Turnbull and Jacqueline Parsons sits inside. Mrs Parsons is wearing a lace mask and she has her electric pistol ready. If the Spring-heeled Jacks meet too much resistance then Mrs Parsons orders Turnbull to return home before they are exposed.

There are several ways that this could end. If the Spring-Heeled Jacks get away with the loot then this initial contact is a failure (unless the adventurers had the foresight to sneak a one sight into the valuables or keep at least one adventurer out of the trap to see where the Jacks take the loot). If this is the case then a new trap will need to be set; this time the Jacks know a few faces.

If the adventurers manage to catch one of the Jacks, he can be made to talk with an appropriate opposed roll. In return for his freedom he fingers Mrs Parsons, figuring that the ruse is up anyway. If the adventurers assault the carriage then Turnbull flees with the carriage leading to a chase through the rookeries. He and Mrs Parsons use pocket bombs and firepower to dissuade the adventurers from following and Turnbull is smart enough not to head for home until he’s sure that he’s shaken the adventurers.

Should Turnbull and Mrs Parsons be restrained, she’ll have little choice but to confess her role in the gang as well as where the cane is hidden. The Gamesmaster can simply go to the appropriate section in Scene 4 for more details.

### The Spring-Heeled Jacks

The Spring-Heeled Jacks are a criminal gang led by Jacqueline Parsons, a brilliant woman who would have made an excellent technologist if her family thought it an appropriate profession for a woman and prevented any chance of her being accepted into college. Jacqueline accepted and defied her family by marrying a technologist who was more interested in his work shop than her. Learning from him, Jacqueline created her own technological devices and began an inappropriate and potentially scandalous relationship with their Northern coachman, Thaddeus Turnbull.

Together they’ve gathered a criminal band that uses Jacqueline’s devices to rob those that they believe can afford it. They try not to use lethal force and use their pocket bombs to subdue victims, although they don’t hesitate to put down magicians and armed victims with prejudice. Parsons and Turnbull usually wait a couple streets away in order to collect the valuables from the other gang members once they’ve left the scene.