

STEAMSCAPES



Singapore Shuffle

[Note – This is the beginning of a multi-episode adventure for Steamscales. It is designed specifically for *Steamscales: Asia*, so we assume you have that book and *Steamscales: North America*, as well as the *Savage Worlds* core rules. This campaign works just as well for a diverse group of characters as it does for one that shares a common background.]

Prologue

Singapore, one of the few remaining territories of the severely diminished British East India Company, is one of the most active ports in all of Asia. Despite tense relations with the nations of India, the Company prioritizes profit, so dozens of Marathan, Bengali, and Mysorean sea ships resupply here on their way east towards China, the Philippines, or North America. Other vessels transfer light freight to and from airships heading north into Vietnam, Burma, and the Malay States.

Of course, not all the trade that passes through the city is legal. Many of the national shipping concerns act as fronts for their respective nations' underworlds. Smuggling is rampant, but the Company police force seems content to allow any activity that fosters more revenue, as long as it doesn't excessively disrupt the peace. North

American weapons find their ways to both Burma and Prathet Thai, European clockwork parts find their way to Maratha and Japan, and Turkish opium finds its way everywhere it can be smuggled.

You have come to Singapore for your own reasons. Whether this is your destination or you are merely stopping on your way, you know that you will be here for at least a few days. So you gather your things and disembark.

At this point, have each player describe their character and whether they are arriving by sea ship or airship. If this is the first time the characters are meeting, consider starting the session with an Interlude to set up appropriate back stories.

Scene 1 – Runaway Rickshaw

As the heroes make their way off of the docks and/or airfield, they see a line of rickshaws waiting for passengers. Notably, all of the rickshaw drivers are automatons—a sight that most people are unlikely to have seen outside of Tokyo.

A Gearsmith can easily recognize that the automatons come from all around the world, and many of them probably had different purposes when they were originally built. Characters who have lived in Japan can spot a few Japanese automatons by the professional “tattoos” engraved into their bare shoulders and arms. Any hero who is familiar with Singapore can make a Common Knowledge roll to be aware that automatons have mixed status in Singapore, and these are likely free automatons working for themselves. (Non-locals might know this as well, but their rolls are at -2 or -4, depending on their backgrounds and specialties.)

As you approach the rickshaw stand, you see a sudden commotion. The middle rickshaw starts pushing into and then around the first one. The drivers say something to each other that you can't quite hear, and then the other rickshaws start leaving in a panic in a variety of directions.



Singapore from the St. Andrews Spire



As the middle rickshaw takes off and picks up speed, you see that it is the only one with a passenger—a woman wearing a European-style dress and hat clutches at the sides of the cart to avoid being jostled as the driver heads into the market square...

You can run this scene as a 5-round Chase on foot. The rickshaw driver has a slight advantage and is a Wild Card (stats below). However, he heads into the busy market square, which is full of obstacles. There are a variety of ways to approach the situation. The heroes can focus on incapacitating the driver, stopping the cart, or just rescuing the woman. The method they choose affects the follow-up scene.

強 HIROMICHI (Automaton)

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4, Spirit d4, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Pace: 6, **Parry:** 5, **Toughness:** 7 (2)

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6

At the end of the chase, there are three possible outcomes: the rickshaw has escaped, the woman is safe but Hiromichi has escaped or is taken out, or both the woman and Hiromichi are up and able to talk.

Outcome 1: The Rickshaw Escapes

If this happens, a Singapore Police officer named Jun Kai approaches the heroes and asks them what happens. Once they share their story, Jun Kai asks them to let him know at the station if they hear anything else related to the incident.

Continue to Scene 2.

Outcome 2: Passenger Conversation

The woman thanks the heroes and introduces herself as Mary Jane Clark Dickins (a strange series of names to all the Asian characters in the party). If asked, she mentions that her husband is a British envoy to the Meiji Emperor. She is on her way back to Japan after a brief trip home to England. The heroes also notice that she has a self-powered steamer trunk that walks on clockwork legs. It seems to listen to her commands.

Jun Kai (see above) approaches and asks everyone involved what happened. Mary Jane reports that the drivers were all alarmed after her

driver said something about seeing “The Long-Named Man.” At this, Jun Kai becomes very worried and hurries away. Mary Jane can make her own way to her hotel or the heroes can help her, but all the rickshaws have fled.

Continue to Scene 2.

Outcome 3: Driver Conversation

In addition to the information listed in the other two outcomes, the heroes can find out even more if they keep Hiromichi around and conscious. He tells Constable Jun that he thought he saw two of the European hats that the Russians always wear, which is why he panicked about “The Long-Named Man.”

Jun Kai tries to keep Hiromichi from saying too much. He quickly escorts the driver to the station “for his own protection.”

Continue to Scene 2.

Scene 2 - Getting to the Bottom of Things

This is an open-ended investigation scene. There are a broad range of paths the heroes could follow to get to the critical information. Below are a number of contacts and what they know, as well as some specific pieces of information that the heroes might acquire through those contacts or through other means.

Possible Contacts

- **Jun Kai**, Constable with the Singapore Police Force. Knows the local underground better than any of the British officers. Can direct the heroes to contacts for the Burmese crime syndicate if they ask the right questions.
- **Pao-Pei**, head of the Sarawak Trade Office in Singapore. She is particularly concerned about piracy, and is suspicious that Brunei might be quietly behind it. Has information on which shipping lanes are most at risk (mostly the ones to the east of Singapore).
- **Su Nila Aung**, operative in the local Burmese smuggling syndicate. Deals in weapons (mostly handguns). Her gang doesn’t steal automatons, because she knows doing that in the city is a good way to force a police crackdown. Can give the heroes the location of The Long-Named Man. “We have to work with the English all the time. We don’t want to make them mad.”

- **Mary Jane Clark Dickins**, British traveler, staying at the Adelphi Hotel. She doesn't know much about Singapore, though she has passed through the city a couple of times on her travels. She is surprisingly familiar with both the social practices and the workings of Japanese automatons. She explains this away with the fact that she has been living in Tokyo, but there may be more to her knowledge...

Important Information

- Various people know that Russian agents have been trying to acquire automatons by any means necessary, including grabbing them off the streets. This is why the rickshaw drivers get nervous whenever they see Russians.
- More in-depth investigation reveals that the Russians have stopped doing this in the last few weeks, suggesting they have found a steady source.
- Very in-depth investigation reveals that the head of the Russian secret service in Singapore is based on Pulau Jemaja, an island to the east. His name is Viktor Fyodorovich Kulikin (aka "The Long-Named Man").
- Other rumors: More airships than usual have gone missing recently. Sea pirates are still a problem, but not more than usual, although there have been some sea ships that have gone missing recently—strange because usually sea pirates just take the cargo they want and leave.

If the heroes are struggling to find clues, you can have them notice that two European men in strange hats (bowlers) are watching them. These men flee when spotted and lead the heroes to a mostly-abandoned warehouse with a desk that has a few stray documents written in Russian. These are months-old smuggling records of shipments to Pulau Jemaja.

Scene 3 - Getting on Top of Things

Once the heroes track down enough information to realize that the key to whatever is happening lies on Pulau Jemaja, they need to head to the island. They can get there either by air or by sea, depending partially on whether they have an aviator among the party. If they choose sea, they can hire a small steam-only island ferry. If they choose

air, they can use their own airship or hire one. The method they choose determines some of the details about the following combat, as outlined below.

Assuming the heroes are in something of a hurry, they are likely making the trip to Pulau Jemaja that night. The moon is out and bright enough for navigation, but there isn't any other traffic. When they are far out to sea, a shadow crosses the moon high above them (even if they are in an airship). Notice rolls at -2 allow the heroes to spot an airship flying high above them, out of which emerge several strange shadows.

These shadows are the winged Bruneian air pirates. No one has ever seen them and survived, as they typically attack and take over entire ships—both sea and air—and kill everyone aboard. Their fixed-wing gliders are also very unusual, though some characters may liken them to kites.

WINGED PIRATES (H+2 Extras)

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d4, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Pace: 6, **Parry:** 7, **Toughness:** 5

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Piloting d8

Edges: Two-Fisted

Equipment: Two Tekpi (Sai) – Str+d4, AP1, Parry +1 (cumulative)

The pirates attempt to drop onto the deck (or airbag), release their gliders, and then begin attacking the crew. If the heroes are travelling by sea, they cannot avoid the pirates. However, if the heroes are on an airship with player-character at the helm, they can attempt a Piloting roll as the shadows emerge to make it more difficult for the pirates to land. Each success and raise applies a -1 to their Agility roll to successfully land on the airship's deck. Any that fail do not participate in the combat, instead plummeting to the ocean below.

Once the heroes successfully fight off the attackers, they continue on their way to Pulau Jemaja. The other airship flees before they can chase it. But they may interrogate any of the pirates they have kept alive and discover that they are indeed from Brunei. These pirates can also reveal that Brunei has struck a deal with Russia to supply them 50% of the automatons they acquire through piracy. (They sell the rest on the black market to a variety of buyers.)

Scene 4 - The Wolf at the Heart of It All

After this attack, the heroes continue unhindered to Pulau Jemaja. They may choose to scout the island from above or by circling closely on the water, although doing so silently is tricky. This is a mostly private, tropical island that has a single European-style estate in view of the main beach. The heroes may approach directly or stealthily, which affects how alert their opponents are in the following combat.

Numerous patrols circle the estate, and other opponents join the guards once they have been alerted—either by engine noise or by the sound of gunfire as combat begins. Set up the fight around the main entrance and courtyard in front of the estate, with some of the guards patrolling the outside of the house and some of them stationed on the porch. For the two Wild Cards, read or paraphrase the descriptions below as they appear. (Consider saving the reveal on Hijikata Toshizō until the second or third round.)

RUSSIAN PATROLS (H Extras)

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Pace: 6, **Parry:** 5, **Toughness:** 5

Skills: Fighting d6, Shooting d8

Equipment: Colt 1860 Army Revolver – 12/24/48, 6 shots/ROF 1, 2d6+1 (Upgrade one or two to Sharps Carbine for increased difficulty.)

強 VIKTOR FYODOROVICH KULIKIN

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d10, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Charisma: 2, **Pace:** 6, **Parry:** 5, **Toughness:** 6

Skills: Electromagnetism d10, Fighting d6, Knowledge: Politics d10, Notice d8, Persuasion d6, Repair d8, Riding d6

Edges: Spark Wrangler, Capacitance (+4 pwr pts per extra d6 damage or -2 on the shutdown Vigor roll), Extended Range (+2 pwr pts for double range)

Equipment: Spark Wand, 3 Condensers

You see one European man who stands out from the others. He seems both hairier and meaner, if that is even be possible. He barks orders to the guards in a harsh, consonant-filled language and then raises a metal rod in his gloved hand. The rod is attached by some sort of cord to a leather satchel

he carries at his side. The satchel contains some controls that he works with his other hand.

(European and North American characters may recognize him as a spark wrangler. Asian characters have probably never even heard of such a thing.)

強 HIJIKATA TOSHIZŌ

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d10

Charisma: 0, **Pace:** 6, **Parry:** 8, **Toughness:** 7

Skills: Fighting d10, Healing d6, Intimidation d8, Investigation d8, Notice d10, Persuasion d6, Streetwise d6, Survival d8, Swimming d6, Taunt d6, Tracking d8

Edges: Apothecary Profession, Anesthesia, Florentine, First Strike, Weapon Stunning Strike (called shot at -2 to Shake), Quick Draw, Trademark Weapon (Katana)

Equipment: Katana, Wakizashi (Str+d6, Parry +1)

A Japanese man in his thirties steps up swiftly to join the fight. His movements are like flowing water, punctuated with a notable metallic clink as he draws both of his swords. His uniform looks like a modified version of traditional upper-class Japanese dress, completely different from the modern, Western-inspired uniforms of the Meiji Empire.

(Japanese characters may recognize the Shinsengumi-style uniform of an officer of the Republic of Ezo.)



Hijikata Toshizō

During the combat the heroes may capture or kill the two Wild Cards. The choice is up to them. If they capture one or both of them, they may have more options moving forward. However, they can acquire the following information either through questioning or by investigating the records throughout the estate:

- This estate is owned by Prince Grigorii, who is listed as the Russian Ambassador to the Pacific Region. He is not here now, so presumably he has other estates elsewhere.
- The Japanese official is Hijikata Toshizō, the Assistant Army Minister for the Republic of Ezo. Russia and Ezo both consider the Meiji Empire an enemy, but Ezo has leaned more traditional and anti-Western. The fact that they are allying more closely with Russia suggests a certain amount of desperation.
- There are no automatons on the island now, but Pulau Jemaja has indeed acted as a transfer point for stolen and smuggled automatons to Russia. Since the Singapore crackdown, all of them have come from Bruneian pirate attacks.
- Records here indicate that the Bruneian pirate vessels are traveling with letters of marque, which means that the Bruneian government is specifically advocating the attacks. This is strange, since Brunei doesn't seem to have the authority to put together admiralty courts or the infrastructure to handle all the ships they are taking in. What are they doing with these vessels? Is someone else helping them?

Epilogue

You have several options of where you could go from here. The closest would be Brunei, where you can investigate who is funding the privateering and hopefully do something to stop it.

You know that Russia is involved somehow, but getting there would be extremely difficult. You are probably better off trying to locate Prince Grigorii. But you will need a few more leads before you tackle that line of investigation.

And then there's the Republic of Ezo. You're not likely to be welcome there, [especially since you've killed an Assistant Army Minister / but you may be able to ransom their Assistant Army Minister]. That path certainly leads into an active

war zone that includes both naval and air blockades, so it will not be the safest option.

Whatever you choose, one thing is clear: the fate of nations and the well-being of automatons throughout the world depends on your actions!



[Note – We use “H” in numbering extras to equal the number of heroes. So H+2 would be 2 more than the number of people playing.]

If you are interested in exploring this setting further, be sure to check out Steamsapes: Asia, available now at DriveThruRPG and Studio 2 Publishing!



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