



# Victorian Gothic & Steampunk

Volume 1 Issue 8 • September 2015

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{ Cover art by Dallas Higdon }

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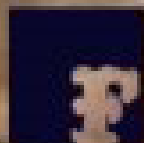


# Apparatus Obsolevit!

W w w . A p p a r a t u s O b s o l e v i t . C o m

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# Ariel Dixon: A Jewel of the Steampunk Desert

By Kasandra Zavrie-Higdon

As it often seems, you find the most interesting and wonderful things as you fall down the rabbit hole known as the internet. One late night, as I sit at my computer just surfing the global electrical interconnecting computational device for new and beautiful costuming ideas, I ran across this unique young lady doing something I hadn't seen before in the Steampunk world; she was wearing a sari. She was bejeweled and geared, all decked out with goggles and a pistol. It was the most unique and wonderful personal interpretation of the genre that I had ever seen. So intrigued, I contacted her and asked her if she would do me the honor of an interview. I caught up with her via the electronic postal service and asked her a few questions.

**VGS:** Tell us a little bit about yourself, what got you into steampunk?

**Ariel:** *I was Born and raised in Miami, Florida, lived in the magic city all my life. I'm a makeup artist by day, chef by night, and a cosplayer 24 hours. I live to be creative. I first learned about steampunk when I went to an outland armor panel at Florida's Supercon. They really opened up my eyes to the world of steampunk.*



**VGS: How long have you been doing cosplay?**

**Ariel:** *I have been in cosplay for 5 years now. Steampunk was my first cosplay costume I made.*

**VGS: Who or what inspired your steampunk persona?**

**Ariel:** *My Bollywood steampunk persona, Sunahala Registana, is a mix of both people and culture. The Indian tribe call the Rabari, inspired some of my character life style. As for her look and style, I pick pieces here and there from different Bollywood films. The Bollywood film, "Jodhaa Akbar", is my top reference to use. The color and style of the movie is my favorite.*

**Here the full bio on Sunahala Registana:**

*She is an Indian girl born and raised in Rajasthan, sunny desert of India. Her father named her after the beautiful land she was born in (Sunahala: Golden, Registana: Desert). She is a part of tribe called Rabari, a tribe that has lived for 1000 of year in the desserts of India. She Lives in a desert village with her tribe that is a mix of Indian tradition and steam power living. Her father is a well respected creator of the town. He created industrial machines call sand riders, that help the tribe ride the large desert sand dunes and hill. The sand riders are important to the tribe since it helps send and receives goods to and from market. They are much faster than dessert horses, so it is preferred to all in the tribe. Sunahalā is smart girl, free spirited, and loves riding through the sand of her land. She is a skilful swordsman and is handy with a gun. She works side by side*



*with her father, working on new inventions and new way of improving the sand riders (her favorite toy). The tribe never wastes anything in their village. So some things that might be considered waste to others are vital things for them. Sunahalā likes to use the extra spare gear that her and her father uses to create the sand riders and turn them into beautiful and unique jewelry pieces. The women in the Rabari tribe decorate*

*themselves in many pieces of jewelry on a daily bases (a mix of tradition and competition). She creates her jewelry as her way to keeping tradition and stand out in the tribe.*

**VGS: When people think of steampunk, Bollywood isn't their first thought. What made you decide to do Bollywood?**





**Ariel:** *I have always been a fan of Indian culture. The fashions that they show in their movies really mesmerize and fascinated me. I really got the idea to do my Bollywood steampunk when I saw a captain Nemo cosplay and the idea just pop in my head.*

**VGS:** **How many Bollywood steampunk outfits do you currently have? Are there going to be more?**

**Ariel:** *There are three completed looks that I have done. My persona will have more looks to come. Each*

*outfit is working with her personality and tasks at hand that she needs to do.*

**VGS:** **Do you have any other steampunk personae and if so, what are they?**

**Ariel:** *I have two more Personas. They are the first personas I created before my Bollywood steampunk persona, Sunahala Registana.*

**Lady Jacqueline A.K.A Black Scarlet:**

*Lady Jacqueline is a wild lady from the 1900 Wild West era. She is known as black scarlet, lady of the wind that never stays in one place for very long. She runs with a different crowd, being both good and bad, and does jobs that interest her as well as for pay. She is a specialist in fire artillery and chemical engineering, often combined both for a deadlier weapon. It's a skill she learned from her father, a man that created and sold deadly weapon to anyone with the highest bid. After losing her father from a deal on bad, she learns from a young age to rely only on herself and trust no one. Working in the business that she does, these are words that will help her live longer.*

**Miss Novelia Pincer Bio:**

*She is an intelligent lady of the 1900s Victorian era. As a daughter of an airship captain for the British military, she always was expected to go along her father footsteps. She shocks all when she places herself as an airship engineer instead of the glamorous airship captain. Her dream is to build her own airship which leads her more along the line of engineering work. She fell in love*



with an amazing wonderland of the ships inner working and plans to builder her own airship. She wasn't built for military life like her father, and wants a more free spirited life. However, she joins the military anyway to gain knowledge of on building high end airships to apply to her own designs. She's not a big fan of weapons of any kind, but knows how

to use a gun and keeps one on hand for safety reason. She's more into her tools and would prefer to use her tools as weapons if she can.

**VGS:** Anything at all that you would like to share with people just getting into steampunk or related genres?

**Ariel:** There is one rule of thumb I always remember when coming up with my steampunk look designs; there is no "one way" to steampunk. Never put limitation on your creativity. The ideas you can come up with are truly endless.

And indeed they are.





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# Twisted Skies- An Ever Evolving Card Game

by Lady Bella Morgana

After portal jumping and drinking with pirates, I have somehow stumbled on a dimension where there are no steam powered airships. (Looks like there isn't much of anything steampowered.)

The year is 2015. Electronics have taken over the world. This thing called the internet lets people grab answers to whatever dying questions they have; Instantly summon those answers. Tea time is barely a thing but instead people drink soda and many varieties of coffee throughout the day. Gun duels never happen, but trolling does.

While investigating this internet, I stumbled on something – my friends from the RAS Il Trovatore. I was quite shocked that that ship, among many other airships, had somehow reached this dimension of a place with nothing steam powered.

I noticed there were so many other airships that I have not come across yet and still need to. I needed to reach this gentleman who has seen my world and the people I have met. (And some whom I will meet in the future.) This is my question and answer segment for those who live in this dimension with no real steam and for those who play and live by steampunk.



Photo courtesy Jim Trent, creative Director for Mad Raven Productions

Here is my interview with Jim Trent, the creative Director for *Mad Raven Productions*.

## What inspired you to create this card game?

The imagination and creativity of Steampunks is truly unique. Many Steampunks love to game and develop fun ideas using their Steampunk personae. I was discussing the possibility of a card game with friends on very talented Airship Isabella and they encouraged me to develop it. Using ideas and mechan-





ics from games Steampunks already enjoy, I wanted to develop a game that anyone could be a part of.

## Tell us about the world of Twisted Skies.

The world of Twisted Skies is the Steampunk Multiverse. A popular concept in the Steampunk community. There are a lot of different settings, genres, and worlds in Steampunk fandom so the Multiverse claims that all are different Realities in a vast Multiverse which is interconnected. Steampunks may travel between these world in their magnificent Airship which travel through time and space. This means that any Steampunk character or setting may be included in the game. The Multiverse has evil, good and not-so-good factions which vie with each other over control of the various Steampunk worlds.

## How do you play Twisted Skies?

Twisted Skies is primarily a round the table game with a mechanic that

encourages players to trade cards and assist each other early in the game and then double cross and oppose each other late in the game.

Each player gets an Airship Card which define what Multiverse faction they are aligned with and how quickly they can win the game. Small agile ships win quicker but are susceptible to attack due to being lightly armed and big ships pack more combat punch but take longer to win. Players advance through turns until one achieves their victory total in points and along the way cards are played by all players to help or hurt players progress. Cards inspire all form of interesting story twists from Ninja attacks to Zombie infestations.

Players may purchase the Twisted Skies: Retribution expansion which

has an alternate rules set to allow players to build custom decks dedicated to one of the Multiverse factions. They can then play each other head to head in a two player competitive environment. Cards can be used with either ruleset.

## How many people can play at a time?

The base game set works great for 4-8 players but as expansion sets are added more and more players can be added.

There is no limit to how many can play.

## How many extensions to the game are there?

Besides the main set there are three expansions and four promotional sets. The promotional sets are special cards that promote Steampunk vendors, events, and personalities such as the Airship Ambassador or *TeslaCon*. Expansions typically are made in cooperation with Steampunk clubs and groups in a certain geographic area such as Desert Steam which highlights the Steampunks in the American Southwest. We have three new expansions planned for 2015; one which will feature Steampunks from the American Midwest and, two great sets will add land and sea vehicles to the game.

## Where can you purchase your game and generally how much does it run?

All of our games are available online at Drive Thru Cards.com, the exact address is:

<http://www.drivethrucards.com/product/118343/Twisted-Skies-Steam-punk-Card-Game>

Photo courtesy Jim Trent, creative Director for Mad Raven Productions



## Is there anything else you wish to say?

We're always looking for new Airships, events and just great Steampunk characters that would love to be featured on cards in the game. Twisted Skies is a labor of love for the Steampunk community and it's

our pleasure at *Mad Raven Productions* to feature the imagination and creativity of the Steampunk community in this fun product. We'd love to hear from more Steampunks about featuring them and their activities in our game!

# Interview with Chef Erica A. Johnson

## Steampunk Hunter's Stew

By Chef Maritza Rodriguez-Brown

Chef Erica Anne Johnson always has a smile on her face, especially while cooking. Anyone can tell that she really enjoys what she does and has a deep devotion for cooking. Chef Johnson has been cooking for nine years. Her true passion for cooking started when she was in the eighth grade. Chef Johnson has a talented palate. She is able to taste multiple ingredients and can come up with different flavor combinations for a variety of recipes.

This 22-year-old chef is going to have a very bright future in the culinary arts. In my years of being in the food industry I have never been around a young chef who has had as much dedication, excitement and eagerness in the arts as much as Chef Erica Johnson. She has a real zest and knack about her, which, in the future, others will see that sparkle and that future potential talent that I see. She has talent now, but this is nothing compared to what I know she is going to be capable of in the future. Look out Guy Fieri, Chef Erica Johnson is coming!

Chef Johnson is going to Tidewater Community College in Virginia. She is working on getting her degree in restaurant management. Chef John-

son will graduate in the fall of 2015. The following is my interview with Chef Erica A. Johnson.

### Where have you worked professionally?

Chef Johnson: *I have worked at the Founders Inn and Spa in 2011 as a cook. I would help out every culinary department (bakery, banquet, employee café, restaurant, etc.). I also worked at Norfolk International Airport from 2012 until 2014. I worked at many different restaurants there, and I was a cook, hostess, bar back, dishwasher, cashier, and food runner. The restaurants I worked were Back Bay Bistro, Home Team, Pizza Hut, Phillips Seafood, Great American Bagel, Tapenade, and James River Bar and Grill.*

### Where do you work now?

Chef Johnson: *I currently work at Farm Fresh as a Chef at the Chef Corner inside the supermarket. I along with the other chefs make fresh food every day to sell to the customers.*

### Do you do any cooking as a side gig besides your main professional job?

Chef Johnson: *I don't have a side cooking gig, but I really want to try*



Chef Erica A. Johnson  
Photo by Maritza Rodriguez-Brown

*to start one. I would do a catering gig. I would be willing to do any kind of food or desserts. Doing something like that would challenge to me, which is the best part of cooking to me.*

### Do you have a professional websites, Facebook page or other social networks that we can find you on?

Chef Johnson: *Yes I do have a social media site and a professional site that you could find me on. The social media site you can find me on is Facebook under my name. The pro-*

professional site you can find me under is LinkedIn under Erica Johnson.

**If you were hiring people to work for you, would you hire people with or without culinary school background? Why or why not?**

*Chef Johnson: I would and wouldn't hire people with culinary school background and without culinary background. I would see the person's past experiences and their skills they have listed on their resume. Then I would put them to the test in a kitchen so I can see their skills and test their knowledge to see if they have what it takes to work in a restaurant kitchen.*

**Who was your mentor?**

*Chef Johnson: My mentor was my high school culinary teacher, Linda Lauman. Being in her class for two years taught me a lot. She always pushed me. She had always encouraged me and helped me better myself not only as a chef, but as a person. I learned all the basics I needed to know in the restaurant business with her, and after graduating and going to college my knowledge has expanded. Without the basic knowledge through her class, I probably wouldn't have understood everything as well, and without her pushing me and driving me to reach my dreams I wouldn't have been where I am today.*

**What is your favorite product to work with?**

*Chef Johnson: My favorite product to work with pasta, because there are so many different dishes you can*



**Chef Erica A. Johnson prepares meat for the "Steampunk Hunter's Stew."**  
Photo by Maritza Rodriguez-Brown

*make with it. The varieties of pastas and sauces are so enormous the possibilities of dishes are endless.*

**If someone came to you to make a huge Steampunk, Victorian or Gothic product for a party or convention here in Virginia, how would you go about making the product? What type of products would**

**you make? Would they be Victorian in theme?**

*Chef Johnson: If someone came to me about making a product for a huge Victorian, Steampunk, or Gothic party or convention it would be a cake. I would make a 3 tier cake with a steampunk theme to it. It would be a marble cake with a layer of cream cheese icing. There would also be a marshmallow fondant that has a light brown color to it that*



Chef Erica A. Johnson prepares Steampunk Hunter's Stew. See recipe on opposite page.  
Photo by Maritza Rodriguez-Brown

would cover each layer. With the extra fondant, I would make chains, gears, pipes, leaves, and flowers. The gears, chains, pipes, and leaves would have an edible spray paint on them so I can give it a shiny copper look to them. The flowers would be spray painted different colors of red, yellow, and purple. The middle layer would have a corset made out of fondant strips and for the lace it would be cream cheese icing but turned into the color black.

**If a couple wanted a Steampunk/Victorian meal for their wedding, where would you get your inspiration?**

Chef Johnson: *I would get my inspiration for a Steampunk/Victorian isn't a very popular theme or choice of meal in this area, so I would need to look up more dishes that would be good to use at a wedding. Once I have found some that might sound good I would cook them and get*

*the couple together with me to see what they think of the dishes.*

**What flavor combination would you use for meats, starch or veggies?**

Chef Johnson: *The flavor combination I like to use is garlic, Italian seasoning, salt and pepper. Depending on what I am cooking, I might even add curry and cumin to the mix.*

**In your opinion, what is the hardest thing about being a Chef?**

Chef Johnson: *The hardest thing about being a chef to me is time management. If you have three or four things to do at once, and you're on a time schedule, you really have to plan out how you want to go about it to make sure it gets done on time. Also, a chef has to make sure that they add some extra time in, just in case they encounter a problem that will set them behind. You definitely do a lot of last minute problem solving when you're a cook or a chef and sometimes it can be hard to plan for something to happen.*

**What are the best things about being a Chef?**

Chef Johnson: *The best thing about being a chef is seeing people happy when they eat the food you make. Each happy person is another feeling of success to me. I want to give a person a new experience when they eat what I cook. The passion I have for cooking, and to make people at least a little happier by food is why I wanted this career path.*

## Steampunk Hunter's Stew

### Ingredients:

- ½ pound sliced bacon, diced
- 2-1/2 pounds red potatoes thinly sliced
- 2 medium onions, sliced
- 1-1/2 pounds boneless venison steak, cubed
- 2 cans cream-style corn
- 3 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- ½ to 1 teaspoon seasoned sea salt
- ½ teaspoon curry
- ½ teaspoon white pepper
- ½ teaspoon chipotle powder
- 1 tablespoon of thyme

### Directions:

Put diced bacon in pan and cook until crispy set aside. Cut the potatoes thin and put into the crockpot. Slice the onions and put into the crockpot. Cut the venison steaks into 1 to 2 inch cubes and put in a bowl and season with all the dry ingredients, then put it into the crockpot. Add the Worcestershire sauce to the crockpot. Open the cans of corn and pour all of it into the crockpot. That helps give it the nice gravy texture along with the meat juices. Finally, add the crispy bacon to the top and cook in the crockpot on a low setting for six hours or on a high setting for four hours.

Photos by Maritza Rodriguez-Brown



## What do you think are the most important skills to have as a Chef?

Chef Johnson: *The most important skills to have is time management, customer service, problem solving, and organizational skills. For you to have the best time management you need to be great at solving problems and being organized. Without them you will probably need to make sure you have some extra time to accomplish what you need to do. Sometimes as a cook or chef you will talk to and handle customers so you need to make sure you have customer service skills.*

## What is your ultimate favorite dessert to eat?

Chef Johnson: *My favorite dessert to eat is ice cream. Especially orange sherbet and vanilla swirled together with some sprinkles on top.*

## What is your favorite meal to make?

Chef Johnson: *My favorite meal to make is chicken Alfredo. I love trying to make different versions of it to see if I can make it better each time, or even try to make it better than a restaurant can.*

## What is the hardest meal for you to make?

Chef Johnson: *I couldn't think of the hardest meal for me to make, but I could think of a dessert that I tried to make once that was really hard which is a chocolate mille-feuilles. This recipe takes practice when it comes to the starter dough and pastry dough. When cooking it off the*

*texture came out wrong and got a little burnt.*

## What is the easiest meal for you to make?

Chef Johnson: *The easiest meal for me to make is homemade mac and cheese. It's not only easy to make, but it is sooooo good.*

## Who is your favorite television Chef?

Chef Johnson: *My favorite TV show is Guy Fieri. I love his shows, and you can tell he has a true passion for cooking. On his shows, he's a real down to Earth chef with a cool look. Most chefs on TV these days may have a passion for food and cooking, but just don't make it seem like they're enjoying it. Guy Fieri makes it look fun and exciting to learn and to cook.*

## Who is your favorite non-television Chef?

Chef Johnson: *My favorite non-TV chef is Chef Eric Doarnberger. I got to work with him for a little while, and the way he operated in the kitchen was fantastic. Even if things were hectic you would still see him and everyone else having fun. You can tell his passion for cooking by the way he had a good time at work, and worked hard to make things go as smooth as possible and get things done when they needed to be done. Not only do things get done, but it was like a non-work atmosphere. When you have a true passion it's not as much work as it is your hobby, and that's how I felt working under him.*

## What advice would you give to up-and-coming Chefs?

Chef Johnson: *The advice I would give to up and coming chefs is to practice your knife skills as much as possible. Also with each job or volunteer event you do always take it in and learn from it. Each event you ever do is a great opportunity to learn and see what kind of career future you may be having. Seeing what goes on at all different events will help open your eyes to see what you may experience in the future. Volunteer cooking will help get the cooking experience you need and it'll help with some job opportunities in the future.*

## The Taste Testers...



## Martin Arevalo; Nursing Student and Deli Clerk Virginia:

*"The overall look of the food is a bit off putting. Usually stews nowadays require a bit more color. I see that the stew has potatoes and onions and those are the traditional occu-*

pants of the pot of stews. The bacon is a new touch for me, I like it.

"The taste is somewhat peculiar. I'm sure it's not the Chef's fault. The spice used is a bit strong, somewhat spicy is fine, but I found it unusual especially with this particular stew and type of meat. The bacon adds some nice salt to the food, but not enough to block the intense herbal taste from the herbs.

"The meat I can taste is venison, a very much sought after meat in the past (especially in the Victorian times) and even today! The meat is nice and tender, but of course it has that visceral smell associated with that type of meat. Not the Chef's fault again, it's just the way that meat is. I like the stew, it's acceptable, it's not what I am used to, and I am used modern beef stews. I think the spice was a bit strong, maybe cut down on it next time. I did like the idea of this stew. Very nice job to the Chef."



**Mollie Orzechowski; Deli Clerk:**

"As I look at this stew I can see nice potatoes, meat, bacon, nice brown gravy and onions which are things that I highly enjoy in a good stew. I can taste the different textures. The textures are wonderful. I did notice right away that it is missing some salt. I also notice that there is corn mixed in with this stew. That is a nice touch. The meat is cooked well done and it's nice and soft, but it is also a bit dry. I believe the meat is dry because it is venison.

"I would have preferred beef, but maybe this is what people ate more of in the Victorian time because it was easy to hunt and they could eat more of it, instead of buying expensive beef. Now venison is expensive and beef is cheaper. Go figure. In Victorian times this could feed a family for a few days especially because they had a lot of deer to hunt, it was hearty, and hey the meat was free. This was something that they could have had cooking on the stove all day and not worry about it so much.

"I am not sure if thyme was put in it but whatever herb it is that was used, put a little less. I found it to be a bit on the spicy side as well. Also to prevent the dryness of the venison happening again, I would suggest searing the venison on the stove before putting it in the crockpot. I think that would keep the juices in better. I would make this stew for my family, but I would use beef not venison. I am not a big fan of venison. Overall, the stew had a very nice texture, nice color and I would recommend it to those who love venison meat. I will try the recipe with beef myself. Thanks Chef for this cool recipe!"

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# Cogs & Roses

By Kasandra Zavrie-Higdon

Charles Tritt and Julianne Hunter opened up their home to host this beautiful event. It was a private party, held rain or shine, at an 1880's farmstead in Mequon, Wisconsin. Food and beverage were provided, guests were asked not to bring anything.

Proper attire was required at this dress-for-it event. Steampunk, diesel punk, yacht rock, neo-Victorian, and neo-Edwardian outfits were most welcome. Jeans and t-shirts were not. Nautically-inspired looks were encouraged but not required. It was a lot of fun to see everyone in their finest steampunk attire.







Cogs & Roses: A steampunk event hosted by Charles Tritt and Julianne Hunter in their home. Mequon, WI.  
Photo by Kasandra Zavrie-Higdon

# Midsummer Masquerade

By Sarah Harris

Saturday, July 11th, was the inaugural *Midsummer Masquerade* to raise money for the *Midwinter Gaming Convention* in Milwaukee. There was a small gathering of people in attendance for this wonderful event at the historic *Pittsburgh Paint Building*. With minimal preparation time available, (advertising, meal planning, drink planning, and theme planning), attendance of over fifty is fantastic!

All attendees were costumed and/or dressed to the nines. The theme was “Wonderland.” Not everyone quite fit the Wonderland ideal, but all looked wonderful. In my evening’s conversations, I learned that a staggering number of attendees created their costumes out of love, rather than strictly buying them. May it be physically taking research and creating costume pieces, renting costumes, or thrift shopping, these masqueraders definitely used their hearts in this queenly masquerade.

*Midsummer Masquerade* itself was an event made of love, dedication, and a touch of whimsy. When I look back through the looking glass at this event, I will have many fond memories, featuring characters I hope to see again, at the *Midwinter Gaming Convention*.





For more information about the *Midsummer Masquerade* and the *Midwinter Gaming Convention*, see the web pages below:

[https://www.facebook.com/](https://www.facebook.com/MidsummerMasquerade?fref=ts)

[MidsummerMasquerade?fref=ts](https://www.facebook.com/MidsummerMasquerade?fref=ts)

<http://www.midwintergamingconvention.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/midwintergamingconvention>









# “Rapping, Rapping at My Chamber Door”: The Birth of Spiritualism

By Michelle L. Hamilton

Mysterious events were occurring in Hydesville, New York during the spring of 1848. At the center of the mystery was the Fox family who had recently moved into the quite farming community located within the Finger Lakes district. The family consisted of John David Fox, his wife Margaret and their two daughters: fourteen-year-old Maggie and eleven year-old Kate. Shortly after moving into their new home, a simple clapboard cottage surrounded by lush farmland, the girls reported to their neighbors that the family had been hearing mysterious knocks on the walls after everyone in the house had gone to bed. The girls were rebuffed. It was nothing more than childish fancy inspired by hearing their new home settling the adults concluded. But the knocks continued, alarming the girl's parents who summoned their neighbors to hear the mysterious raps for themselves. What the neighbors heard was shocking, not only was there strange raps and bangs coming from the house, but the sounds proved to be intelligent in nature.

Kate Fox in a spirit of jest named the entity “Mr. Splitfoot,” a common nickname for the Devil. A form of communication was developed with one rap for “yes” and two raps for “no.” For longer answers the ques-

tioner would call out the alphabet and the spirit would rap at the appropriate letter. After a series of questions the Fox family and their baffled neighbors concluded that the noise was being caused by the spirit of a peddler named Charles B. Rosma who claimed that he had been murdered in the house and had been buried in the cellar by the homes previous owner. The spirit proved friendly and talkative, after relating the story of his sad demise Rosma engaged his visitors in conversation, relating gossip about the communities' residents, and challenging visiting clergy to lively theological debates. Shortly Rosma was joined by other talkative ghosts, including the spirit of a neighbor's deceased child. It soon became clear that the activity increased when Maggie and Kate Fox were present. The girls quickly adapted to all of the attention and began to act as a translator for the spirits. Maggie and Kate relished the attention that they were now receiving. The events in the farmhouse quickly escalated into more than just a simple haunting. Out of the mysterious knocks and raps that plagued the Fox family's slumber emerged a religious movement that proclaimed it was possible to speak with the dead. The movement was coined “Spiritualism” and would become the fastest growing religious movement in mid-19<sup>th</sup> century America, claiming over a million adherents in the United States alone.

The events at Hydesville were not the first time that mysterious, paranormal activity had been reported in the United States. The European immigrants who flocked to America's shores starting in the seventh-century brought not only their culture but their superstitions. Before the Civil War most Americans could trace their heritage back to England, Germany, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. All of these cultures embraced a vibrant folk tradition which believed in ghosts, omens, and other supernatural beings. Despite coming to the new world these immigrants held firm to their folk beliefs and shared ghost stories with their children during long winter nights surrounded around the fire for warmth and protection. During the nation's founding era life was unpredictable and dangerous on the unsettled frontier where attacks from Native Americans was a real danger and death could come at any time. In an attempt to control their world, Americans from the North and South believed in omens and practiced folk magic to protect their loved ones. One well known haunting occurred at the farm of John Bell in Tennessee in 1817 when the family was terrorized by a malevolent witch who only ceased her reign of terror until she had killed the family patriarch.

While many Americans continued to cling to the traditions and superstitions of their forefathers, the na-

tion was gripped by an era of unprecedented change. During this period new innovations changed forever how Americans traveled and communicated. For the first time information could be transmitted in seconds across electric telegraph wires. Travel which would have taken weeks was accomplished in days as Americans boarded steamboats and railroads. With this increased speed of travel, news could travel faster, so what was once an isolated event could now be broadcast to a larger audience in a matter of days. Out of this climate of change and progress, many Americans grew apprehensive. For many, life was changing too fast, during these times of uncertainty people instinctively turned towards religion for comfort. However in this “modern age” many were unsatisfied by traditional Christianity which still borrowed heavily from the strict Calvinism of their Puritan forefathers. Adherents of Calvinism upheld the belief in infant damnation and original sin with sermons full of fire and brimstone. Clearly what was needed was a new Protestant tradition for a new era.

As news of the Fox sisters amazing talents quickly spread throughout the countryside the girls were forced to re-locate to Rochester, New York. In Rochester, Spiritualism converted its first followers. Isaac and Amy Post, radical Quakers whose home was a center for Rochester’s social activism opened their home to Maggie and Kate. The Posts were committed to a variety of political causes including abolition, temperance, prison reform, and women’s rights. Isaac and Amy Post offered Maggie and Kate a safe haven, away from the pressing crowds of curiosity seekers who had come to witness a miracle or a fraud at the Fox homestead. Away from the crowds, Mag-

gie and Kate began to improve their skills as mediums, for the spirits of Hydesville had moved with the girls to Rochester. While residing with the Posts, Maggie and Kate Fox displayed their abilities to their hosts. The Posts were entranced and had their guests hold *séances* for their friends William Cullen Bryant, James Fennimore Cooper, Sojourner Truth, William Lloyd Garrison, and Frederick Douglass. The spirits were more than happy to perform for such an august gathering. Soon the spirits from Hydesville were joined by new spirits from Rochester. It turned out that spirits were everywhere and they were more than happy to communicate with grieving family and friends. But the spirits were not content with small *séances* held in the Posts’ parlor, they wanted a larger audience to spread their message. Soon the spirits were demanding that Maggie and Kate take their *séances* public. In response to the pleas of the spirits, supporters of Maggie and Kate rented out theatres and lecture halls. The Fox sisters became instant celebrities and capitalized on their fame by traveling throughout the North.

The Fox sisters lecture tour proved to be a success. Thousands clamored to see the teenage mediums and where the sisters performed Spiritualist communities were quickly established by enthusiastic converts. Spiritualism appealed to individuals who were not comforted by traditional Christian ideology. In a period when parents expected the loss of at least one child, Spiritualism maintained that life continued after physical death and that it was possible to contact the dead. The spirits assured grieving audiences that heaven was a welcoming, loving place and that life there was just like life on earth—only without pain

and suffering. This was immensely comforting to countless grieving mothers. During the first half of the nineteenth-century children were particularly vulnerable to childhood illness. One-half of all deaths in the United States during this period were children under the age of five.

Unlike other religious institutions that flourished during this period which included Methodism and Mormonism, Spiritualism was more of a belief system than an established religion. The Fox sisters and their early followers never established a centralized leadership or an official church doctrine. Instead a group of believers and skeptics gathered in a parlor and conducted *séances*. With the rising popularity of Spiritualism the movement gathered criticism from Protestant clergy who viewed communication with the dead as demonic. Spiritualism also attracted its fair share of frauds and charlatans who conned grieving family members out of their hard earned money and instead produced elaborate tricks and illusions. Despite instances of fraud the majority of Spiritualists remained firm in their belief in the possibility of spirit communication.

Spiritualism was embraced across the nation, particularly in the North with Spiritualist centers located in New York City, Boston, and Philadelphia. One of the reasons for Spiritualism’s success in the North was due to the movement’s popularity among social reformers which included abolitionists and feminists. While Spiritualism found centers in the South particularly in New Orleans, Charleston, and Richmond, the movement did not develop as wide of a base in the South due to its appeal with abolitionists.

Unlike other religious groups, women played a key role as converts and mediums. Women were viewed as more pure and innocent than men, which made them ideal mediums to channel the spirits of the dead as they had not been tainted by the evils of the world. Female mediums capitalized on their popularity with audiences and used their status to champion controversial social and political causes. Besides relaying messages from deceased children, the spirits had a lot to say about various reform movements—in particular the abolition of African American slaves. Female mediums were allowed to address these issues because they insisted that they were simply relaying the messages of the spirits. They were simply the conduit of the spirits. This offended many in the South, adding to the strain between the North and the South over slavery which led to the Civil War.

By the eve of the Civil War Spiritualism had grown from a small home grown movement centered on two teenaged sisters to a movement which embraced social activism and was the one of the few religious groups which offered women a prominent voice and leadership opportunities. Spiritualism even became a part of American culture during the 1850's with the introduction of the planchette an early version of the Ouija board which turned

holding *séances* into a parlor game. Believers could subscribe to Spiritualist newspapers with titles such as *The Spiritualist Register* and *Banner of Light* to share messages and the latest developments from the Other Side. The death and destruction of the Civil War would attract thousands of grieving women to seek solace from Spiritualism. Perhaps the most famous Spiritualists Mary Lincoln and Queen Victoria became active followers of Spiritualism during the 1860s. Mary Lincoln, Queen Victoria and countless others insured that Spiritualism would continue to grow throughout the nineteenth-century—but that is a story for another day!

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## Author Biography

Michelle L. Hamilton earned her master's degree in history from San Diego State University in 2013. Her work can be seen in the magazine *The Citizens' Companion*. Fascinated with the American Civil War and the life of Abraham Lincoln since as long as she could remember Hamilton pursued her love of history by working as a docent at the Whaley House Museum in Old Town San Diego.

In her free time, Hamilton is a Civil War and 18<sup>th</sup>-century living historian. Born and raised in California, Hamilton now resides in Ruther Glen, Virginia and is a docent at the Mary Washington House in Fredericksburg, Virginia. *"I Would Be Drowned in Tears": Spiritualism in Abraham Lincoln's White House* is her first book. You can follow her at her blog <http://michelle-hamilton.blogspot.com>.

# The Taming of the Badger

## A Practical Treatise on the shaving brush.

By Tony Peterson, Owner of  
BareKnuckleBarbery.com

So, you've decided you want to try wet shaving. You saw it in a movie once, you want to be old-timey, or you're frankly sick of canned goo. Well, then, you need a brush! Off you go to your local intertubes, only to be overwhelmed by a glut of choices and unfamiliar terminology. Sound familiar?

Synthetic, Boar bristle, Pure Badger, Best Badger, Super Badger, Silvertip Badger... Super Silvertip Badger?! Who made this nonsense up, and what in the world does it mean? What brush is the best? Which is the best value? Which one is best for beginners? Wait, they come in different sizes, too? AAAAAARGH!

**Take a deep breath; we'll get through this together.**

The most important thing to remember when starting out in the world of wet shaving is that there is no such thing as the "Perfect Brush". There is only the brush that is perfect for you; and no, chances are it won't be the first one you buy. This does not mean that your first brush needs to be a waste of your hard-earned money. Wet shaving is a hobby. Like all hobbies, collecting tools for the job is half the fun! Armed with a little knowledge, you can be confident that your first foray into the immensely



The apparently endless variety of shaving brushes on the market can seem daunting.  
Photo by Tony Peterson



Synthetic nylon brushes are a surprisingly good choice for shavers who object to animal products. Note the crimped fibers and the very fine tips. These are hallmarks of a quality synthetic brush. Photo by Tony Peterson.

enjoyable world of wet shaving will be a positive one.

## What makes a good brush?

To answer that, one must first understand that the primary function of a brush is NOT to paint your skin. The most important job the brush does is to incorporate water (and a little air) into a dense soap or cream to build lather. The soap or cream on its own won't cut it. The lather's job is to hold water on the skin to lubricate the blade and to suspend the hair (more on this in an upcoming article). Think foam machine, not paintbrush. Using the brush to apply the lather is just an added bonus!

In order to build lather, the brush must hold water. Water retention is the

most important consideration when shopping for a shaving brush. How the brush looks, feels, smells, et cetera are secondary (and largely subjective) considerations.

Armed with this information, we can start to parse the seemingly endless choices into three major categories, in order of water-holding capability: synthetic, boar bristle, and badger hair. From there, we can explore each category in greater detail.

## Synthetic Hair

"Synthetic" refers to any variety of man-made bristle. Nylon, hypo-allergenic, and animal-free are all terms used in the industry for synthetic brushes. Many wet shavers dismiss synthetics and insist that their only advantage is

cost, but that's not the whole story. While it is true that of the three categories, a synthetic brush offers the lowest water retention, but that does not mean it is without its own distinct advantages.

It's animal-friendly. Not everyone is okay with animal products. A synthetic brush means you can maintain your commitment to an animal-friendly ethos and still get your old-timey shave experience. Demand for an animal-free alternative is the primary reason we started carrying synthetic brushes at Bare Knuckle Barbery. I was skeptical of their success at first. Like most wet shavers, I had bought into the "Badger is the only brush" mentality. Once I started experimenting with the synthetic brush heads, however, the other benefits became apparent.

It's durable. Organic material rots if not cared for properly. This absolutely applies to animal hair brushes. Keeping your brush clean and dry is one of the major commandments of wet shaving. An animal hair brush left continually damp will mildew and smell like, well, rotting animal. This can pose a problem when allowing sufficient time to air dry properly just isn't feasible, like while traveling. I use a synthetic brush exclusively when I travel. It lives in my dopp kit. I have learned to compensate for the reduced water retention and have no problems building an acceptable lather. Since the synthetic hair strands themselves do not absorb water, a few flicks and maybe a quick blast with a hair dryer (if I'm feeling fastidious) and it is good to go. I never need to worry about it, and I know my Super Silvertip pride and joy is safe at home.

No animal smell. Animal hair brushes smell. The smell of Boar Bristle may lessen with time, and the smell of badger hair disappears completely if properly broken in, but some prefer to avoid the issue altogether with an aroma-free synthetic brush.

As with all three categories, not all synthetics are created equal. Many are coarse and have a rough skin feel. If shopping for a synthetic brush, spend the money for one with crimped hairs and very fine bristle tips.

## Boar Bristle

That \$5 el cheapo brush at your local pharmacy is likely boar bristle. Boar bristle brushes come from a special breed of Asian boar raised for its hair. The hair is harvested from the animal seasonally, not unlike sheep shearing. The primary advantage to boar hair is that it offers marginally better water retention over synthetic while retain-



ing a relatively low price tag. Most wet shavers feel the modest improvement in water retention is not sufficient to justify the drawbacks.

Boar hair breaks. Even the best badger hair brushes will shed hairs over time, but boar hair breaks much more easily. The boar hairs are hollow and taper more drastically than synthetic or badger hair, and this leads to brittleness

and bristles that are very stiff at the base and too soft at the tip.

Boar brushes continue to proliferate in the market for two reasons. The first reason is tradition. Boar bristle has been available for centuries. It was the only economical choice for brushes in the pre-plastics era. My father-in-law has used boar and badger brushes interchangeably for 50 years. The other reason they are so widely available is a



question of infrastructure. Boar bristle is cheap and readily available. The primary market for boar bristle is utility brushes. Have you seen those \$2 disposable “natural” paint brushes on the bottom shelf in the hardware store? They are exactly the same material as in boar bristle shaving brushes.

## Badger Hair

This is where things get *really* confusing.

Don’t worry— I’m here for you.

Before diving into the different grades of badger hair available on the market today, a little bit of clarification: No, these are not American

Badgers. Badgers are a protected species in North America. More than that, though, the hair of the American Badger (*Taxidea Taxus*) is unsuitable for shaving brushes. The hair that we as wet shavers covet comes from the Eurasian Badger (*Meles Meles*). All commercially available badger hair comes from mainland China. Yes, even the “European” brushes that cost more than a car payment are coming from the same region of China (possibly the same factory) as a lower-cost brush of a comparable grade. The rest is branding and marketing.

Regarding any concerns over harvesting animals for fur: The Eurasian badger is prolific in China. It is so abundant it is considered a nuisance animal and hunted for food. The pelts are then sold to brush manufacturers. So, not only are the badgers providing food, utilizing pelts that would otherwise go to waste makes economic and ecological sense. It is using as much of the animal as possible. Contrary to popular belief, the badger hair industry is a very different one than, say, the mink farming industry here in the U.S. It is more similar to American deer hunters selling hides to leather manufacturers. In fact, badger hunting in China is subject to stringent regulation (not unlike American hunting seasons) and there are protected reserve areas to prevent overharvesting.

Badger hair is the one plus ultra of shaving brush material because of its unique combination of physical characteristics. Not only does it offer the perfect amount of softness, badger hair is also one of the few animal hairs that actually absorbs water into the strands, similar to human hair. There are other animals with absorbent hair, but none with the

availability and uniformity of badger. If the difference in water retention between synthetic and boar bristle is negligible, the difference between boar and badger is astounding. A badger hair knot can triple in weight when properly hydrated. Not only that, badger hair will soften considerably when wet, so even a coarser grade, like pure (see below), will feel softer and lather better than the most expensive boar brush when hydrated.

**Bloom.** The other unique characteristic of badger hair brushes is something called bloom. As a badger hair brush is used, and the naturally occurring dirt and oils are washed away and replaced by glycerin from the soap or cream, the hair strands soften and any natural wave becomes more pronounced. The hairs push against each other, and the brush head spreads out, or blooms. Bloom is a good indicator of the quality of a brush.

**Does size matter?** C'mon, now stop giggling. Many badger hair brush manufacturers offer different sizes of brush heads. Size is expressed in millimeters. The first number is the diameter of the nylon base, or "plug" into which the individual hairs are seated. The second number is what is called "Loft". Loft is the length of the hair strands above the plug. The most common brush sizes are 22 and 24 millimeters in diameter (22mm is approximately 7/8") and between 65 and 70 millimeters of loft. Larger and smaller brushes are available, but this is a good "all-purpose" size range. For a new wet shaver, keep your search in this range, and you can be confident you will not end up with a brush that is disappointingly small, or one that is too large and difficult to control. To eliminate confusion,



all of the brushes available on the Bare Knuckle Barbery website are 22mmx65mm.

What's in a name? There are 3 basic grades of badger hair: *Pure*, *Best*, and *Silvertip*. Unfortunately, for

you, the consumer, shaving brush nomenclature is not regulated, and many larger manufacturers have proprietary grades carrying their own terms. The good news is, those proprietary grades are nothing more than intermediary blends, or re-brandings of the three basic grades.



A brand new brush knot (left), and one that has been broken in. The larger spread of the bristles is called "Bloom".

Photo by Tony Peterson.

The exception to this rule is Silvertip and Super Silvertip, discussed below. The easiest way to discern the quality of a badger brush when shopping is by color.

## Pure Badger

Pure badger is the most abundant hair, coming from the animal's sides. It is the darkest hair, ranging from uniformly brown and grey to black. It is also the stiffest among badger hairs and least

uniform in length. Pure badger brushes are trimmed after tying to compensate for the higher level of variation in hair lengths. This results in a coarser brush with blunt bristles that works very well for individuals desiring exfoliation. Pure badger has the least pronounced bloom of all the grades.



Pure badger is the darkest and coarsest badger grade, but it is still far superior to boar bristle.  
Photo by Tony Peterson.

Because of the coarser texture and slightly stiffer hairs, pure badger is the brush of choice for many shavers for lathering with hard soaps. Repeated swirling on a hard cake of soap can knot the heart of a softer grade brush, like silvertip, and ruin it. I made that mistake at an early live event for Bare Knuckle Barbary. I was sampling a hard soap for passersby with one of my \$80 silvertip brushes. After just a few hours of building lather on top of the hard cake, the brush was knotted beyond hope and had to be thrown away.

Is it possible to safely use a hard soap with a fine grade brush? Absolutely. Is a newbie learning how to build lather with a hard cake and a Silvertip brush asking for trouble? Probably.

## Best Badger

The next level of badger goodness is commonly referred to as best badger. The best grade hair comes from the belly and either side of the back stripe.

Best badger hair is lighter in color than pure, with dark hair shafts fading to light tan or grey at the tips. It is considerably softer and more uniform in length than pure. The uniform length means that the hair does not need to

be trimmed to shape, so the very fine and soft tips of the hair strands are retained. Best grade hair is also much finer than pure, so there are more individual hair strands in a knot of the same size. Finer, more densely packed hair results in improved bloom and superior water retention through capillary action.

Best badger offers a good combination of softness, water retention, exfoliation, and price. It is our most popular grade.

## Silvertip and Super Silvertip

The highest grade of hair is silvertip. Silvertip hair grows on the back of the badger's neck and part way down the center of the back stripe. It is the finest, lightest colored, and most absorbent hair. On silvertip hair, the wide, dark band seen on best grade hair gives way to a light tan base with a narrow stripe of brown or black. Silvertip also has the



Best badger is the middle of the road. It offers a good compromise between hair quality and price.  
Photo by Tony Peterson.



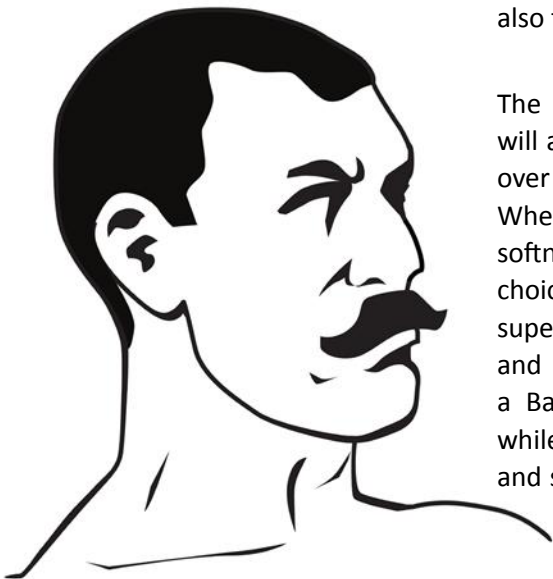
**Silvertip badger is the finest brush material available. Its water retention and lathering ability is unmatched.**  
Photo by Tony Peterson.

softest tips and has the highest water retention with the most pronounced bloom. A silvertip badger brush will build lather faster and hold more lather than the other grades.

Super silvertip is a specially-treated type of silvertip hair. The silvertip hair strands are hand-sorted and graded, and all broken, twisted, or otherwise undesirable hair is removed. Super silvertip brushes are the softest and most luxurious brushes available. They are also the most expensive.

my brush of choice while shaving Mrs. Bare Knuckle's legs (Yes, I do, and if you have a wife or girlfriend, you should be wet shaving her legs for her.).

Exercising care when selecting a shaving brush will ensure that your wet shaving experience is a positive one.



The superior bloom of super silvertip will also allow the user to apply lather over a larger surface area more quickly. When combined with the unparalleled softness, super silvertip is the brush of choice when shaving legs. Burlesque superstar Michelle L'amour is a friend and client, and she has been using a Bare Knuckle super silvertip brush while shaving her legs for some time, and swears by it. Super silvertip is also

## Still confused?

Email me at [sales@bareknucklebarbery.com](mailto:sales@bareknucklebarbery.com). I will be happy to answer your questions. Who knows, perhaps I'll use your question in an upcoming article.

# The Bauble Babe : The Gothic Purse

By Anna Opie Rotach

I want to fess up right away to not physically making a purse from the ground on up. I can sew, I like to sew, I have not attempted a handbag yet. I rescued an adorable little black purse from the thrift store across the street from our home for this project. There are tons of them in need of a good home. And for a very small amount of money.

Safety Warning: The hot glue gun is hot. Take precautions to not burn yourself.

## You will need:

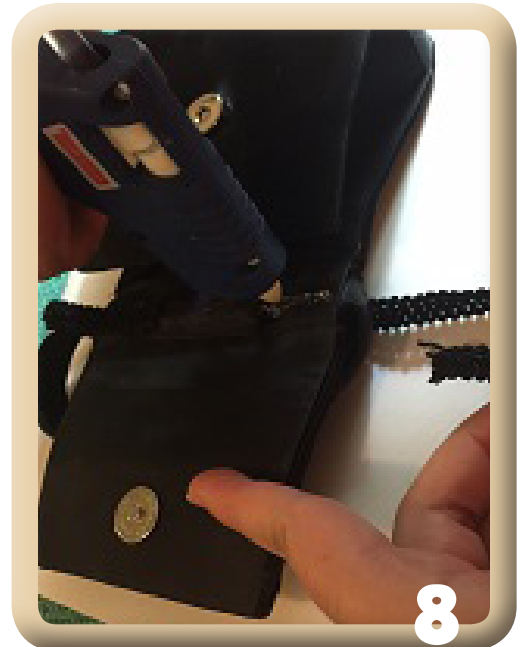
- A small black purse. Seriously, search thrift stores and clearance racks
- 2 ½- 3 yards of Edging (Trim)
- A beaded embellishment
- A decorative silver or pewter clasp
- Fabric Paint in silver or pewter
- Hot glue gun
- Scissors

## Steps:

- 1.**Go buy a simple black purse. Something with satin or textured fabric will cooperate with the hot glue really nicely.
- 2.**Lightly put a small amount of fabric paint on your fingertip.
- 3.**Brush the fabric paint over the edges of the lace on the embellishment. Just enough to add a little shimmer.
- 4.**Set it aside to dry.
- 5.**Get the glue gun ready.

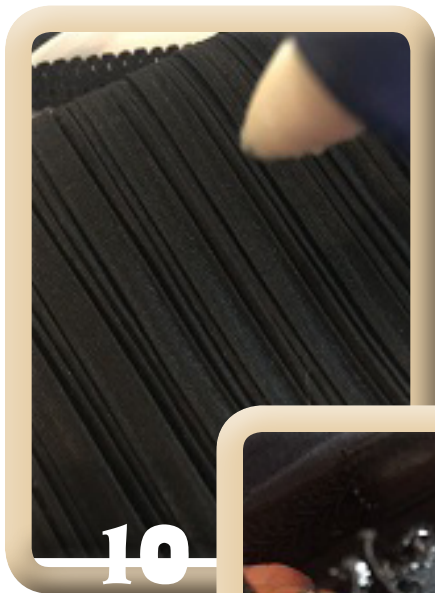


- 6.**Open the purse and cut the shoulder strap off, as close to wear it is attached as possible.
- 7.**Measure the amount of edging needed to make a new shoulder strap. Add 2-4 extra inches that will be attached inside the purse.
- 8.**With the hot glue gun, squeeze about an inch of hot glue from the inside center out, and firmly press each end of the edging into the hot glue (It is hot. Be careful.) Make sure that the new shoulder strap is not twisted before putting it into the hot glue. Hold it firmly for a few minutes until the glue sets.



**9.** Measure enough edging to go around the outside of the front of the purse, from each top corner edge. Cut it carefully because it frays easily.

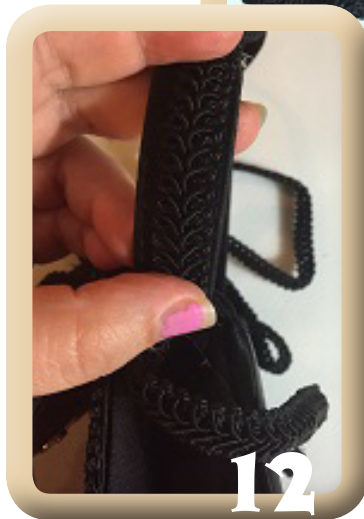
**10.** Begin on one top corner, placing hot glue on the top and pressing the first end of the edging into the hot glue. You may have to use a slightly larger amount of glue on the end to prevent the edging from fraying.



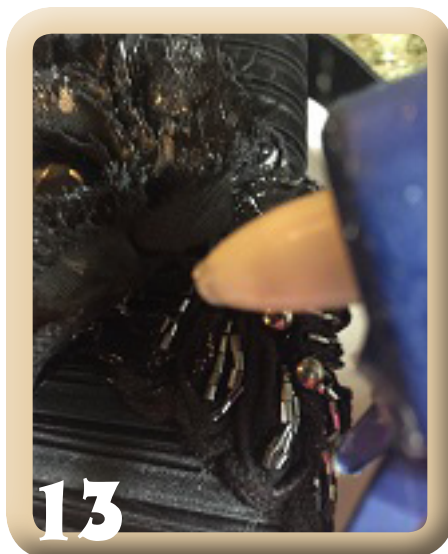
**Right: Use hot glue to prevent edging / trim from fraying.**

**11.** Using a small amount of hot glue at a time, go along the edge of the purse, pressing the edging into the hot glue and letting it set before moving on. Go all the way around and once again, use a larger amount of hot glue at the second end of the edging to prevent fraying.

**12.** If there is enough edging and a small clutch handle, use hot glue to attach edging to the top of it, starting at the underside of the purse's crease.



**13.** Look at the beaded embellishment. See how it fits on the purse's cover. You may have to cut it and reorganize it to fit. Once you decide how you want it to look, use hot glue to attach it to the cover.

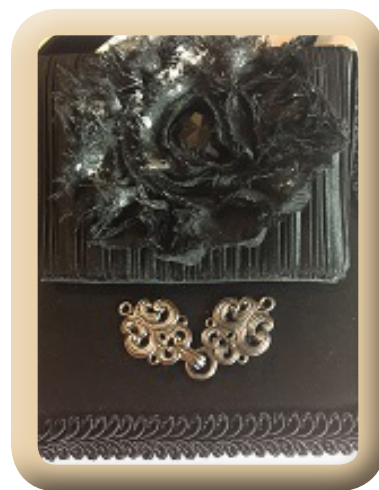


**14.** Look at the embellishment and use hot glue to attach any loose or 'flappy' parts.



**15.** Decide where you want the decorative clasp to go. It does not have to be used as a clasp, especially if your purse has a magnetic clasp already. Use hot glue to attach it.

**16.** Wait a solid few hours before wearing your purse, making sure that the hot glue has hardened.



**The Bauble Babe** is written by Anna Rotach, an artist and writer in Orlando, Florida. She loves creating beauty with her hands, be it crafts, sewing, jewelry, or painting. She runs a Facebook Site and Etsy Page (Starting in January 2015) called Jewels Burn - Steampunk Inspirations. As a Steampunk Jewelry Designer, her philosophy is to create pieces that allow people to wear what they love, every day. She finds beauty in combining the mechanical with the world of fine art.

# Easy Victorian Recipes for Modern People

By Chef Maritza Rodriguez-Brown

Do to unforeseen circumstances; we were unable to get our taste testers to agree on a meeting time before the deadline. Here are the recipes that were promised in the last issue.

## Kedgeree

### Ingredients:

- 2 cups of uncooked rice
- 2 eggs
- 4 ounces of smoked white fish
- 1 cup of peas
- Bay leaf
- 1 cup of milk as needed or half and half
- 1 tablespoon of butter
- 1 1/2 teaspoon of curry powder
- 2 green onions chopped
- 2 white onions chopped
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1/2 cup of yogurt
- 1/4 teaspoon of cayenne

### Directions:

Make rice, drain and set to the side. Put eggs in saucepan and cover it with ice cold water. Bring it to a boil. Immediately take the pan off of the heat. Cover and let the eggs stand in hot water for 11 minutes, then remove them from the hot water. Let eggs cool, peel and chop. Set it aside.

Put the white fish in a small skillet or frying pan with the bay leaf. Pour milk just to cover the fish. Let it simmer on medium heat. Cook until the fish starts flaking. Use a fork to check flakiness. Set the fish aside. Discard the milk and bay leaf.

Melt the butter in the skillet or frying pan. Stir in curry powder and cayenne, making sure the heat is high. Add the onions and cook until clear. Add peas, and pan-fry for few more minutes. Add the rice, eggs and fish. Toss lightly. Season with salt and pepper. Serve with yogurt on top.



Photo courtesy jules:stonesoup  
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/stone-soup>

# Deviled Kidneys

## Ingredients:

- 6 13 ounces of lamb kidneys skinned
- 2 tablespoons of plain flour
- 1 ounce of butter
- 1 medium white onion
- 1 tablespoon of tomato paste
- 1 tablespoon of English Mustard
- 2 tablespoons of Worcestershire sauce
- 4 thick slices of crusty bread
- Warm butter for spreading
- 1 tablespoon of dry parsley
- Sea salt and ground pepper

## Directions:

Rinse the kidneys under cold water. Dry with paper towel. Cut the white cores with scissors. Throw the white cores out. Cut the kidneys into chunky pieces. Put flour in plastic food storage bag and season very well with salt and pepper. Put kidneys in the bag until they are well-coated with flour.

Melt butter in a large, nonstick, frying pan. Add the onion and fry for 4 minutes, until golden brown. Stir occasionally. Shake the excess flour from the kidneys and put them in the pan with the onions. Cook for about 3 minutes. Turn every minute and a half.

Add the tomato paste and mustard to the pan. Gradually add 10 ounces of water and stir constantly. Bring to a boil and add a tablespoon of Worcestershire sauce (add more to taste).

While the kidneys cook, toast some bread and spread butter on them. Spoon the kidneys and the sauce over the buttered toast and put the parsley on top. Serve immediately while hot.



# Victorian Scones & Interview With Aspiring Chef Christopher Siebert

By Chef Maritza Rodriguez-Brown

**Chef Maritza:** Name?

**Siebert:** *Christopher L Siebert*

**Chef Maritza:** How long have you been interested in becoming a Chef?

**Siebert:** *4 years*

**Chef Maritza:** When will you be attending culinary school?

**Siebert:** *July 2016*

**Chef Maritza:** Which school will you be attending?

**Siebert:** *Oregon Culinary Institute*

**Chef Maritza:** What year will you graduate?

**Siebert:** *2017*

**Chef Maritza:** Where have you worked professionally to begin your goal as a Chef?

**Siebert:** *I started off working front of the house at several different restaurants, but I started at Longhorn Steakhouse working in the kitchen, as a Salad/Food Prep/Fry line.*

**Chef Maritza:** Where do you want to work once you become a Chef?

**Siebert:** *To be honest I am not sure where I would like to work, I haven't figured out what is my favorite cuisine to cook, so my possibilities are still wide open.*

**Chef Maritza:** Who is your mentor?

**Siebert:** *You, Maritza Brown, because any time I have a prep question about anything while I am at home making dinner I will call you and ask for your advice about how to improve on the meal I am making.*

**Chef Maritza:** What is your favorite recipe to cook right now?

**Siebert:** *My favorite recipe to cook right now is the recipe that you gave me. The pork chop recipe. It is amazing. You have to keep the pork chops at room temperature prior to cooking. Lightly brush the pork chop with a mixture of vinegar and olive oil, then put salt, pepper, garlic, oregano, and chili powder. Marinate for thirty minutes to an hour. Let the pork chop get to room temperature before cooking. The longer it is*



Photo courtesy Christopher Siebert

*marinated the better they will taste and the softer they will be. Before putting the pork chop in the skillet make sure that the oil is hot. Check by splashing a tiny bit of water. When it sizzles it's done. Thanks for this recipe, it is delicious.*

**Chef Maritza:** What is your favorite food?



Aspiring Chef Christopher Siebert measures ingredients.  
Photo courtesy Christopher Siebert

Photo courtesy  
Wikimedia  
Commons



## Victorian Scones

By Aspiring Chef Christopher Siebert

### Ingredients:

- 3 cups of flour
- ½ cup white sugar
- 5 teaspoons baking powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¾ cups butter
- 1 egg beaten
- 1 cup milk

### Directions:

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Lightly grease a baking cookie sheet. In a large bowl combine flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt. Cut in the butter. Mix the egg and milk in a small bowl, and stir into flour mixture until moistened.

Turn dough out onto a lightly floured surface, and knead briefly. Roll dough out into a 1/e inch thick round. Cut into 8 wedges, and place on the prepared baking sheet. Bake for about 15 minutes in the preheated oven or until it is golden brown.

**Siebert:** *My favorite food to eat is always changing, for right now I am really hooked on hummus shawarma from this Lebanese restaurant here in Toledo. There is something about the way they make their hummus that gives it an extra creaminess. It has an extra garlic kick and the spices they chose to use on the shawarma really enhance the overall enjoyment of this dish.*

**Chef Maritza:** What do you think are the most important skills to have as a Chef?

**Siebert:** *Proper understandings of spices, knife skills and time management.*

**Chef Maritza:** What is your ultimate favorite dessert to eat?

**Siebert:** *I am a simple guy when it comes to desserts; a chocolate/vanilla swirl cone has always been my favorite.*

**Chef Maritza:** Was the scones recipe hard for you to make?

**Siebert:** *They were easy to make, but they were extremely time consuming. There is nothing I could do*



Above: Preparing the Scones.  
Photos courtesy Christopher Siebert

*to make the recipe any easier. I suppose back then they had more time to make these so it was ok, but for the busy person of today it would be harder. I would add fruit to them and icing to make them a lot better. I did enjoy making them, because it was something new to make.*

**Chef Maritza:** Who is your favorite television Chef or cook?

**Siebert:** *My favorite TV Chef is Michael Symon because he is from Cleveland, and his restaurants there are simply fantastic*

**Chef Maritza:** Who is your favorite non-television Chef?

**Siebert:** *I haven't met other chef yet from outside of work, so I don't have one as of right now ask me again in about two years.*

# "Damned Before Breakfast"

## Author, Jessica Gleason, to release third novel

Courtesy *Fiction at its Finest*

June 24, 2015

**Summary:** *Rave and Mage may seem unlikely friends, one is responsible (most of the time), and the other is more of a free spirit. They both come in their own shade of stubborn and sassy. But, as many Wisconsin girls know, alcohol can make for unlikely friendships, bedfellows and shiny new fangs. What started out as an end of the semester celebration turns into a permanent vacation to the seedy paranormal underbelly in the Mid-West's least assuming state, Wisconsin.*

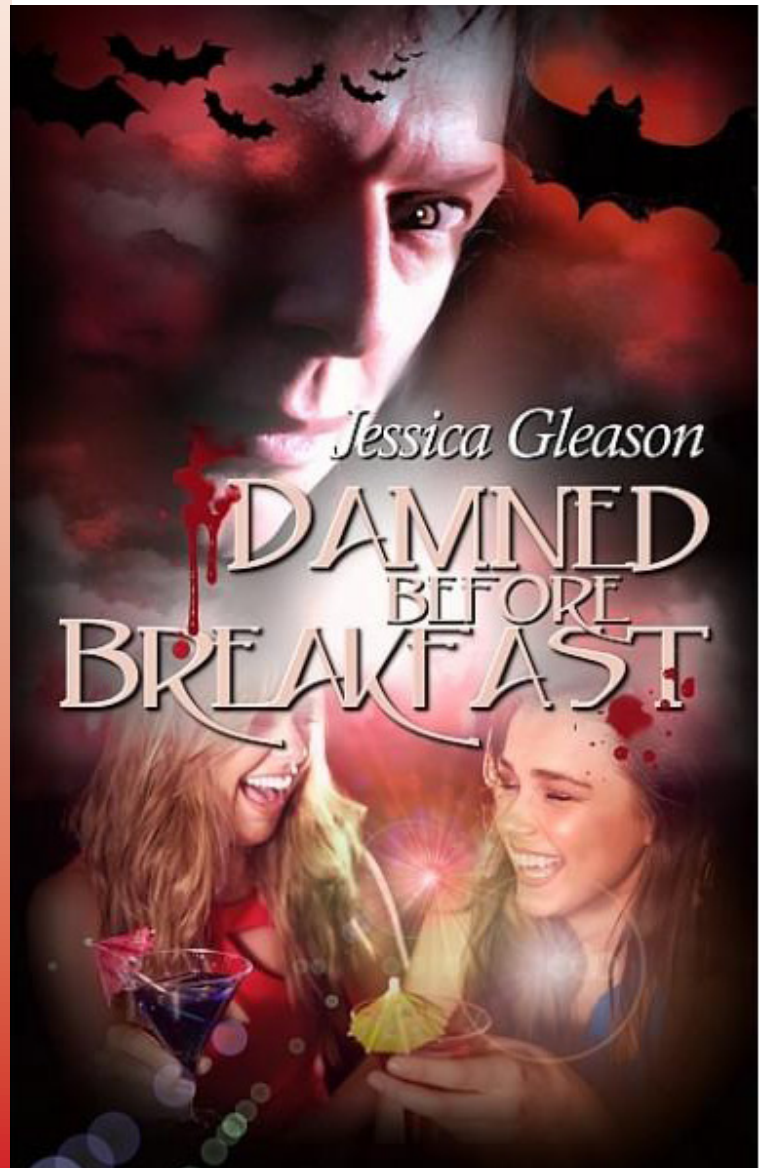
*"Damned Before Breakfast" is the second novel in the "Wisconsin Weirdos" series. Following the break-out novel, "Madison Murphy, Wisconsin Weirdo," Gleason now takes us to another dark corner of Wisconsin's bustling paranormal community. This novel explores the vampire population living underneath the great state of Wisconsin. Lovers of Wisconsin and lovers of the paranormal, alike, will enjoy this sexy romp into the unknown.*

*As a Wisconsin native, Jessica Gleason, brings authenticity to the characters and environment. She is witty and writes steamy romance with gusto. This is an entertaining book that is sure to delight readers. It's a fun book to read while bathing in the fine Wisconsin summer sun. Gleason is also the author of "Sundown on This Town" which was released by Popcorn Press in 2014.*

*"Damned Before Breakfast" is scheduled for release on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015 from Champagne Books. It will be available as an e-book straight from the publisher. It can also be purchased through Amazon and BN.com. The book is currently available for pre-order through iTunes. To learn more about the author and this fascinating title, visit: <http://www.demontorember.blogspot.com>*

*If you would like more information about "Damned Before Breakfast" or to schedule an e-mail interview, please e-mail the author direct at [gleasonj@gtc.edu](mailto:gleasonj@gtc.edu). Book signings are available. Please query.*

Jessica Gleason



# STEAMPUNK'D

## GSN's new game show : I watched the first episode so you wouldn't have to

By Celia Bannan

It's as bad as we all feared, but it's not the contestant's fault. In the initial episode of Game Show Network's *Steampunk'd*, drama over teamwork and a lack of shared vision took up most of the hour, as expected. A talented maker was sent home for reasons which seem stupid and unfair, to me. It also appears that the producers would rather have the viewers and the steampunk community angry and complaining about the show (because it generates *Buzz*) than to take the time and actually produce a better show. **What does a design community watch a design competition show for? The designs!** The incentive for the viewer is to get to see artists making something great. To serve that end, the show itself should be structured to make that happen. That's the real failure here, because that is not this show, and it should be.

All the makers appear talented individually, but, like any creative-type people, we don't work well in teams, or under extreme time constraints. Since all the challenges are team ones, and the makers have less

than 3 days to construct an entire themed-room, also since the producers have decided the drama of competition (read: backbiting and arguing) will be featured foremost, instead of giving talented artists some space to create, the combined results are weak. I don't know if I can even watch future episodes—the pay-off is so poor.

I wish *Steampunk'd* had taken notes from *Sweet Genius*, or *Face Off*, and not from *Ink Master*. *Ink Master*, the tattoo competition with host Dave Navarro, had great judges who educated viewers, but the show lost me when the producers began editing more for discord than for design, and then didn't give the resulting designs enough airtime for me to even examine properly! If I have to sit through a show full of screaming and crying, then don't even get a good look at the designs, I am done with it.

*Face Off*, the special-effects make-up competition, does a much better job at this—at least the on-air drama is more about whether the artist will complete his vision in time, instead of interpersonal disagreements. And *Face Off* makes time for the viewer to appreciate the final piece, unlike *Ink Master* has done. The competitors on *Face Off* (at least in previous seasons) come off as less hate-full,



and more supportive of each other, which may be due to the individuals as much as the guiding hands behind the show, but in any case it's the way the program is edited that gives me that impression. *Steampunk'd*'s first episode was edited to make a show full of confusion, tears, and anger, sad.

If only *Steampunk'd* had stolen from *Sweet Genius*, the dessert competition hosted by Ron Ben-Israel, instead! Imagine a whimsical mad scientist who demands the impossible every week from a quartet (a much more workable number) of steampunk makers. The challenges would be for each to make a themed object for the host's steampunk lair, choosing parts from a communal junkpile. The winner of each episode gets to return for a semi-final, and then a final, round. No one has to work in stupid teams. Yes, time is severely constrained, but no one's designs get disrespected unless it is blatantly deserved. The challenges would still be ridiculously outrageous, as befits the over-the-top persona of a mad scientist host, but like in *Sweet Genius*, the drama is about finishing maker's vision effectively and on time, and not about in-fighting. Contestants are not set up to fail, but are enabled to perform. What a different, and more enjoyable, show that would be. I'd call it *Mad Genius*. Who else wants to watch it?

# Talk Steamy To Me

## How To Simplify Steampunk For Your Friends, Family, and Complete Strangers

### A Personal Definition

By Celia Bannan

### STEAMPUNK. Explain it

There's a comic strip floating around the Interwebs, and you might have seen it. (You can find it easily if you type EXPLAIN STEAMPUNK into the Google search box. Or if you follow Jeph Jaques' excellent strip, *Questionable Content*.) A middle-aged male parental unit bangs on the door of a tech-savvy twenty-something, and demands "STEAMPUNK. EXPLAIN IT!"

"W-well, it's like 1800s technology," she begins, "only made all weird. Like clockwork robots and giant steam powered zeppelins and stuff. And people dress up all old-timey only with gears and goggles and . . ."

"God DAMN IT," says Dad. "GOD DAMN IT GOD DAMN IT GOD DAMN IT."

This is funny for a couple of reasons. Firstly, if for some reason you mention the term "steampunk" in mixed company, someone who has totally no context for cosplay, science-fiction, or history for that matter, is going to ask you "Steampunk? What's that?" And you are going to have to try to give them some sort of an answer. You'll probably sputter out something like "robots and giant

steam powered zeppelins — and stuff."

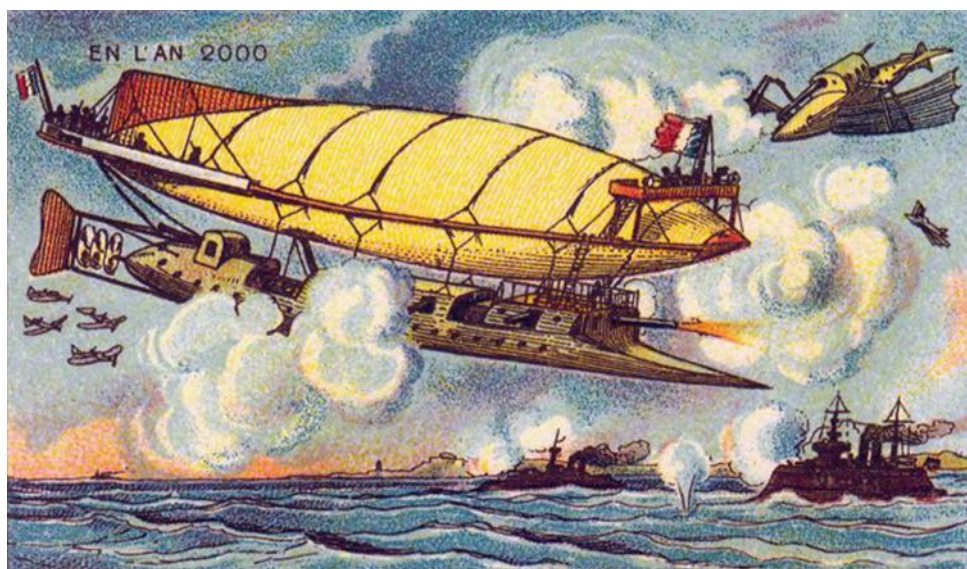
Secondly, whatever answer you give them might only confuse them more. In Jaques' comic strip, the dad is enraged by his nerd-girl's definition. His reasons are not addressed in the strip, but I'm guessing the individual points in his daughter's list don't add up to an answer he can accept. It doesn't address the WHY of steampunk, and Dad is left more baffled than before. There's more to it than the sum of its parts. Explaining steampunk is a tricky business.

I've been there myself. I've been both the clueless outsider, and the perceived spokesperson for an entire cultural movement (but only in groups of so-called "Normals." Prop me up in my character's costume next to, oh say, anyone at The Steam-

punk World's Fair and see how fast I'll get knocked down in the rush to take their picture). Coming up with a definition that will really inform your enquirer depends on whatever context they bring to the table. With friends and family, it's easier to guess their starting point. With complete strangers, you have to work a little harder. But remember, if you are dressed in your steamy bits, you represent the steamhood. Do try to show some gentility and good manners before you break down and say "Just Google it."

### Why "Victorian Science-Fiction" just won't do

Any poll on an internet forum like Facebook or The Steampunk Empire asking "How do you explain steam-



Victorian Postcard Depicts The Year 2000

punk?” will bring up a few well-used, and concise answers. “Victorian (or Industrial Age) Science-Fiction” is how literary types like writer G. D. Falksen and others put it. Another great short answer is “Steampunk : the Tomorrow that society expected a hundred years ago.” Or even, “The greatest era that never was!” Still, these clever answers don’t give much detail to those questioners who are short on historical or literary context. “Where does the Steam come in?” they may ask. “And what’s so Punk about it?”

You could go the scholarly route. For the sake of completeness, here’s what some real experts say. Popular steampunk author Gail Carriger defines steampunk as “a re-imagining of either the past or the future where steam technology never died, and electricity never dominated, and a Victorian aesthetic overshadows all.” She also presents the dystopic steampunk scenario, which she calls industrial steampunk. It “sees a far future world that harkens back to Victorian culture, for example a bustle dress made of Kevlar. There are also other temporal options like clockpunk (c. 1500s) and dieselpunk (WWII).” Baron Halfpenny, the fictitious character that runs an online clothing store, says “Steampunk is a creative social movement that draws inspiration from Victorian and pre-[world war] history in an anachronistic mix of science-fiction, modern values, and a sense of fun.” And Steampunk.com says it “is a genre AND a design aesthetic AND a philosophy. First and foremost a literary genre . . . that includes social or technological aspects of the 19th century (the steam) usually with some deconstruction of, reimagining of, or rebellion against parts of it (the punk).” This last even breaks down the etymology of the term. You might think



**Take a virtual tour of this fully-steampunked House for sale in Sharon, Massachusetts at <http://www.onlinepropertyshowcase.com/showcase/>**

this explanation would do perfectly. But try using it on the clueless dad of Jaques’ comic strip. I imagine he’ll think “But why does everyone wear goggles?” and resume gibbering “GOD DAMN IT GOD DAMN IT!”

You *could* go the scholarly route, but I’d advise against it. In general, the majority of people don’t want to think that hard. I’ve tried using “Victorian Science-Fiction” myself to describe steampunk, because to me it easily conjures up recollections of Jules Verne and H. G. Wells’ stories of Victorians flying to the Moon in steam-powered ships. The term works for me personally, because I have read Victorian Science-Fiction. But the term fails the numerous majority who have not read Verne or Wells, or any kind of science fiction whatsoever. Imagine the dull lives they must lead.

To them you might say, “Steampunk is a re-imagining of the Industrial Age through a 19<sup>th</sup> Century lens.” But even I, who just made that up, have

some problems with that definition. It also does not address the WHY. WHY dress up, go to conventions, remodel our homes and offices to look like Captain Nemo’s “Nautilus?” What’s the attraction of pretending to live in the 19th Century? Sure, there were garden parties, calling cards, and tea time. But wasn’t it also a time of outhouses, high infant mortality, and umm, slavery?

## **WHY Steampunk? Von Slatt’s Steampunk Manifesto**

There is no doubt in my mind that if I had the misfortune to live in the 19th Century, I would not be a member of High Society, but instead would be one of the miserable multitude. Had I lived beyond childhood, I may well have been forced into prostitution, and died in childbirth. Or from tuberculosis or any number of diseases. Or from freezing to death, or heat-stroke. Or just plain over-work. The 19th Century was really not that

nice for most people. Yet it is common to romanticize the period, even though women could not hold property in their own name, could not refuse their husbands' sexual advances, or vote. What attracts intelligent people to recreate such a stifling, morbid world?

The Steampunk Workshop's Jake von Slatt wrote a manifesto that attempts to answer the WHY of the genre. In it, he laments the reality of society today, in that it is too focused on consumerism, among other things. Today we are encouraged to apply nose to grindstone, work in a money-making (if heartless) job, don't ask questions about the environment, and continually buy the latest in throw-away technology.

"Is it any wonder, then," von Slatt writes, "that some of us have decided to take a step sideways? A step out of the corporate time stream and into one we have made for ourselves? A step into a world of adventure and romance where we each seek our own futures on our own terms without having to wait for it to go on sale? A step sideways into a past that never was and a future that still could be?"

He hearkens back to the days when the future we "enjoy" now was looked at with enthusiasm; when magazines wrote articles on the wonders of the Year 2000; when supposedly our daily toil would be resolved by technology, and humanity would be free to explore higher pursuits. This is the feeling steampunks want to recreate.

"The nineteenth century holds important lessons for us," he continues. Undoubtedly. We know what happened, and where it led us. Steampunk revisionism imagines there was/is a way around civil war, colonial oppression, and new wars on a global scale, leading up to more dictators than I can count, with genocide on their minds. Looking back, we could have done things differently, and with more style and freedom. Is steampunk then a 19th Century do-over?

I think that is a great deal of the appeal. We can do-over the 19th Century our way, keeping the great parts, and adding more freedom. Let's go back to where it all went wrong, and start again, but do it right this time. With style. And robots and giant steam powered zeppelins and stuff.



Steampunk Equation by Jeff VanderMeer



Excerpted from a Letter to Locus Magazine, 1987

## How to answer the FAQs of the uninformed

We still have to condense the allure of steampunk into a few soundbites. You likely already have something that works best for you. For me, steampunk is a re-imagining of the Industrial Age with more freedom, and more adventure. I play a part because it's fun. For your consideration, here are a few responses I came up with to some frequently asked questions.

## STEAMPUNK. Is that still a thing?

It is still a thing. The Steampunk World's Fair in May of 2014 had an attendance of over 4,000. The Steampunk Guide lists over 100 global steampunk events for 2015 (<http://steampunkguide.blogspot.com>).

## Why does everyone wear goggles?

Wearing goggles implies that what you do is so dangerous you must wear eye protection. You could be a mad scientist, a zeppelin captain, a time traveler, but you still value your eyesight. Goggles mean Adventure! Thrills! Science!

## What's so Punk about it?

Originally, the punk was in reference to cyberpunk in a letter by author K. W. Jeter to Locus Magazine in 1987. But never mind the origin story. You can say punk refers to a rebellion against our current society, in

## Steam Around The World

Steampunk is all over the world. France and Germany have had their own steam scenes for a while now. Japan's own **Tokyo Inventor's Society** produces a salon-type event called Steam Garden a few times a year as a showcase for steampunk artists and performers. Brazil has groups, modeled after Masonic lodges, that meet several times a year and promote the aesthetic. Fiction writers are taking inspiration from older cultures and adding steam; in other words, asking what if the cultures of Arabia, India, or China continued to evolve their own machine ages independently of Europe?

Creator **James Ng** dreams up his own steampunk world in his work based off Chinese culture. Stories like "The Mechanical Aviary of Emperor Jalal-ud-din Muhammad Akbar" by **Shweta Narayan** (anthologized in *Steampunk II: Steampunk Reloaded*), and the anthology *Shanghai Steam* (by Absolute Xpress, available on Amazon) are also taking the common steampunk themes of Man vs. Machine, Class Conflict, Mad Science, Colonialism, Clockwork Robots, Dystopia, and Women's Subjugation, and setting them in places and times other than the Britain and America of the Industrial Revolution. Is this still steampunk, if it's not Victorian? Hardliners say "No." But it seems the majority of steamers are willing to accept these hybrids, if most of the familiar motifs are there.



**Luke Chaos of The Tokyo Inventor's Society**

Check out these examples of steampunk around the world:

**Les Machines De L'Île :** In Nantes, France, the birthplace of **Jules Verne**, one can see the fabulous mechanical elephant of Internet fame at a theme park inspired by Verne. Check out a video of it and other mechanical animals here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cs4fgQxki4s>

And visit the theme park's site at <http://www.lesmachines-nantes.fr/en>.

**Steam Garden :** <http://www.tokyo-steampunk.com>

**Carnivale Steampunk Brazil :** (short film) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_uzGAIQS-TU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_uzGAIQS-TU)

**James Ng, Artist :** [jamesngart.com](http://jamesngart.com)

And while you are at it, check out the **Silver Goggles** website—all about the problems of reimagining the Victorian era from a non-Anglo perspective.

**Silver Goggles:** Worn by the steampunk post-colonialist when engaging with issues of race, representation, diversity, and other such exciting adventures as one might find in our genial genre. <http://silver-goggles.blogspot.com>

that steamers are making their own culture from the nice bits and bobs from the past.

## What's with all the gears everywhere?

Those gears (they could also be cogs or sprockets) are moving machinery parts. Some steamers overdose on those a bit. At this point, it is the multi-national symbol for steampunk, like the peace symbol was for hippies.

## I still don't get it.

When all else fails, reference "The Wild Wild West." Older folks will remember the 1960s TV show with Robert Conrad and Ross Martin,

playing secret agents for President U. S. Grant. Everyone else might at least know about the 1999 movie with Will Smith and Kevin Kline.

## Everything is awesome! Everything is cool when it's powered by STEAM!

What is your favorite definition of Steampunk? What are the FAQs that you get most often? Did I fail to add anything new to the conversation? Add your comment to the Victorian Gothic and Steampunk Magazine Facebook page and give me what for!



Celia Bannan (aka Captain Killian Jameson) writes a Victorian-era time-travel adventure serial, called Captain Killian and the Coin-Operated Boy. It can be found and followed at [captain-killian.wordpress.com](http://captain-killian.wordpress.com).

# The Impossible Bullet

By Sir August Éclair

Greeting dear readers, it is I Sir August Éclair gentleman adventurer back from sabbatical and quite ready to relate my latest assignment with vigor and panache. I trust you were able to find some way to entertain yourself without my tales of the unlikely to keep you on the edge of your respective seats. I dare say you shall find yourself quite satisfied with my current offering and that we shall both find ourselves at the end of this telling well and truly emboldened with the great spirit of the hunt.

My tale starts, as so many of them do, with an assignment from my edi-

tor. As my more frequent readers are aware, my editor is a stark raving lunatic more obsessed with collecting on the policy our periodical has taken out on my good self than with any sort of journalistic integrity. I say this without fear of reprisal or censor for whatever sort of rascalion my editor may be, they have never had the bad taste to change my work to suit their own machinations.

The assignment was delivered to me by a group of hooligans who accosted me one night while ambling back to my manor from the public house. I do say wherever my editor had found the louts they could take quite the thrashing and it was only upon examining their persons for evidence of what organization had seen fit to dispatch me this night

that I found something rather peculiar. When stripped of their shirts and arranged by height, the tattoos on their chests formed a message from my editor. My quarry was to be the monster of Loch Ness.

I continued on my way to my manor, a little more bruised than I would have liked, to prepare myself for the coming endeavor. The night was quite unremarkable, but there was something gnawing at the edge of my mind as I made my way through the hedge maze. There was something out of place, something that my training was recognizing which did not register with my somewhat whiskey addled mind. A twig snapped here a patch of grass disturbed there. My instincts were calculating a sum that put me on edge.



As I approached the garden entrance to my library I immediately sobered. The door was ajar. Someone had entered my library without my permission. I ran through the stacks jumping over mislaid tomes and toppled shelves certain of what I would find, but hoping I was wrong. The hidden door to my armory was exposed.

My security door was eight feet high and two feet thick. Dwarven iron impervious to offensive magics, a locking mechanism designed by a cloistered monk who had sealed himself inside of a police call box and slid each sheet of the blue print out one at a time over a dozen years, and the

wards placed upon it were a personal favor of a mad necromancer I had met in the black deserts that bordered the land of the dead. I had a devil of a time deciding whether I would congratulate the master thief who had bypassed, without disturbing or damaging the structure in the slightest mind you, the door or throttling the life out of the cad on the spot.

As I silently entered the armory I prepared myself for a fight that would put my every skill to the test. What I found was, to say the least, disheartening. My armory had been left almost entirely intact. I could tell

that the intruder had picked up and examined some of my more esoteric weaponry. By the items examined I could tell that whoever had made their way into my abode was a true admirer of fine armaments.

Whatever had been taken was from the deeper armory, what I had dubbed the shadow vault. The weapons I had deemed too dangerous for common or even uncommon use were stored therein. Weapons I had collected throughout my entire career as a gentleman adventurer. Some had been wrested from the hands of tyrants bent on the destruction of all that was good and

civilized. Some had been stolen, my reader need not point out the irony of my situation at the time for believe me I was well and truly aware of it, from the halls of mad gods and the labs of even madder scientists. No, nothing good would possibly come from someone having breached the shadow vault.

As I entered the vault I was accosted by a blast of frigid wind. The precautions set in place for the vault were of such arcane nature that they sapped the vitality of the very air itself. I would go into detail of the various and devious defenses of the shadow vault, but I have made promises to certain entities that I would not break even for the sake of my dear reader's edification. I dare say that the thief had gone up in my regard if not just for the audacity at attempting such an inadvisable feat, but in the sheer vexed lunacy that was the fact that they had succeeded.

The item in question that was missing was known as the impossible bullet. It had, until recently, resided in a display case in between Vlad the Impaler's mace and a siege cannon fashioned out of the horn of the long extinct dire narwhal.

I will admit, dear reader, that at the time I was quite puzzled as to why such an item would have been taken. The impossible bullet was more a novelty than anything else. Normally such items would not even be stored in the shadow vault, but my fellow gentleman adventurer, who at his request shall remain nameless, had assured me that it had the potential for destruction on an unknowable scale. The bullet was the magnum opus of a particularly gifted scientist named Dr. Willard Wilton who had become unhinged by studying what

was explained to me as expanding plural reality theory. I shan't go in to detail about the theory itself but suffice to say that the longer one delved into it the more questions one was left with.

Now Dr. Wilton had become convinced that he was being pursued by beings that didn't exist. After taking over the metallurgical lab of rather prestigious, and at the request of the faculty nameless, college he forged a new type of alloy that had defied analysis. The alloy reacted very strangely to both magnetic and thermal forces. Sometimes it would reverse the polarity of magnets and at other times it would increase the magnetic force a hundred fold. If exposed to extreme cold it would alternate between an extreme increase in mass and a phenomenon unnamed, but described as a decrease in the general ambient light. When heated past a certain point it would disappear entirely and reform later cool to the touch. The scientist had used this amazing metal to cast bullets and hunt down his pursuers.

By the time the gentleman adventurer had caught up to him, Wilton was dead. He was found inside a room secured from the inside with his arm severed cleanly from the shoulder, one last bullet remaining in the his revolver. As it was described to me the scene was one of an exceptionally ghastly nature. The gentleman adventurer told me that I was never to reveal his involvement with the ordeal for fear that Wilton was not only right about his pursuers, but that one of them must have survived their final encounter with the good doctor.

The glass case, like all the other levels of my security, was left open yet

undamaged. Upon the velvet pillow which had once held the bullet was a brass cylinder. As I withdrew the cylinder I noticed that it was a rudimentary puzzle and possibly a trap, but I was pretty sure that I had taken the measure of the thief by their work and such baseness would be quite beneath them. As I spun the sections they lined up to form an engraving of a scene depicting a fox hunt. With a click and a hiss the cylinder split open and I was left holding a slowly uncoiling long bright green and blue feather.

Wordlessly I walked to my study and poured myself a brandy. I sat down by the fireplace and examined the feather. It could of course mean only one thing, I was the victim of our generations most capable and infamous thief. A bandit of limitless resourcefulness and cunning, never caught never so much as even inconvenienced by the authorities. A notorious rake and celebrated wit of the courts of Asia, a man simultaneously cursed by the aristocracy and lauded as a hero of the people. My quarry could be none other than the Rogue Rajah of India. The man they called the Peacock.

To be continued in "The Improbable Gun"

*Sir August Éclair*

# A Steampunk Outing: The Villa Terrace Decorative Arts Museum

Photos by Kasandra Zavrie-Higdon

Guests for this special event were asked to dress in their fanciest attire. The itinerary included a guided tour of the Villa Terrace Decorative Arts Museum, a group photo shoot, and a gathering at the Lakefront Brewery to finish off the evening with beverages and another tour.

The Villa Terrace Decorative Arts Museum was built in 1923, and overlooks Lake Michigan in Milwaukee, WI.

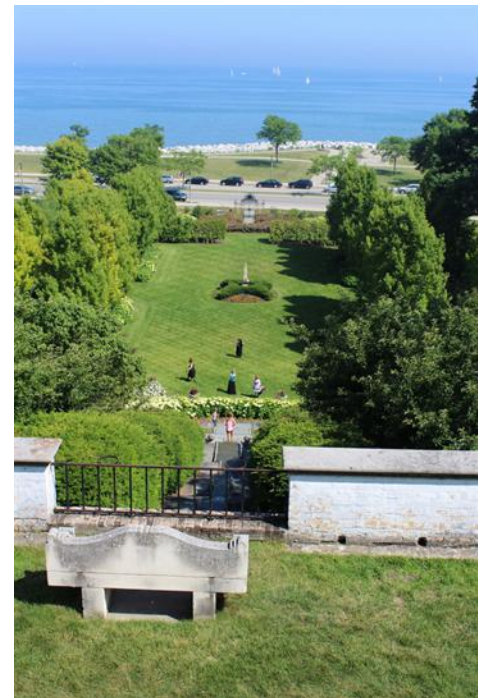
More information about the museum and its exhibitions can be found at: [www.villaterracemuseum.org](http://www.villaterracemuseum.org)

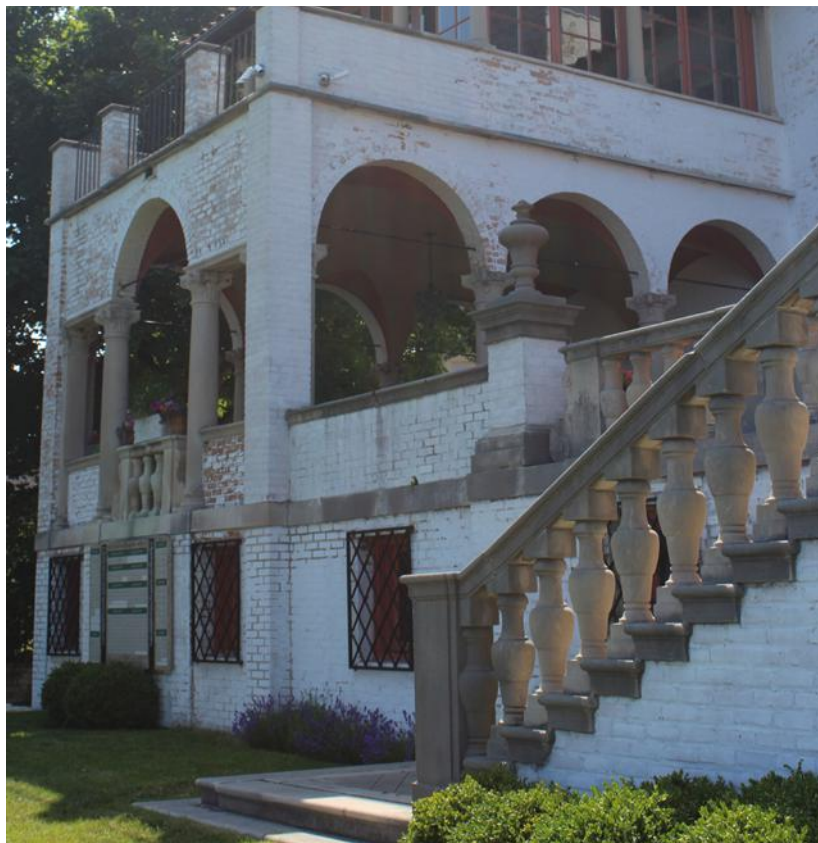


This decorative plate adorns the entry way of the museum.  
Villa Terrace Decorative Arts Museum.



Above: Guests of the Steampunk Outing.  
Right: View of Lake Michigan from the Museum.





Above & Right: The Villa Terrace Decorative Arts Museum.  
Below: Guests of the Steampunk Outing.





Above: Guests of the Steampunk Outing sit in an outdoor seating area (see below) at the Villa Terrace Decorative Arts Museum.

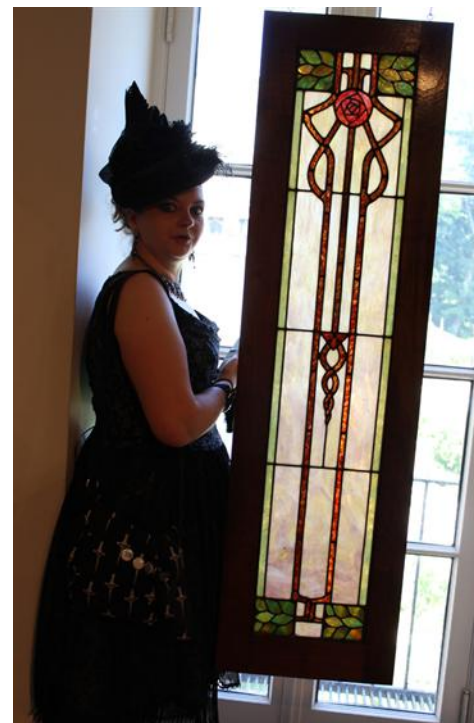




Above: A group gathers for a photo in the Renaissance Garden at The Villa Terrace Decorative Arts Museum.



Guests of the Steampunk Outing gather for beverages at the Lakefront Brewery in Milwaukee, WI, after touring the brewery.



A guest admires a stained glass window on display at the Villa Terrace Decorative Arts Museum.

# The Victorian Tradition of Fireworks

By BRAD ROBERTS

Call it what you will – Independence Day, or the Fourth of July, has been a federal holiday in the United States only since 1941. But the tradition goes back as far as the Revolutionary War, fought from 1775-1783. Representatives from our original thirteen colonies, which engaged Great Britain in our fight for freedom, drew up a set of terms that declared their independence from tyrannical rule in June of 1776. On July 2nd the Continental Congress voted in favor of independence and two days later the Declaration of Independence was adopted.

The Declaration of Independence was an historic document drafted by Thomas Jefferson. Everyone who signed it literally put their life on the line. Not only were they traitors to the English, but they were people who stood up for the rights and freedom of everyone living in the new world.

Fireworks are thought to be very old, invented by the Chinese approximately 2,000 years ago. They've been a part of the United States' 4th of July tradition from the beginning.

Supposedly the idea of celebrating with great, skyward luminaries came about when John Adams sent a letter to his wife on July 3, 1776 telling



her the signing of the Declaration of Independence should be a “great anniversary festival solemnized with pomp and parade, with shews, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires and illuminations from one end of this continent to the other from this time forward, forever more.”

If John Adams would have had his way, we would celebrate the 2nd of July, however, as his letter to his wife Abigail also stated: “The second day of July 1776 will be the most memorable epochal in the history of America. I am apt to believe that it will be celebrated, by succeeding genera-

tions, as the great anniversary festival.”

(Hint: in case you missed that or your American History classes fail you – the Declaration of Independence is WHY we celebrate the Fourth of July!)

One year later (1777) Congress started the tradition of celebrating July 4th in Philadelphia with the first fireworks exhibition dedicated to the United States’ freedom. Thirteen rockets were shot skyward, representing the thirteen startup colonies. (An amount that would numerically become important in fireworks displays).

**The day before the Fourth of July, 1906.**  
Photo courtesy Library of Congress.



*The Fourth of July. (1) The Day Before.*  
Copyright 1906, by E. W. Kelley

Boston also lit fireworks in 1777. It didn’t take long before the tradition caught on in other parts of the country. New York City really liked the idea and it’s recorded that soon they held fifteen separate fireworks displays across town.

Across the wild west, where pretty much anything you wanted or needed was hard to get, fireworks became in-demand but were unobtainable. Those folks substituted dynamite and gunpowder for fireworks to help celebrate Independence Day.

If your pet hides underneath the bed for a week before July 4, you have Philadelphia merchants to thank. By 1783 they sold fireworks to the general public. As you can imagine, the new explosive “toy” made the streets a dangerous place to be. Not only would folks throw lit fireworks at people randomly, sometimes merchandisers would see their entire profit go up in smoke as a kid threw a lit firecracker onto their display table.

Fun for a kid with an eye for the wild side, perhaps. Not so fun if it was your investment that just burned up in a flash of smoke in front of you, or if you happened to be a pre-occupied by-stander.

From the beginning celebrating would start on July 3 and go for a day and a half (which seems short by today’s standards). Personal injuries abounded, proving not everyone could or was willing to SAFELY set off fireworks. Early attempts at regulating public fireworks concentrated more on the noise, ignoring safety considerations.

In 1903 the American Medical Association began tracking fireworks





**Above: Child in liberty costume, 1916. Photo courtesy Library of Congress  
Right: Fourth of July postcard , 1911**

casualties, which prompted a crack-down on fireworks safety. Even the tamest of fireworks can be dangerous – I’ve had an adult cousin burned by a sparkler stick, one of the fireworks usually reserved for kids. I eventually looked up sparklers, and was amazed to find that they burn at an incredibly hot 2,000 degrees – hot enough to melt some metals!

Today’s Independence celebrations are likely to include family-oriented social events filled with picnics, home-made ice cream and entertainers.

In contrast, Victorian celebrations were more likely to find small-town

folk gathered to hear a wandering politician stop to speak on how great America is, or how great George Washington was, along with some political agenda that suited his fancy. Many times such speakers came through town and stopped to talk where there was no speaking platform for them to address the public from, so they would perch atop a stump to talk to locals, thus inventing the term “stump speaking”.

Whatever you do to celebrate our country’s Independence Day, be sure to have a safe one!



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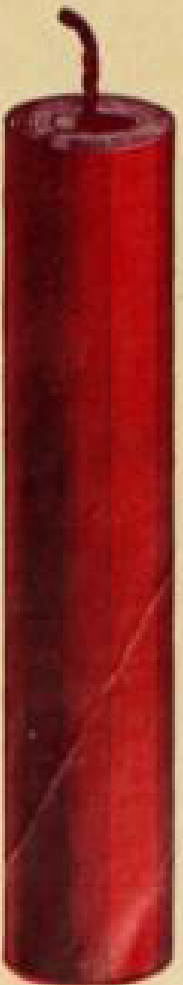
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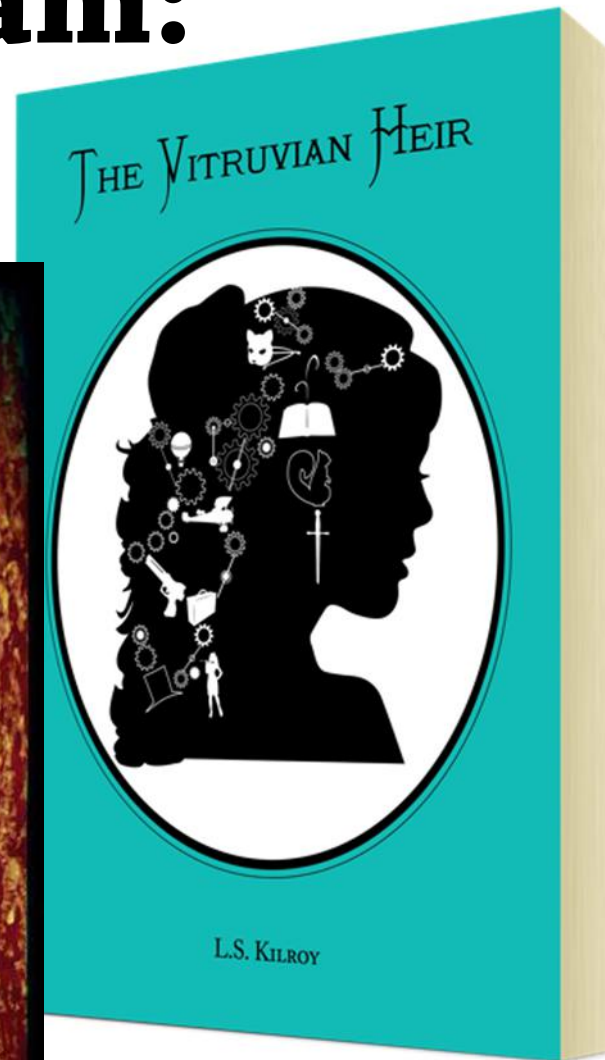
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# Profiles in Steam: Writer L.S. Kilroy

By Celia Bannan



Above: *The Vitruvian Heir* by L. S. Kilroy, Little Tree Press.

Left: L.S. Kilroy. Photo courtesy Kristin Gillis Photography.

## Indie author L.S. Kilroy shares thoughts on writing, self-publishing, and marketing her first novel “*The Vitruvian Heir*”

Writer L. S. Kilroy is giving a book reading and author Q & A session at a local, Boston-area bookstore;

one of the many presentations she’s become accustomed to doing since releasing her first novel, “*The Vitruvian Heir*,” in January of 2015. She’s dark-haired, and neat as a pinstripe, sitting behind a pop-up table that holds notes, and copies of her book. The chic, turquoise handbag sitting at her feet exactly matches her book’s cover. She’s the picture of poise, although her boyfriend confesses she’s been nervous

about this event all day, but no one would ever know. Doubtless, it was teaching high school for five years that allows her to speak in front of the public and sound like a pro. She looks demure, but her appearance belies her intellect. She has some dark and significant themes to explore in her dystopian new novel. Life is not all lemon cakes and tea parties in straitlaced Vitruvia.

## Before reading aloud from the Prologue, Kilroy sets up the back story for her audience:

In a world two-hundred years or so hence, a devastating series of natural disasters destroys governments and economies. In what used to be the United States, stunned survivors back the strongest leader, who ultimately makes himself Emperor. Under this new, ultra-conservative regime, society is forced back into the rigidly-mannered structure of the Victorian and Edwardian social structure. Away with lewdness and vulgarity! Women, back into corsets ye shall go! Females can only look forward to the day when an arranged marriage brings them closer to their higher calling, popping out a family.

In this new world order called Vitruvia, history is rewritten (or forbidden), society has regressed, women are repressed, and the poor are oppressed. These themes, along with very inventive technology and a few fantasy elements, are what conjure the steampunk genre. Kilroy's main character, aristocrat Lorelei Featherstone, is about to graduate from the school where she's been taught how to be a proper Vitruvian, and little else. She's slated to marry one fellow but is in love with another. Not allowed to drive her own carriage, appear in public without a husband, or even write (her passion!), Lore and two companions run away to neighboring Hopespoke, looking for asylum. Lore finds much more there: answers about the past, and the possibility for a new Vitruvia, if she can just contrive it.

Kilroy reads her prologue aloud to her audience (get a taste at Ama-



Kilroy at an author reading

zon.com's "The Vitruvian Heir" page), then opens up for a question and answer session. She elaborates a bit on the possibility of the book becoming a graphic novel, mentioning meeting comic book illustrator Nathan Massengill (a DC and Marvel Comics alum) online. He had read "The Vitruvian Heir," and thought it might make a good graphic novel, as it didn't overwhelm the reader with too many visual details, and left room for an artist to embellish. "I like to be clear about what the world looks like while still allowing readers to visualize it for themselves," Kilroy says later. Massengill's own work, "Viscera: Epic Frail" (read it at <http://ringrunning.com/read-it-now>), explores similar themes of extreme misogyny and women's rights, and it is sort of "Sarah Connor" meets "Sin City" in its exposition. As exciting as the possibility is, Kilroy admits the road to translating "The Vitruvian Heir" into a graphic novel would be a long one, longer perhaps than the path she took to publishing her own book independently. But doing so would bring the story to new audiences. "There aren't that many steampunk

comic books, and I think strong female titles are underrepresented in that world, so I'm hoping to make a statement."

## Writers publishing themselves: from *outré* to indie

Though Kilroy did query publishers and agents with her novel, she ultimately decided to publish "The Vitruvian Heir" herself. She says she was encouraged by friends who had already undertaken the process and had actually enjoyed it. "I did want to attempt to be 'traditionally published' because I felt and still feel that there's a stigma around doing it yourself," she says later. But, "I wanted to get my story into the hands of readers before it became irrelevant and without waiting for some finicky agent to decide my work was good enough for them to represent. I think it's good enough and readers are mirroring this sentiment so that's all that matters.

"You need to remain organized at all times. But once you've uploaded your files on createspace or whichever platform you decide to use – that's when the hard part starts. Marketing...it's a bitch." Kilroy has experience in the field, and a Masters in Writing and Publishing. Self-promotion, like the author meet-and-greets she does at book stores and fairs, takes up much spare time that she would like to devote to writing new stuff. But even if she had gone with traditional publishing, Kilroy says, she would still be expected to do the kind of marketing and networking she's already doing for her book. So where is the advantage of waiting to be accepted by a traditional publisher?

**“I fought this battle thirty years ago. I never thought I would be fighting it again!”**

### **History, and the danger of repeating it, is the inspiration for *The Vitruvian Heir***

Kilroy describes finding the inspiration for her novel in two real-world movements—one, “L’Escadron Volant (the Flying Squadron),” a group of female spies organized by Catherine d’Medici in the French court of the sixteenth century, whose purpose was to infiltrate themselves into positions of confidence with highly-positioned men, learn their secrets, and report back to the Queen. Kilroy asked herself, “What if a future version of the United States had somehow come under the control of an emperor who commanded that everything be returned to the Victorian and Edwardian periods – women were stripped of rights, had to wear corsets, were forced into arranged marriages, etc.? And what if there was a woman who was running this underground circle of female spies trained to extract information from powerful men? What if she was planning a coup? What if she sent her best girl in to charm the emperor himself? But then the girl falls in love with him . . .” Kilroy admits the love story was her teen-aged sensibility at the time—she learned about “L’Escadron Volant” in high school History class—but the idea stayed with her.

Then around the time Kilroy began to seriously think about writing a novel, female contra-

ception and reproductive rights were again in the news. “I started researching very restrictive laws that many states were quietly trying to pass. Weird and upsetting bill proposals like if a woman is pregnant and the fetus dies, she should be forced to carry the dead child to term. And throughout this, I kept hearing a lot of women saying things like, ‘I fought this battle thirty years ago. I never thought I would be fighting it again,’ and those words stuck with me while I was writing.

“While it’s frightening to conceive a dystopian future full of new challenges for humanity,” Kilroy continues, “I think what’s even more terrifying is the idea that we keep repeating our mistakes as a society and there’s a very real possibility that our civilization could regress to that point again. It’s already happened to women in other countries. And it’s not just happening to women but to people within the LGBT community and among minorities. It’s chilling to me that in 2015, our civil liberties are still under the threat of ignorance, intolerance, and radical agendas.”



**Kilroy attends steampunk festivals to promote her book**

“The publishing industry is evolving and it seems like now is the best time to be indie,” she adds— “indie author” being the term self-published writers prefer. Issuing “The Vitruvian Heir” independently also gives Kilroy a finished hard copy to present to prospective agents, which is a plus when shopping the work around. She’s got ideas for a Vitruvian trilogy too, as well as that graphic novel. But, while she’s hesitant about committing to a trilogy, Kilroy admits she has the rest of the story, or part of it, already in mind (Be

**A Catherine d’Medici Ball at the Court of Henri III**





"Getting ti out there"

assured though that "The Vitruvian Heir" makes its own story, trilogy notwithstanding.).

Later, when asked to elaborate on her plans for a series of Vitruvian books, Kilroy explains. "I never wanted to outright commit to a trilogy, but I do have two more books conceived to continue the story. The second will pick up about one year after the first book ends, and then the third will be set another seventeen years into the future. Readers will see what else has been going on in the world while Vitruvia has been shut off from it. I imagine that other areas have similarly regressed - but others have moved forward. There will be a host of new characters - heroes, villains, and those in-between. Of course, there will be tensions, intrigue, attempted takeovers, invasions, a kidnapping, a

soldier with a unique disability, and a multi-dimensional child."

## What is steampunk; Slippery genres

Though "The Vitruvian Heir" is promoted as a steampunk novel, Kilroy is not exclusively a writer in that genre. She explains that "Although [it] is my first published work, none of my other writing can be classified as steampunk. I normally write straight literary fiction or young adult type fiction, and much of what I write are short stories. These pieces usually focus on characters who find themselves at a crossroads and are coping with the strange period of limbo that comes with that, which is likely and ironically the period where they become illuminated about themselves. My favorite

way to write is to have each chapter be from another character's perspective so I often alternate in that way. Much of my content is reflective of personal experiences so I'm almost always writing a fictionalized memoir."

Back at the bookstore, the Q & A is heating up. When asked what she considers steampunk, she answers "Science-fiction meets the Victorian era." She mentions Jules Verne and "The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen," which gets a nod or two from the audience. "The Vitruvian Heir" is a bit different though, she says, and might even be considered a bit cyberpunk, as it combines a Neo-Victorian society with dystopian and industrial elements, with a soupçon of the wild west. The technology featured in the novel is not even steam-powered. It's yoc-to-powered: tiny microbes smaller

than nanos which interact with each other, and are used to produce energy and operate machinery. Kilroy mentions “‘The Diamond Age’ by Neal Stephenson, another novel, and a particularly good one, that sets its action in a Neo-Victorian dystopia, and uses nanotechnology instead of steam. With more futuristic (yet plausible) science behind and within it, “The Diamond Age” reads as cyberpunk, or post-cyberpunk. The differences in genre between “The Vitruvian Heir” and “The Diamond Age” are slippery, but many readers don’t worry with arguments of nomenclature—though writers of internet comments on steampunk forum boards often do.

Kilroy recommends “Steampunk! An Anthology of Fantastically Rich and Strange Stories” by Gavin Grant and Kelly Link as an enjoyable journey into the genre for audience members curious about the steampunk movement, at least in literature. She names Aldous Huxley and George Orwell’s works as inspirations for the dystopian Vitruvia, and the writers Jane Austen, Mary Shelley, and the Brontës (later, she adds more classic literary authors Charles Dickens, Edith Wharton, and Dorothy Parker, with a laundry list of others) as those she has enjoyed all her life. Then comes the question from the audience, “How do you feel about The “Vitruvian Heir” being compared to “The Handmaid’s Tale” by Margaret Atwood?”

“I’ve never read that [book] but I love the compliment,” she says. Atwood has written over 50 novels, short story collections, collections of poetry, and non-fiction books, and won the Arthur C. Clarke award, and a Booker Prize. “The Handmaid’s Tale” is also set in a future dystopia where women have no civil, legal,

or reproductive rights. Atwood was, in 1985, the year of its publication, responding to the then-recent controversies regarding these rights, just as Kilroy was (see Sidebar: “I fought this battle thirty years ago. I never thought I would be fighting it again!”).

“Is “The Vitruvian Heir” a Young Adult novel,” someone asks next. The young heroine faces coming-of-age issues in a future dystopia, like many currently popular books of this genre (“The Hunger Games,” “Divergent”); Kilroy’s character Lore works to overcome and change the world she lives in, and ultimately succeeds. “I’m a huge fan of YA books so I’m not surprised that many people are considering “The Vitruvian Heir” as part of this genre,” Kilroy says. “I wrote it with the idea of a teen and above audience in mind. Personally, I think some of the content is a bit dark and wouldn’t recommend that anyone under fourteen read it, but then I’ve heard from a bookstore manager that it’s pretty tame compared to what the kids are reading these days.”

## Get yourself some more of L. S. Kilroy

The bookstore Q&A winds down, and Kilroy plugs her upcoming appearances. She begins to sign the copies of her book brought, or bought, by the audience, personalizing each with the individual’s name, and a “Thanks for your support!” She chats warmly with everyone, which at this event, includes several family members.

Did she sell many books that night? Though that *is* the point of a book signing, it’s not *really* the point—

getting the book’s cover noticed, getting chatter going about the book and its author, getting her picture in the window of the bookstore announcing her appearance— all these things are tiny movements in a process that increases visibility and builds word-of-mouth, ultimately resulting (hopefully) in later sales. That’s the truth of a writing life. After the hard work of writing the thing, comes the hard work of promoting it. Marketing *may* be a Bitch, so better to make friends with her.

“The Vitruvian Heir” is available on Amazon, Kindle, Barnes & Noble, Nook, iTunes eBooks, and Kobo eBooks.

*Find more info about L.S. Kilroy at her website [www.lskilroy.com](http://www.lskilroy.com)*

*Like her on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/authorlskilroy](http://www.facebook.com/authorlskilroy)*



Celia Bannan (aka Captain Killian Jameson) writes a Victorian-era time-travel adventure serial, called Captain Killian and the Coin-Operated Boy. It can be found and followed at [captain-killian.wordpress.com](http://captain-killian.wordpress.com).



# Anime Midwest

By Sarah Harris  
Photos by Sarah Harris

900 pictures. The most cosplayed were My Little Pony, Naruto, and Steven Universe.

The Anime Midwest convention (Hyatt Regency O'Hare & Convention Center, Rosemont, IL) lasted from Friday July 3 through Sunday July 5, attending both Friday and Saturday. We were greeted by numerous people in cosplay and a staff that was accommodating and friendly. We ended up taking over

What I have learned about cosplay is that some people are so dedicated that they might put on a mask that was finished hours before so they are smelling paint fumes and barely eat. Luckily there are smoothies at Starbucks® as to get some nutrition through a straw, at least. There was a lady in the Starbucks® line who said that her costume was so complex that she physically needs someone to help her undress so she can use the bathroom.

Another woman made a Deadpool® pyramid head for a friend. She was so dedicated to her first cosplay requested creation that she followed him around & sewed whatever tiny little rips she would find on the costume.

The convention staff was more than accommodating. They, somehow, could smile no matter what task



was there. They never looked upset over any bump in the road. A few convention operations workers never even had the chance to sleep. Caffeine and parties fuel everything at a convention. Nonetheless, if anyone had a question or needed something convention operations were right there to help everyone.

For me, the highlight of the convention was the maid cafe. At \$15 it was more than worth it if you wanted entertainment and somewhere to sit while feeling a bit like royalty, this was the perfect place.

While you waited to be seated, butlers would be outside, blowing bubbles or dancing. Finally, after waiting for your table, it was like walking into the entrance of *Ouron High School Host Club*® (except with maids, and no extravagant flowers or

balloons). You can request a butler or maid if you wish. We were lucky and received both.

We did not take too many pictures due to wanting to keep the butlers and maids in character and not to distract them.

During your stay at the maid cafe, you may be seated with strangers, so everyone experiences the same magical service. You all have the same maid/butler waiting on you and whatever happens, you are all sure to get a laugh at some point in your stay. For example, on day two





of the convention, we received cake (which is standard) but we were able to request a drawing made with raspberry, chocolate, or caramel syrup. Since our maid enjoyed *Invader Zim*, I requested a piggy. It was the worst piggy drawing ever. Because of that, it was hilariously fantastic. Then, we were asked if we wanted whipped cream. Being sweet, delicious, whipped cream, which is just so fluffy and good I requested whipped cream all over my plate. Lo and behold, the maid puts whipped cream ALL over my plate. She then gets yelled at by another maid. Harley, our maid, reminds the other maid that there are ten cans in the back. It was quite a performance. Many laughs were had. Yet another maid heard about the whipped cream all over the plate and had to come over to see if this rumor was true.

To close your experience in the maid cafe, there is a maid dance in which all maids participate. Afterward, you can request pictures with them. At this point during your experience, we recommend that you tip your maid and/or butler since they are volunteers. They work hard and everyone does a fantastic job.

The Hyatt® themselves tried to accommodate everyone who participated at the convention. A list of all the panels and events at the convention was located by the concierge. One of the most convenient rooms was by convention operations was the ramen room. Instant ramen bowls and

rice balls were served free with your convention pass. Once your ramen or rice ball was cooked, there was a condiments stand available, offering soy sauce, parmesan cheese, or sriracha.

We were so busy and overwhelmed by the convention that our attempt to try to meet up with the elusive Steam Powered Giraffe musical project was futile. We'll admit we met a ton of awesome people who loved to converse with us and the

costumes we saw were vast and amazing. This made us lose track of time, which we don't regret. We made friends and had fun. The Anime Midwest convention was exhausting, but was a great success.













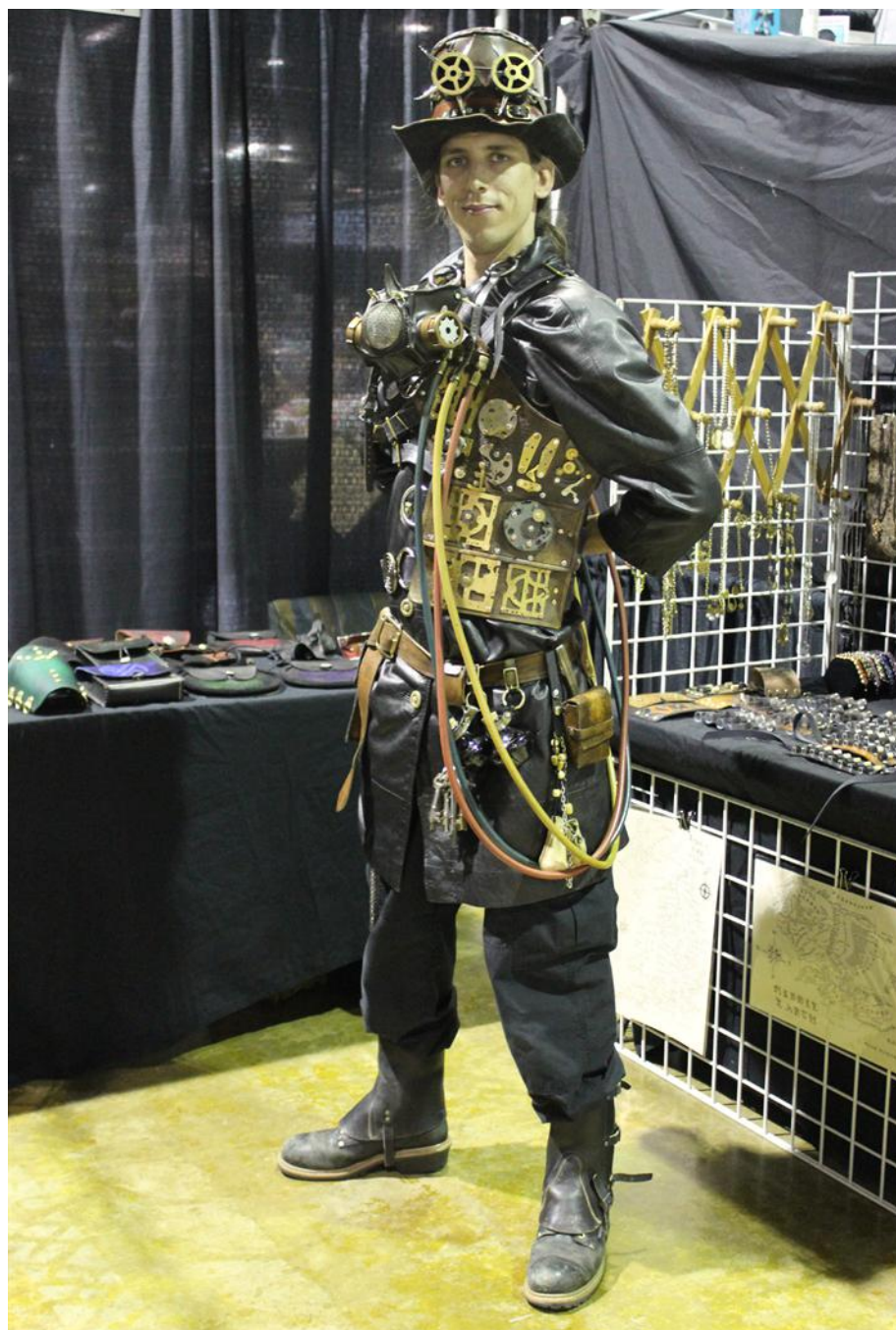
















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