

# LIFE IN THE WORLD OF KEYSTONE, v1.1

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## 1 - Welcome to the World of Keystone

As a citizen of the new world, the world forged from the remnants of the pre-Cataclysm nations, you may have noticed that some things have rightly changed over the last twenty years. Heck, for that matter, things were never the same since the Difference Engines were first erected in the United States of America and the United Kingdom in 1830. Most of you have never known peace and prosperity in your time, whether your people ran to keep up with progress, faced off against tyrants or eke a meager survival during desperate times. Now, with the Second Cardiff Expedition underway, leading thousands of people to the new Continent, things aren't likely to calm down anytime soon. If you hope to keep up with the many changes that are underway, you best pay attention and figure out how things are done.

## 2 - Gettin' Around

Thanks to their industrial might, the United States and the United Kingdom have fielded a respectable number of Ironclads, large metal ships that can brave the terrors of the Shattered Seas. Whatever unspoken horrors lurk in the dregs of the earth that lurk between the islands of the Cardiff Nations, Ironclads are more than capable of weathering whatever hardships the Seas throw at them.

Now, an Ironclad fleet without a proper Navigator is sure to get lost in the foggy, murky depths of the Unknown. These eccentric men and women have a knack for navigating across oceans that seem to defy every maritime tool used in common practice. Aware of their worth, these people banded several years ago into a self-governing organization that calls themselves the Navigator's Union. Independent of all national ties, they ply their trade to the Cardiff nations in order to maintain maritime trade between them. All three governments seek to uncover the Navigators' secrets, but all have failed. It is best to give them a wide berth, as they are accustomed to people wishing them harm.

Once on land, most people get around by railroad. These large mechanical locomotors ride along tracks to transport many people and resources across long distances. It is said that the latest railroads can cover almost 500 miles in a day, far further than by horse and cart! If you need to travel between cities, or across an empty expanse, you are best wanting to wait for the next railroad. Be warned that railroads do not travel very often. If you miss the next scheduled train, you may be waiting for days, even weeks, before the next one makes the same trip.

There are many other mechanical vehicles in use by the United States and the United Kingdom, but these are mainly used by the military or the extravagantly rich. Best known are the treaded war machines, popularly called "Juggernauts" or "Treads" by the everyday joe. Mounted with cannons, these machines are able to rain artillery several miles away. Best avoid them if you come upon any.

Once out in the frontier, there is no means of transportation more reliable than a good horse. A good horse, properly cared for, can move you about forty miles in a day. Best of all, it ain't your feet that's doing the treadin', so more power to you. Most settlements will have one or two people hankering to buy or sell horses. Just make sure you buy yourself one in good shape, so keep an eye out for bowed backs or cracked hooves. Last thing you want is for your horse to give out when you're in the middle of nowhere.

### 3 - Buyin' and Sellin'

Fifty years of social unrest, wars and detentes made it very difficult for nations to trust each others' currency. Add to that the breakdown of any kind of economic infrastructure after The Cataclysm, and what you have is an economy that relies mainly on barter to exchange goods and services.

Cardiff Credits, backed by the Gold Repository of Cardiff, has slowly started to gain trust among merchants. It helps that every Cardiff settlement has a Cardiff Store, at which you can purchase goods from the United States, the UK and Rome, as well as any good that have been apportioned to settlers in the new world. Most locals will take Cardiff Credits for a chance to purchase something grandiose or exotic from the "foreigner store".

As of late, a few independent merchant houses have taken to minting special gold coins, which they call *ducats* (duckets.) Each is carefully weighed and lacquered with a special varnish, so as to prevent tampering. These houses guarantee that, so long as the lacquer has not been tampered with, they will honor the value of these coins. As of now, gold ducats are measured to be worth about 10 Cardiff Credits each, but that price may fluctuate with the value of gold.

### 4 - Everyday Amenities

The average person lives wherever they can find housing, usually commensurate to their means. For the everyday joe, that usually means a modest wood home with curtains, tapestries on the walls to keep out the cold and a simple, tiled floor. For those of means, the sky's the limit when it comes to the extravagancies they may own. For example, some well-to-do establishments may rely on their own natural gas feed to keep warm, may have running water from their own mechanical pump, or may even have mechanical storage units for keeping food cold. There are rumors of some eccentric scientists playing with something called "electricity", but nothing has come of it as of yet.

Since keeping warm and safe are such chores in the new world, most people gather at the local Common Hall or Saloon once the sun sets. There is safety in numbers, plus it is much more affordable to keep one larger room warm than several small ones. Besides, there is little more soothing after a hard day's labor than a whiskey nightcap.

There are several popular pastimes to keep people busy. Most Saloons hire local entertainment to play the piano, sing, dance or recite plays from faraway lands. Gambling is popular as well. Draw Poker, Stud Poker and Faro are very popular games, although Pai Gow Poker and Mahjong have started to gain a following. Every now and then, some stranger brings a game from their homeland, such as Bocce (Rome), Cricket (UK) or Court Ball (New Lhasa), which usually leads to a pleasant afternoon's entertainment.

It is every person's business who they choose with whom they share their bed. The modern age has made such taboos obsolete. Because of this, people now pay for company as much, if not more, than what happens at the end of the night. In fact, it is considered respectable work to ply your trade as a professional companion or courtesan, both for men and women. Such arrangements are considered to be private, none of your business and tacky for anyone to stir up gossip about them. Individual nations may have more specific peculiarities with such practices ("No, my dear, she's also an Aristo, so this is a liaison. Perfectly acceptable!"), but they should not supercede what is listed here.

## 5 - Earning a Livin' Wage (And Spendin' It!)

The average unskilled laborer earns about 20CC/month, while most skilled labor earns about 30-40CC/month. A master in their field can usually name their price, although that will depend entirely on who's buying. The average person can subsist on about 20-30CC/month, which covers basic meals, room-and-board and little else. A successful tradesman will usually spend 30-40CC/month, which will include meals, room-and-board, and some light entertainment, such as the occasional show or trip to the saloon. Beyond that, luxuries and higher-quality amenities depend on how much you are willing to spend. A fancy lady or lord could spend as much as 100CC/month to live in the lap of luxury, although supply may not be able to keep up with them. After all, this is the frontier, where one rarely find wine and cheese shops or caviar vendors.

By and large, most everyday knick-knacks go for about 1-2CC each, such as a toothbrush, comb, simple shirt or blouse, canteen, hatchet, a shot of whiskey or a tin of shoe polish. In other words, if it has a simple, cosmetic benefit, it tends to fall under knick-knack. Once you get into tools, trade expenses or specialty goods, prices can go up as high as 10-20CC. This list can include a pick-axe, an axe, a tea set, handcuffs, drill and file, a duster, a saddle, a cooking kit or a bottle of champagne. If the item is relevant to a trade, or is considered a special, high-end cosmetic item, it falls under this category. Lastly, once you get into specialized goods that cannot be manufactured in the area, the price for these items can go up to 30-50CC, such as jeweler's tools, etching tools or a professional calligrapher's set.

## 6 - Communications

The Courier's Guild was formed during the first days of the Treaty of Cardiff, as it was apparent to all nations that open communications were key to their mutual prosperity. However, in order to everyone to trust the Guild, it needed to operate outside of Cardiff purview. As such, the Courier's Guild operates outside of any other organization's jurisdiction, their sole purpose to maintain open lines of communications with all nations that accept their charter.

Nowadays, you can find Courier's in nearly every settlement. You can generally trust a Courier to take your parcel and deliver it to their local office, after which it enters the delivery system. A parcel can take anywhere from two to six months to arrive to its destination, depending on distance, ocean travel or any current concerns. Just remember that all parcels must have a Mail ticket affixed to them, to show that you've properly paid for the service. No ticket, no delivery.

Difference Engines can communicate nearly instantaneously with each other, thanks to a dedicated mechanical system of axles and crankshafts that is nicknamed "The Pipeline". So long as both Engines are running at either end, someone can enter their message at one end and have it produced at the other end with almost no lost time. Currently, there is one pipeline going between Fortress Laramie and Omaha, while there are presumably many more scouring the United States and the United Kingdom. It is rumored that the Courier's Guild has a deal with those nations to use their Difference Engine message systems to speed up delivery time, but that is a service that is offered by invitation only.

## 7 - The Rule of Law

All Cardiff settlements obey a complicated series of rules, designed to enforce public trust, while allowing ambassadors to maintain the sovereignty of their citizens. At any moment, you can find yourself under the purview of UK Law, Cardiff Law, US Law or Roman Law, each taking precedent depending on the situation. Here is a quick and dirty summation of how the law works for the Cardiff nations:

- Every Cardiff settlement has a Sheriff, whose job is to maintain peace and order in their jurisdiction. Provided that no international disputes are involved, their word takes precedence.
- The Cardiff Marshals handle any matters of justice that exist outside of a single settlement. They have the backing of the Cardiff Nations and, as such, can supercede diplomatic law in matters assigned to them.
- Every settlement should have an ambassador for each of the Cardiff Nations. If the interests of their nation are being violated in the pursuit of justice, they have the right to relegate matters into their own hands.
- Disputes that involve more than one nation are to be settled between their respective ambassadors.
- The involved parties in a dispute can call on the Right of the Duel, which allows them to settle the matter with pistols, either at dawn (UK tradition) or at high noon (US tradition). They can fight themselves, or hire a Second to fight for them. First one down loses the dispute, much to their shame.

As you can imagine, handling matters of law is as much diplomacy and negotiation as it is a matter of justice. It is not uncommon for people with ties to various nations to hire themselves as professional Arbiters, or for gunslingers to make a career as a professional Second. Regardless, maintaining the peace has never been so darn complicated!

By contrast, the non-Cardiff nations have no agreed-upon arrangement for legal matters between nations. If you are involved in some wrong-doing in another nation's territory... well, I wish you the best of luck. You are about as safe as your countrymen care to make a fuss. There are plenty of rumors about those who've wandered too far towards New Lhasa or the People's lands, all of whom have disappeared without a trace. Furthermore, while the Cardiff Marshals have the backing of all Cardiff nations, the Continentals have no such equivalent group. As such, Cardiff lawmen will often act with much more authority than Continental lawmen. On the frontier, it all comes down to who has the greater backing.

## 8 - The Right of the Duel

The Right of the Duel is the only means to resolve disputes that has been accepted by all nations in the world of Keystone. All nations have agreed on the following set of steps when conducting a duel:

- The offended party declares their intent to duel to the offender, as well as a time and place.

Traditionally, most duels take place at dawn, as is done in the United Kingdom, the noon hour, as per the American tradition of “High Noon”, or dusk. However, this is only tradition; a duel can happen at any time the instigator chooses.

As duels are big to-do’s, they tend to happen in public locations. Not only does this bring the cause of the duel to light, but it also provides plenty of witness to ensure a fair duel.

- The offended party declares the severity of the duel, which can be:

“To Shame” Whoever is unable to fight from injury loses the duel.

“To Blood” Whoever is “Knocked Out” first loses the duel.

“To Death” Whoever is “Done For” first loses. Also, if the grievance and the duel are fair, the loser will not return as a Revenant if killed, same as with a proper Lynchin’ and Hangin’.

- At the time of the duel, a third party, known as the Officiator, will present pistols to the two duelists. That person must have loaded the pistols and must verify that they are in equal working order. It is up to the Officiator to decide on the pistols to be used.
- Once ready, both duelists stand back-to-back. The Officiator then calls upon them to separately say “Ready!”, then counts from one to five. The duelists step with each count, then turn and start shooting on five.
- Whoever wins the duel may shame the loser by calling: “I shame you! Drain to Minor Foe!” Alternatively, the opponent may shame their foe if they refuse or walk out on the duel. It is very poor form to bully people into unjust duels. Expect to suffer if you do so.
- If Seconds are employed, all consequences of a duel are delivered by and target the person(s) who hired them. In other word, if a Second loses a Duel To Death, the winner shames the hirer instead of the Second, and it is the hirer who won’t return as a Revenant if killed.

Duels are serious business, so be darn sure you’re ready for the consequences if you call someone out!

## 9 - Choose your Way of Life

People on the frontier gravitate towards one of two extremes in their thinking:

On one hand, you are the pride of your nation, here to show the rest of the world a better way of life. Your nation's traditions are paramount, even in the face of hardship and adversity. Your way of life is the only thing that separates you from savagery. In order for society to thrive, people like you must do your part in maintaining your nation's social order.

On the other hand, you are out here, on your own, with only the people around you to help you survive another day. Getting fresh water, food and shelter is more important than any cultural quirks you and everyone else may have. Traditions are fine and all, but when has national pride ever fed you, or kept you warm at night. Best for you and everyone else to put your differences aside and watch each other's back.

Where you decide to fall on that scale is entirely up to you. Each side has its benefits, while forcing you to give something of yourself up. Whatever stance you choose to take, just make sure you can still sleep at night and look at yourself in the mirror. Hold onto whatever gives you strength, because life on the frontier only gets harder as time goes by.