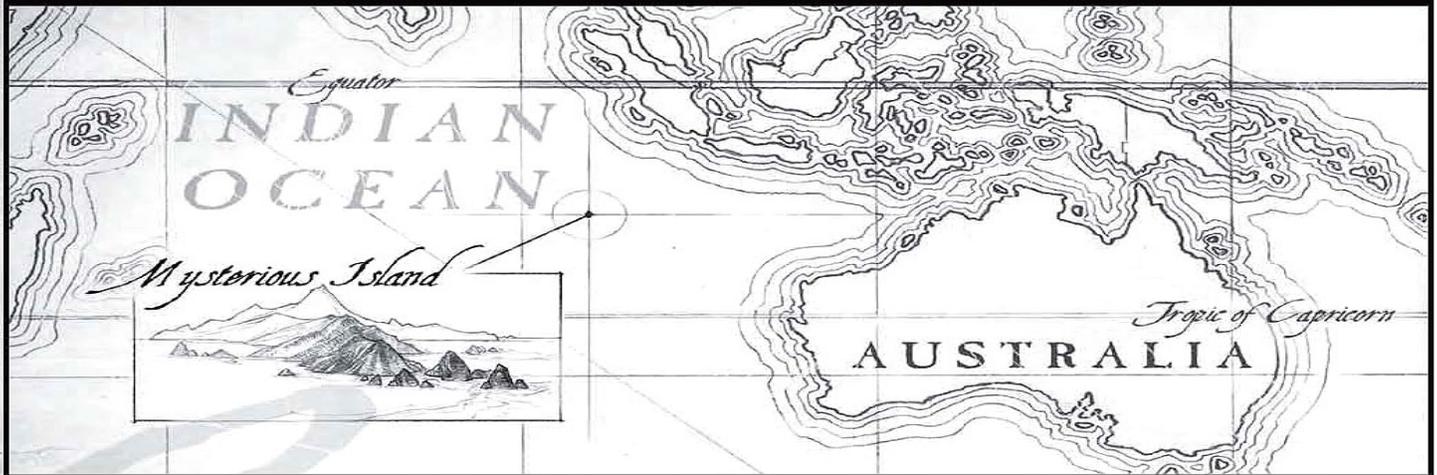


# HOLLOW EARTH EXPEDITIONS MECHANICAL HUNTERS

## FIELD NOTES:

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This is an Unofficial supplement to the world of *Hollow Earth Expeditions* and the Ubiquity system.

**Field Notes** are short, one shot encounters or introductions to creatures, places and things found throughout the world (both out and within). They are small and lack "area" details so that they may be dropped into an existing campaign without great effort. Enjoy.

## Day 217

We are all wounded, and still being hunted by those accursed machines. We've managed to avoid three, and I believe we were successful in destroying one, but I cannot be sure as Paul Bryce would not let me go examine the wreckage. Currently we are hidden within one of the many ruins found within this valley. The others are hopeful that we can find shelter deeper within the forest, or possibly a way out of the valley on the far side.

You see, approximately 14 and a half hours ago we arrived in this valley. We entered through an ancient tunnel, likely of

First Walker construction, but when our group cleared the passage, a large metal door, not of their construction, slid down and blocked the passage.

All the walls of this valley are at least 100 feet tall, sheer and climbable. My guess is that this valley is man made, and given the angle of curvature of the walls, perhaps 20 miles across. The interior is filled with a dense forest, comprised mostly of evergreens, but a number of species of deciduous trees are scattered about.

We elected to strike out across, heading for what looks like a structure near the center. A normal days walk, but we proceeded with caution. We were, perhaps, a mile in when the first machine attacked.

Body is round, about the size of an inflatable beach ball, approximately 36 inches across, with 3 long, thin, triangular legs that end in sharp points. The legs are attached to the round body by hinges and pistons. The overall height of the machine is around 4 feet at the top of the dome.

Top half rotates all the way around, like a turret. A fixed yellow crystal lenses about the size of a mans fist, with two smaller crystals set beside, one above the other. Each of the smaller ones is around the size of a jacket button. I believe those are the "eyes" of the machine.

A short smokestack goes up about 6 inches from just off center, opposite of the "eye," with a thin stream of white smoke or steam almost always coming out. The smoke only seems to stop when the machine is sitting still. It must be exhaust from some form of engine or generator, although the only sound they make is a "hiss" when it fires its disk weapon. What is their power source? I must find out.

There are weapons on lower body, one between each leg pair. It seems to be able to fire in one direction at a time, whatever way the "eye" is currently facing. The weapons are disk launchers, firing a sharp flat disk the size of a peace dollar (about 1.5 inches). It seems to be able to fire around 15 to 20 shots in a set, before it has to stop for a moment. The rate of fire seems to be similar to that of my Webley revolver.

We noticed that once every hour, all of the machines stop for 5 minutes, even when it is chasing someone. During this time, a great amount of smoke or steam comes from the stack. We dared not approach to investigate, although we did fire on one from range, knocking it to the ground. It appeared to take no actions as we shot it. Incredible pieces of mechanical engineering.

When the first machine attacked, we were caught in a small clearing. It fired its disk weapon, and charged toward us. Thur-Long struck it with his spear while others attacked with pistol, but most of our attacks just

bounced off its metal shell. In a brilliant tactic, Rufus covered the "eye" of the machine with his jacket. This caused it to stumble about aimlessly while we made our escape.

Two other machines we were able to escape by outrunning them and hiding among some ruins. They appear to have difficulty tracking us when we remain motionless, but seem to recognize a man standing still. Astounding how a machine can track a moving man, and more so that it can recognize the difference between a Tree or Rock and a Man who is just standing there. Fascinating.

Thur-Long and Bryce believe there may be as many as a dozen walking around looking for us, and those are not good odds. In a moment, we are going to try for a group of ruins several hundred yards away, moving from ruin to ruin in short jogs every time they shut down each hour.

Bryce is worried that we are being "herded," like cattle, into some form of trap, and that both fascinates and terrifies me. What level of Mechanical Intelligence do these machines possess? As I said, incredible pieces of mechanical engineering.

## *Mystery of the Hunters*

Although apparently not of First Walker construction, the valley the Hunters occupy seem ideal for them. With no easy way to exit, and thick trees and little vegetation to hinder their movement, the area is idea for them to track prey.

But who constructed them, and for what purpose? Are they guardians for someone living deeper in the valley? Or perhaps form of experiment in mechanical intelligence, an unmanned war machine?

Whatever their purpose, those unlucky enough to enter into the valley will likely never exit...