

Hydraulic Dowsing Rods

Description: A Y-shaped wooden stick, encased in brass wires, gears, a glass reservoir in the crook of the Y, a small steam engine and whistle in the base, and a few pressure gauges here and there. Basically, it all looks very steampunk, right down to the occasional puff of steam.

Powers: liquid detection. Pour a liquid in the reservoir, activate the steam engine, and start dowsing. When the Hydraulic Dowsing Rod comes within fifty feet of a liquid that matches one in the reservoir, the whistle starts blowing. The closer the liquid, the louder the whistle.

*Is the Hydraulic Dowsing Rod magical? Well, no more so than any other piece of steampunk technology in the campaign. The engineer who invented them swore up and down that the Rods operated on strictly rational lines -- and then proceeded to spout off paragraph after paragraph of Rubber Science, so there's that. The Rods certainly *work*, though.*

Ironically, they're not that great at finding water (or, rather, they'll home in on the water in a person's body). They're pretty great at tracking oil, though. Or perfume, alcohol, gasoline, ichor, Chemical X, acid, super-serum -- if it's a liquid in its natural form and won't eat through the glass reservoir, the Hydraulic Dowsing Rod can track it. Virtually every customs agency in the world uses Rods, if they can afford them. And a remarkable number of criminal groups use Rods, too. It's an excellent way to make sure that a smuggled liquid cargo actually is what it's supposed to be, for example.

All of which is to note that a Hydraulic Dowsing Rod is a valuable piece of equipment. It's also well worth looting -- but people will notice it if somebody has one. And those in authority will want to know how, and where, its owner got it originally. They're not illegal items; just ones *of interest*. Sometimes that's worse than just being illegal.

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