

Mini Scenario 12

The Marvellous Automaton

"See the modern miracle of our age!"

Summary

This is a (probably) single-scene bar room brawl-style fight in the streets of Strangerside. It is aimed at the more combat-oriented members of the party (Flame, Fish Trader and Walker). Slight's and Wishbone's magic will be completely useless (though Hawk will be able to spot and track Why until he gets out of range, and Slight could spot that Comity is not who she seems). Rathgard's crowd control could prove useful.

The set-up is ostensibly a street entertainment that goes horribly wrong, but this is a ruse. Why has come up with a prototype Clockwork Warrior and wants to test it out in an actual combat situation against humans in Everway, but without alerting the Everway authorities. The strongest fighters he knows are the heroes. He doesn't want to harm them, so the warrior's weapons will be blunted, but collateral damage is definitely a possibility.

Visions

- A large clockwork golem-type figure lurching out of control through the streets of Strangerside, firing laser beams(?) out of its ruby eyes.
- "Uh oh". A red-headed figure takes off from a building in an egg-shaped personal helicopter and flies away.

Characters

- **"Comity Soubrette"** (real name: Terrible Motley). A woman huckster, encouraging the crowd to "come and see the Marvellous Automaton, fresh from the Civil Kingdom!" She is being paid by Brander Smith.

Background - The Crow Conspiracy

The Crows and the Smiths are building an army that is unaffected by the Pyramid.

- **Freedom Crow** is the instigator – he wants to unseat the Emeralds because he doesn't think they are taking the threats to Everway seriously enough.
- He is aware that any coup attempt could be frustrated by Ulrich Crookstaff (he knows about the Edge?), and is working with **Nightwing Crookstaff** to remove him.
- He knows that the Palace, the Library and the Armoury are protected by Crookstaff-maintained magicks, so he needs an army that is not susceptible to them. **Brander Smith** has undertaken to provide this and Why is one of a number of people that he has recruited.
- Funding: The **Copper Duke** is funding the Crows from Rath (a scandal if it emerges).
- The Smiths are behind the smuggling of gold into Everway. Hidden in supplies of ore from the Red Mountains. Illicit relationship with **Prickling Sand**, who is raiding shipments of gold from the Blacksand Desert mines. The Diggers, desperate for gold, are paying through the nose for it. The money is being used to kit out Why and his laboratory in the Whitetop Mountains.

The Plot

Opening: Ideally, the heroes encounter Comity and the Automaton in Talespinners Square. Alternatively, an excited gang member comes in and tells everyone to come and see it.

Interaction: The heroes see the Automaton in operation (headstands, juggles with eggs, ballet moves), and may get to talk to Comity, who will reply with a pre-written patter about its construction by the genius inventor **Polymath Valiance**. Slight or Rathgard will spot that she

is lying.

Rising Tension: The appearance of the heroes is the cue for the Automaton to start to go off the rails. Its head turns as if following the conversation, particularly if the heroes are openly skeptical. It rises and picks up a plank. This is a genuine surprise to Comity who orders to stop - it does for a moment, but then a cog springs out of its head and it starts to move again.

Conflict: The automaton starts to swing the plank around, smashing nearby restaurant tables. Sparks emanate from its shiny body and heat shimmers from its head. Destructive flash and fire bombs launch from its shoulders. Blades spring out from its arms. The heroes have to defeat the out-of-control automaton, deal with the panicking crowds and capture Comity (if they can). It will not be an easy fight.

Climax and Resolution: As the heroes beat up the (probably smoking) remains of the automaton, the more observant among them may notice a red-haired figure in an egg shaped device with whirling sycamore seed-shaped blades take off from a nearby building. It heads towards the north-west, skirting round Everway.

The heroes may be able to capture Comity and question her. She turns out to be a member of the Motley who was hired by a nondescript Everwayan for a considerable sum of money. She suspected that the Civil Kingdom was behind it all, but because an Everwayan was involved, she thought it would be okay.

Notes

Imagine a fight with a giant metal robot in the streets off the Town Hall Square in Tallinn...

What does the Automaton look like?

- Twice the height of a man (12')
- Built of silvery metal
- Bipedal. Big plate-like feet.
- Hips: Move forward-backward on wheel that can also rotate left-right. Does a good impression of a ball and socket. Likewise shoulders
- Movement uses pistons. Not clear how they work.
- Head: Flattened ovoid. Upper surface (and upper surfaces of shoulders and arms) are covered with pyramid-shaped red crystals.
- Eyes: Focusing lenses that can move up/down or left/right.
- Ears: Ear trumpets that look like shells.
- No mouth.
- Hands: 3 fingered claws
- Joints of full of little gears and cogs. They are protected by metal covers.
- Smells: Of oil and hot metal.
- Sounds:
 - Slight whirring as head moves for search
 - A squeak in the left knee joint that Why wasn't able to fix.

What is Why trying to test?

- **Distinguish friend from foe:** Foes have weapons or fire magic. Walker will be targeted because of his staff. Do not attack bystanders.
- **Attack prioritisation:** Use light and missile attacks against bows and magic users. Melee

vs melee attacks.

- **Unpredictable movement:** Can the automaton's responses be predicted?
- **Ability to improvise:** Find missile/melee weapon alternatives from environment.
- **Self-destruct:** Explode when taking too much damage.

Hook

Day, am or pm.

At Talespinners Square

- If the heroes are out and about, they notice that a lot of people are converging on Talespinners Square. "It's the Marvellous Automaton! It's truly a wonder!"

At the Cellars

- If the heroes are in the Cellars, an excited Byrnie comes in. "Boss, boss, come quickly! You've got to come and see this! It's amazing!"

If the heroes decide not to come for any reason, the Automaton goes beserk anyway. The screams and pleas for help should get them to act.

Talespinners Square

- A 15' x 10' x 5' wooden stage has been set up near the fountain in Talespinners Square. Despite this, the square is so packed with people that it is difficult to see. The heroes can muscle their way to the front, or use the Lavender House which has a good view from its front windows.
- On the stage are a chair and table, various props, and two figures. One is a 30-something woman dressed in colourful robes with red and gold stripes. She has long black hair tied in an elaborate set of loops and curls.

More fashion-conscious people than the heroes will recognise that these are Civil Kingdom styles. However, they are too high class for the character that Comity is pretending to be.

- The other, much more imposing, figure, is a 12' high silver-metal simulacrum of a man. Its head is a flattened ovoid with two eye sockets, shell-like ears and no mouth. The torso is a faceted silver metal breast plate dotted with grey-white hemispheres, tapering to a waist where it articulates with a pelvis-shaped lower piece. Its arms are tubes ending in three-fingered claws for hands; small cogs and pistons can be seen where they join at shoulder, elbow and wrist. The legs are attached to wheels that project out of the lower torso piece. The upper half of its head and its shoulders are covered with red pyramidal crystals that gleam in the sun. The automaton keeps perfectly still, balanced on its flat, plate-like feet.
- Depending on when the heroes arrive, they will catch some or all of Comity's spiel. She has a deep contralto voice with a distinct accent. "My name is Comity Soubrette, and I have journeyed many days from the Civil Kingdom to show you the Wonder of the Modern Age - Eidolon, the Marvellous Automaton!" The crowd gasps as, at the mention of its name, the eyes of the automaton light up a deep crimson and it turns its head towards Comity.

The accent is a fair approximation of a Civil Kingdom accent, but again, Comity has overdone it. The heroes have met one Civil Kingdom person, Diligent Politesse, and if they think to ask, their accents are not quite the same. Comity's is broader.

- "Built by my master, Polymath Valiance, using the *latest discoveries* of Civil Kingdom alchemists and natural philosophers, and the *unparalleled* skills of our artisans, the Marvellous Automaton will *thrill* and *amaze* you with its *jaw-dropping* feats of skill and dexterity!"

If Rathgard is present, his truth sense will ping on "my master". Slight's opinion is that the whole thing is an act and a not terribly skilled one at that.

- The Strangerside crowd, are, as usual, interested but skeptical. If the heroes don't come up with heckles of their own, some crowd members ask questions like:
 - What's it made of? "Aureliargentium, a new alloy devised by our Alchemists. It has the strength of steel plate and the lightness of wood."

Flame thinks the name is metallurgical nonsense.
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- What's it run on? "The power of the sun, my friend. See the crystals upon its head and shoulders? They are made of carnelian quartz, a marvellous material found only in the mountains of the Civil Kingdom. It absorbs sunlight and converts it into mechanical fluxion."
- It's magic isn't it? "No, my friend, not a scintilla of magic was used in the construction of the Automaton. Nor is it the product of gods, goddesses, demons or angelic beings. It is a thing of pure natural philosophy, built entirely by the genius of the Civil Kingdom." In the face of continuing skepticism, Comity will invite any magical alchemists or artificers in the audience to examine the Automaton for themselves. The heroes can use this as an excuse to approach.
- What's in it for you? "Why, the opportunity to show the world the superiority of Civil Kingdom technology. And, of course, the hope of a small contribution to my expenses." (Laughter).
- Comity puts Eidolon through his paces:
 - "Eidolon, pour me a drink." Eidolon goes to the table, picks up a wine bottle and pours it into a glass, then brings it to Comity, who toasts the audience. As it turns round, cogs and gears can be seen whirring in a groove in the back of its head.
 - "Eidolon, stand on one leg." Eidolon looks down at each of its legs in turn. "Your *left* leg!" Eidolon raises its right leg, hopping a little to keep its balance. The heroes may notice a slight squeak each time the left knee joint flexes.
 - "Eidolon, juggle those eggs." Eidolon goes to the table and takes three eggs. It tries rather clumsily to juggle them and manages a couple of catches, but then one goes flying and smashes on the floor. Another lands on its shoulder and drips down its upper arm, smoking when it encounters the evidently hot pistons that power the elbow joint. Laughter from the crowd.
 - "Eidolon, do a handstand." Eidolon leans down and kicks its feet in the air. It stays balanced for several seconds, then flips over to land on its feet. The crowd applauds.
 - "Eidolon, dance for the crowd." Eidolon performs a shuffling side-to-side motion with its feet while its arms float up and down.
 - "Eidolon, sit in the chair." Eidolon tries to sit in the chair which splinters to matchwood under its weight. Eidolon goes sprawling. More laughter.

Things Go Wrong

- By now the crowd is thoroughly on side and shouting out suggestions. Encourage the heroes to join in.
- The first sign that something is wrong is when one of the heroes says or do something. Eidolon's head turns towards them and scans them closely. Then it reaches down and rips up a plank from the stage.
- The audience laughs, thinking this is part of the act. More observant heroes may notice that Comity was clearly not expecting this. "Eidolon, no! Put that back!"
- Eidolon reaches forward to put it back, but then stops. With an audible "ping", something springs out of the groove in the back of its head. It straightens up again and there is a hum of rising power.
- Eidolon starts to swing around, holding the plank out. The table and remaining eggs go flying. "Oh shit," says Comity, backing away.

- Eidolon jumps off the stage and into the crowd, which quickly becomes a mass of panicky people scrambling to get away. Still using the plank as a bludgeon, it moves purposefully towards the heroes OR towards the outdoor tables of a nearby restaurant. Screams. The power buildup continues.
- Eidolon reaches the tables, still swinging. Chairs, plates and utensils go flying as diners scramble away. Eidolon grabs a nearby awning pole and wrenches it from the ground, tearing off half the awning in the process. Holding it out a lance, it charges towards the heroes OR a couple of hapless Plume guards who happen to be passing.
- The heroes may notice that Comity attempting to disappear into the fleeing crowd. She stops to remove her wig and shrug out of her robes, revealing Motley rags underneath.

The Fight

Eidolon moves quickly and is very strong. It makes strong situational use of its environment. Tripping it up is difficult, unless the heroes aim for its dodgy left knee. Flame will find that her temperature-altering powers work only slowly against Eidolon's silver-metal casing, which also acts as plate armour.

Why has programmed Eidolon as follows:

- **Distinguish friend from foe:** Foes have weapons or fire magic. Walker will be targetted because of his staff. Do not attack bystanders.
- **Attack prioritisation:** Use light and missile attacks against bows and magic users. Melee vs melee attacks.

The heroes may not notice it at the time, but Eidolon avoids hitting non-combatants and its attacks do not cause serious damage. It is very destructive of property however.

Random Events

- More cogs and gears pop out of Eidolon's head. There is a smell of hot metal and oil.
- Two beams of blue light lance out from its eyes, blasting anything that looks like a weapon.
- When threatened, blades pop out from narrow grooves in its arms.
- In close combat, steel blades slide wolverine-style from its wrists. They look vicious but are in fact blunted.
- Eidolon moves to a shopkeepers stall, picks up apples and throws them.
- Eidolon tears down a shop sign to use as a shield.
- If surrounded, one or more hemispheres detach from its body, spring out about 5 feet and then smash on the ground. Effects depend on situation:
 - Flash-bangs explode, knocking people off their feet and disrupting attacks. They are also piercingly bright: $E + FC \geq 4$ to avoid being blinded for a couple of rounds.
 - Smoke bombs can be used to allow Eidolon to get out when surrounded. It will most probably jump onto a nearby roof. Heroes lost in the fog must avoid hitting each other ($W + FC \geq 4$).
- Eidolon jumps up to 6 feet and hauls itself onto a building. Rips tiles off the roof and uses them as missiles.
- Eidolo rampages into a tavern/restaurant. Picks up chairs and benches and throws them at PCs. Also wine bottles.
- If the heroes try to use Lavender House as a base, Eidolon sets fire to it (again).
- Eidolon uses light beams to burn a rope holding up a flag so it drops on someone.
- Eidolon releases a waggon-load of oranges to trip people up. It stomps them into pulp.

The End

Eidolon will take 2-3 successful attacks per hero to bring down. When they have done sufficient damage, it stops and starts to shake. A barrage of springs, cogs and gears fly out from its joints and head. Smoke pours from its torso and heat shimmers off it. There is a rising whine that becomes a scream, accompanied by a "vworp, vworp, vworp" alarm. The heroes have one round to get away before it explodes with a massive "BANG!", showering the street with crystals and metal shrapnel. The dome of its head flies up and rolls to the heroes' feet.

On a lucky FC, or if they say they are looking, heroes may notice a flash of light from a building tower or cupola not too far away. Sharp-eyed heroes like F.T. or Rathgard may recognise the hair of their erstwhile companion Why, who is putting away an elaborate telescope. If the heroes come after him, they hear him go "uh oh" and jump into a weird egg-shaped contraption behind him. With a clicking sound, a wing-like propellor at its top rotates rapidly, propelling him up into the air. Despite the heroes' best efforts, Why makes his escape, zooming off in an erratic path that carefully avoids Everway.

Rewards and Consequences

The heroes can attempt to track down Comity, but it will be difficult if they don't target her early on in the fight. If they do manage to capture her, she quickly spills the beans. Her real name is **Terrible Motley** and she is an ex-Mask who didn't make the cut for the Terpsichorean Troupe (then led by Loudvoice Mask, against whom she has an animus).

She was paid 500 hefts by a nondescript man who called himself **Factotum Stranger** who spotted her doing her act in the Bazaar. She was taken in a closed carriage to an isolated farm where they practised the act in a barn. A small red-headed guy called Why controlled Eidolon and was constantly tinkering with it. Eidolon never misbehaved in that time.

The heroes can figure out who the farm belonged to by clever detective work. The farm was several hours travel outside Everway - it was in a valley so Comity couldn't see much, but it was by a large river and she could see mountains in the distance to the east. By investigating land ownership at the Library of All Worlds, the heroes can deduce that the farm is probably Ploughshare Farm and is owned by the Smiths.

Factotum explained that he is working on behalf of a Civil Kingdom organisation that is seeking to sell its products to Everway families. They couldn't take Eidolon into Everway proper, so a demonstration in Talespinners Square was the next best thing. Comity thought it was a bit odd that there didn't seem to be any real Civil Kingdom people around, but presumed that there was a political reason.

She hasn't seen Factotum since he paid her the last of her money for the show at the Grandmother's Square entrance to Strangerside. She is pretty certain that he is an Everwayan.

Character Stats

The Marvellous Automaton

A3 Skirmish tactics

E8 Resist Magic/stone skin

F7 Dancing confusion (rapid throw)

W3 Sense weapons

Powers:

- All round vision
- Rapid throw

Comity Soubrette (Terrible Motley)

A4 Wow a Crowd

E2 Good balance

F3 Slip out the back way

W2 Acting

Powers: None

Magic: None

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