



# DEFY THE PROPHECY

**A *STARK CITY* ADVENTURE**



**ICONS**  
SUPERPOWERED ROLEPLAYING  
COMPATIBLE



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A **STARK CITY** ADVENTURE

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## Adventure Summary

The heroes encounter a member of the city's social elite as she attempts to steal valuable religious artifacts from a museum. As they work to stop the crime in progress, they discover that the thief is a Clockwork Doppelganger. Studying the scene of the crime and the opponent's remains, they may discover that a plan is in progress with a much larger scope.

Their investigation eventually reveals that a villain is conducting a magical ritual within a ruined warehouse in Geartown. Unless they can take action to stop it, a prophecy revealing the arrival of a new Gloriana invasion fleet could be fulfilled. The characters must prevent the ritual, rescue the hostages, and recover additional missing artifacts. Otherwise, the city could soon be embroiled in another war with an extradimensional opponent.

## Adventure Background

After Gloriana's failed invasion of 1972, there were countless legends and rumors of invaders who had remained in hiding. Though more than forty years have passed since those dramatic days, the terror of the overwhelming invaders remains fresh in the minds of those who lived through it. Ever since that time, the citizens of Stark City have waited for another invasion attempt. Many recognized that a renewed effort was inevitable, as the previous action failed with no good explanation.

Today, the heroes confront a criminal who could be a herald of a fresh invasion effort. Unless the heroes work together to identify the dastardly villain behind the plan, he could open the path to a fresh invasion. If the heroes hope to persevere and overcome their unknown foe, they must first decipher his plans, which are dependent upon discrediting the city's leadership and tapping into arcane energies.

The villain, also known as the Cog Prince, has spent thirty-five of the past forty years in suspended animation. It was only a fortuitous accident that freed the villain from his deep slumber. Since awakening, and discovering that the initial invasion failed, he has worked to rebuild his technology and his magic. With an upcoming astronomical alignment, the scientist and sorcerer prepares to open a fresh connection to Gloriana. In order to collect the magical power required for the gateway, the madman has designed a number of automatons to infiltrate Stark City's society. In addition to stealing the necessary tools, those machines are also subsuming the lives of several of the city's prominent leaders.

## Doppelgangers

Throughout the course of this adventure, the characters are certain to encounter a number of doppelgangers. Some of these may be robots that have completely taken over the life of a prominent member of the city's elite. Others may be drones that the Cog Prince hoped to eventually use to replace a NPC—or that simply exist now to sow confusion. Game Masters should decide prior to running the scenario which NPCs fall into each of these categories. If the heroes successfully defeat the Cog Prince and shut down all of the doppelgangers, it may leave a power vacuum in several parts of Stark City. Ultimately, new individuals could come to occupy those positions of power.

## Scene I: Early Leads

During this scene, the player characters first encounter the clockwork doppelgangers (see page 10). Several signs point to the fact that these machines are less than intelligent, individually. Instead, they must be acting in the service of a more intelligent being, carrying out its orders. While identified drones pose little threat to Stark City and its heroes, those that remain incognito are certainly continuing the efforts of their master. The

heroes must move to stop the doppelgangers that have been exposed, and quickly identify any that might be continuing their nefarious actions in secret.

### **Action!**

The adventure opens when the heroes uncover the fact that a key member of Stark City society is actually a doppelganger. Unless a different character is more appropriate for the campaign, use Mrs. Hilda Abercrombie. The characters are on patrol in the city when they discover a disturbance at the Stark City Museum of Science and Natural History in the Platinum Coast area. When they come upon the crime scene, they see the respected Mrs. Abercrombie leaving the scene of the crime. Two of the museum's guards lay unconscious just outside the building's doorway. The woman is descending the steps, carrying a bulging duffel bag over her shoulder and holding what looks like a taser in her other hand.

Any characters familiar with the city's social elite immediately recognize Mrs. Abercrombie. If none of the heroes have the relevant background, any of them have seen her picture and know of her with success on a Difficulty 3 Know Test. Even those who lack the background and fail the test can immediately note that the military-style duffel bag seems a terrible fit with her glamorous evening dress, delicately coiffed hair, and perfectly applied make-up.

### **Alternative Doppelgangers**

If any of the player characters have an alter ego who happens to be a member of high society, then that character would be an ideal substitute for Mrs. Abercrombie. The first advantage is obviously that at least one of the heroes would recognize that the opponent was not actually the person in question. The second is that it provides the character with a clear investment from the very beginning. Using the alter ego like this could also provide

the character with an extra point of Determination.

The doppelganger has a late-model silver Cadillac parked at the curb. She makes little effort to confront the heroes. Instead, she focuses her efforts on getting to the car and driving away. If the players permit her to escape—perhaps in hopes of discovering her destination—the automaton drives towards Geartown. Once there, she abandons the car and enters the Catacombs, with an eventual destination of the Cog Prince's warehouse (see page 7). Along the way—while driving and later, on foot—she actively tries to lose any pursuers. This includes attempting driving feats that are ridiculously dangerous.

In a confrontation, the automaton's rudimentary conversation ability is poorly suited to combat patter. She derides the heroes' fashion sense and sense of decorum, all the while using a nasal and authoritative tone. She offers no explanation for her style of dress or obvious crimes.

Because they face an automaton, any attempts at using psychic powers meet with abject failure. In fact, an empath or telepath immediately recognizes that they face something that is either incredibly well-shielded or inhuman. There are no surface thoughts or emotions apparent. Similarly, if the characters wound their opponent, they can immediately reveal its inhuman nature. The doppelganger does not bleed. Instead, any damage to its flesh reveals its brass clockwork internals.

Once overcome, the characters can clearly tell that their opponent was inhuman. The doppelganger shuts down completely—though it may be unclear if this is a voluntary reaction or if it is due to damage. Her clockwork internals become visible, with no sign of any organs or tissues beyond the convincingly authentic outer skin.

The heroes can examine the contents of her duffle bag. It contains the following:

- Thieving tools: lock picks, glass cutters, black nylon rope, a grappling hook, a climbing harness.
- Stolen goods: A statue of Amun-Ra, a ritual knife made from horn, and a gem-encrusted chalice.

Anyone familiar with the museum can immediately identify all three of the items as objects which were on display. They were part of a display of religious artifacts through the ages. The statue is on loan from the Cairo Museum. It was recovered near Giza and is believed to date to 2500 BCE. The knife came from the London museum. It was recovered near Stonehenge. Carbon dating places its origin at roughly 3000 BCE. The chalice is much newer, on loan from the Vatican. It was the property of a heretical Bishop in Fourteenth century Florence. Any character with a magical aptitude can recognize that all three of these objects are charged with unusually high amounts of spiritual energy.

### **Resolution**

This scene concludes when the police and media make their respective arrivals. The heroes may try to make their escape before this happens; if they do so, point out that the museum's guards are unconscious. If they leave prior to the police reaching the scene, the building would be left unsecured.

Television reporter Dirk Hargrove (see page 11) from WKBR 7 Action News arrives with a camera crew moments before the police. He wants to interview the characters about the crime, the villain, and uncover the true story about Mrs. Abercrombie's heinous robbery attempt. If the heroes play along, he does his best to put them in a negative light through the interview. If they do not cooperate, his report strongly implies that they were involved in the heist.

The police are more cooperative, but do wish for the heroes to file formal reports about the incident. They also want to take the doppelganger's body back to their forensics lab for further analysis. This may come into conflict with the heroes' wishes, as they probably are also interested in examining it further. If any of the PCs can convincingly portray a scientist, they are invited to assist at the police lab.

## **Scene II: Preordained Omens**

This scene presents the different investigative paths that the characters might pursue. With evidence of the first doppelganger, the heroes might be concerned about the presence of others. They could also be curious about the objects stolen—and wonder how they could link together. Similarly, the heroes might wish to study the automaton's body further, so that they could attempt to determine its origins.

Depending upon their available resources and their connections with the civil and social authorities, the investigation could go in several different directions. If the characters have the appropriate associations and a good reputation, they receive ample assistance. Otherwise, they can encounter numerous difficulties in the course of their research.

### **Abercrombie Estate**

An arrival at the Abercrombie estate in heroic attire results in a cold reception. The mansion's staff barely contains its displeasure at the antics of costumed vigilantes. An arrival in civilian garb is better received, but the staff and Mr. Howard Abercrombie—a real successful real estate developer—would prefer to deal with the police than with vigilantes, regardless of their standing.

He confesses that Hilda had been cold and distant for the past few weeks, but he

assumed it was because of some difficulties she had encountered with several of the charitable organizations she actively chaired. He is as surprised as anyone to discover that she had been replaced by a doppelganger and hopes that she can be safely recovered. He has no ideas as to her whereabouts. No ransom requests have been received. On the night of the crime, she was left to attend a meeting about an upcoming fundraiser, while Howard stayed home for a routine meeting with one of his financial advisors.

None of the couple's adult children are in town at the moment. Two live in other cities, while a third is currently studying abroad. A search of the mansion reveals no further clues. Whatever the doppelganger's programming, it has left no traces of its intentions.

### **The Artifacts**

Researching the artifacts' general history reveals little additional information. A skilled occultist or magical theorist can uncover additional information with a difficulty 4 Occult test. Upon success, they recognize that the objects contain enough spiritual energy that they could be used to power a potent ritual. The type of ritual remains wide open to interpretation, however, as the available energy does not have a particular focus.

Investigation into artifacts with similar amounts of power could lead the characters to check with several of the city's churches, magical shops, antiquities dealers, and collectors. A search of police records reveals that more than a dozen objects of comparable potency have been stolen over the past two weeks. None of the other crimes have yet been solved.

In the course of this research, any of the characters can make a difficulty 5 Occult test to recognize that an astronomical alignment is set to occur the night after attempted museum heist. If someone is planning to conduct a ritual, this could be

an ideal time. Between the power available from the alignment and any other spiritually charged artifacts, a talented sorcerer might be able to undertake a tremendously powerful working.

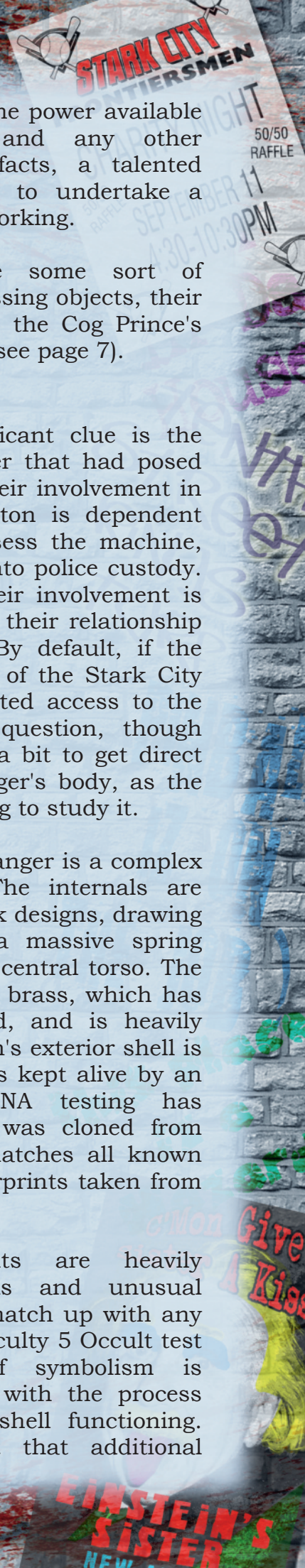
If the characters use some sort of divination to find the missing objects, their efforts can lead them to the Cog Prince's warehouse in Geartown (see page 7).

### **The Doppelganger**

The heroes' most significant clue is the body of the doppelganger that had posed as Mrs. Abercrombie. Their involvement in dismantling the automaton is dependent upon whether they possess the machine, or if it has been taken into police custody. If the police have it, their involvement is entirely dependent upon their relationship with law enforcement. By default, if the characters are members of the Stark City Sentinels, they are granted access to the police reports without question, though they may need to work a bit to get direct access to the doppelganger's body, as the forensics lab is continuing to study it.

Dismantling the doppelganger is a complex and tedious process. The internals are entirely built of clockwork designs, drawing all of its power from a massive spring located in the creature's central torso. The components are made of brass, which has been carefully machined, and is heavily inscribed. The automaton's exterior shell is made of flesh, which was kept alive by an alchemical process. DNA testing has revealed that the skin was cloned from Hilda Abercrombie. It matches all known samples, including fingerprints taken from old family records.

The brass components are heavily inscribed with symbols and unusual characters that do not match up with any known languages. A difficulty 5 Occult test reveals that some of symbolism is undoubtedly associated with the process that kept the exterior shell functioning. Other symbols suggest that additional



spells were layered upon the automaton. Some of these probably accounted for its ability to pass as a human being.

A thorough study of the components finally reveals one additional clue: Several of the components bear the rising sun iconography of the Gloriana flag. This strongly suggests that the doppelganger might have been created using technology that came to Stark City during the invasion. There is, unfortunately, no evidence as to whether or not the doppelganger was originally created here or in Gloriana. Similarly, it is impossible to determine how long ago the automaton was synthesized.

Divination efforts may be used to identify other automatons, or this device's history. Similarly, a thorough study of the machine can reveal any number of ways to identify similar doppelgangers using Supersenses or specialized devices. This process could reveal other doppelgangers (see below) or it could be used to track down the Cog Prince's warehouse (see page 7).

### The Prophecy

If the characters take the time to closely examine the inner workings of the automaton, they may make a difficulty 7 Mechanics test. Upon success, they recognise that among the unusual inscriptions, there are several partial letters inscribed upon the cogs of some of the gears. The letters can be assembled in any number of ways, but carefully reassembling the doppelganger can eventually reveal the following prophecy inscribed upon the gears:

***The Empire shall come into its glory within this foreign land when the stars properly align. As the foe's leadership turns upon itself, the path for assault shall become clear.***

If the heroes are able to compare the state of the clockwork system prior to disassembly with the state when the

prophecy is legible, they can determine that it would only be fully legible once every 200 years. The timing matches up with the astronomical alignment, due to occur the night after the museum break-in.

**Note:** This is a pretty key bit of intel. A savvy GM may want to consider giving this information to the players without requiring any tests as the rest of adventure is a bit more clear if the players are aware of this.

### Other Imposters

As the characters continue their investigation into the Abercrombie doppelganger, they may uncover additional imposters. The methods of discovery should vary, and the numbers and degrees of opposition should be proportionate to the methods the characters have used to date. Here are a few suggestions, though Game Masters are encouraged to also consider using any characters that have played a significant role in their Stark City campaign:

**Reporter Dirk Hargrove:** Perhaps the reporter's unending efforts to damage the reputation of the city's heroes is all part of a larger plot. Without the city's good will and public support, their investigative efforts are substantially more challenging. The reporter may begin tracking their every move, and broadcasting things in the least favorable light possible.

**Chief of Police Jesus Martinez:** The police might not cooperate with the heroes because of direct orders. With a doppelganger holding this position, the heroes could be branded as enemies. Alternatively, the strategy might be subtler, constantly stalling the heroes with never-ending bureaucracy. Rather than quickly obtaining the information they need through official channels, the heroes must resort to more direct measures, risking legal troubles if they hope to stop the Cog Prince in time.

**Mayor Harrison Ullman:** If the Mayor is a doppelganger, the city's full resources can be used to delay the team's investigation. Because he is hesitant to blow his cover, the doppelganger does not take direct action against the heroes. Instead, he puts out repeated calls to the heroes for a number of incredibly minor offenses and public appearances. The team may receive a request from the mayor to rescue pets from trees, appear at the grand re-opening of a refurbished city hall office, or attend the mayor's friend's nephew's bar mitzvah. The issues should be incredibly mundane, inconvenient, and time consuming.

### Resolution

The keys to the investigation are uncovering the Gloriana connection as well as the potential to find the location of the Cog Prince's warehouse. In the process, the team may learn about the potential for a mystic ritual as well as the nature of the stolen artifacts and the presence of any other doppelgangers. The investigation is largely concluded when the characters decide to venture into Geartown to find the Cog Prince's warehouse.

## Scene III: Fulfilled or Averted

This scene presents the epic confrontation with the Cog Prince. The characters must overcome his defenses, rescue the hostages, recover the stolen artifacts, and stop the ritual. A successful ritual could open a new portal to Gloriana, heralding a second invasion. A failed ritual might still result in the destruction of priceless religious artifacts and the deaths of several of Stark City's prominent citizens. Success requires a carefully executed plan and minimal mistakes.

### The Cog Prince's Warehouse

Regardless of how they discovered the locale, the Cog Prince's headquarters is located in a run-down part of Geartown.

### Triumvirate of Villains Option

Both Monarch (detailed in the Silver District section of Stark City) and Sever and the Vapor Shades (see Platinum Coast) are refugees from the Gloriana dimension (like the Cog Prince) and they have been hiding in our world after the failed invasion.

In the metaplot as written, these refugees are not aware of each other. However, it'd be trivial to rewrite the background and have them working with the Clockwork Prince to fulfill the prophecy.

Some GMs prefer a climatic final battle against a team of villains. Perhaps Svern and Monarch discovered the Prince of Cogs was in suspended animation and raided several Tesla Park businesses to get the necessary supplies to awaken him in order to fulfil the prophecy. The PCs may first become aware that something is amiss when they investigate this series of thefts.

The two-story warehouse is heavily rusted corrugated steel construction. The back corner of the building has already collapsed, and the rusted metal framing stands vertically among the twisted and fallen corrugated steel walls. No guards are visible from the exterior, nor are there any visible signs of light or habitation.

Entering the structure, the interior of the building is a mess. A rusted and unstable catwalk runs around the building's perimeter, fifteen feet above the ground. It is accessible from numerous ladders, but climbing to it—and walking upon it—is dangerous due to its instability. The catwalk can collapse at any time.

The structure's ground level is completely filled with packing crates. All are empty, but the wooden and cardboard debris fills the warehouse, to a height of ten feet. There is little apparent organization to the



chaos. The boxes form a maze, which eventually leads to the ritual at the center of the warehouse.

Six Clockwork Doppelgangers patrol the maze—they have memorized the warehouse's layout. One of the doppelgangers is configured to play the role of Chief of Police Martinez. He attempts to dissuade the heroes from their attack, explaining that the police have the situation well in hand. Of course, he can only do so if he is aware of the heroes' arrival. If the heroes are stealthy in their approach, they may avoid contact with these guardians. The remaining doppelgangers are configured into the shapes of any doppelgangers previously introduced throughout the adventure.

If the doppelgangers are aware of the heroes' approach, the automatons work together so that they can launch a simultaneous attack upon the intruders. Ideally, this takes place after the Martinez automaton attempts to persuade them to leave. The attack occurs either once they have dropped their guard or in response to any attack they might launch.

### **The Ritual**

The Cog Prince (see page 12) is in the process of conducting an elaborate ritual to open a gateway between this world and Gloriana. The ceremony involves a complex blend of clockwork technology and arcane techniques. He stands upon a massive brass gear, more than thirty feet across. It is heavily inscribed with ritual symbols and serves as the focal point for the ritual. Additional clockwork devices extend upwards from the gear's axle. The missing religious artifacts are suspended from bronze chains, serving as counterweights for the machine. All of the city's missing citizens are contained within ornate bronze cages, also suspended as counterweights. The citizens are all drugged.

The ritual is expected to take more than twelve hours to complete. This should insure that it is already in process, no matter what time the heroes arrive to foil it. The Cog Prince's primary focus is on completing the ritual. If the heroes take a stealthy approach the situation, he may be unaware of their arrival. Note, however, that if any of the Clockwork Doppelgangers have previously encountered the heroes, then they also notified him of the intrusion.

The Cog Prince is limited in the actions he can take. Even as the heroes launch their assault, he attempts to continue the ritual. He suffers an additional -2 to his Coordination for any attacks the heroes launch. In addition, the heroes gain a +1 to their Dodging attempts against his counterattacks. While he wishes to eliminate the scum who threaten him, he cannot afford to also disrupt the ritual.

He may threaten to destroy the artifacts or kill the hostages if he believes that it could grant him time to finish the ritual. However, these are not meaningful threats. The Cog Prince cannot afford to lose any of the assets he needs for his ritual.

If the characters step onto the massive cog while the Cog Prince is still consciously continuing the ritual, some of the dark magic flows into their bodies. Treat the attack as a Level 4 Life Drain. Any Stamina lost goes directly to the Cog Prince.

### **Resolution**

When the Cog Prince falls, the ritual is disrupted. This results in a massive release of uncontrolled mystical energy. None of the characters present are directly affected, but the warehouse begins to collapse. The characters must hurry to try and escape before the dilapidated structure can fall upon them—and the prisoners and artifacts.

Freeing an artifact or a hostage from the clockwork device does not require a test. Avoiding the falling debris as the machine and the building collapse, however, does. Avoiding debris requires a difficulty 3 Dodging test. Each hostage the character carries imposes a -1 penalty to the test.

The difficulty of the test increases by 1 for every other page after the Cog Prince falls, as more and more debris gives way.

Characters who fail the test suffer a Level 6 Bashing attack each page.

The building takes 4 pages to completely collapse. Any characters or artifacts that were not rescued prior to this time are buried within the ruins. NPCs who were not freed from their cages suffer injury at the Game Master's judgment.

Depending upon his situation, this can also grant the Cog Prince an opportunity to be buried alive, leading to an eventual reappearance. This is completely subject to the Game Master's discretion.

## Wrap Up

If the heroes failed to stop the ritual, then a new Gloriana invasion fleet of zeppelins soon descends upon the city. Anarchy reigns supreme as dozens of airships, with thousands of armed invaders begin to take control of the city. The red, white, and blue rising sun becomes an ever more common symbol, as the city's heroes and villains may unite to repulse the incredibly well-armed and organized invasion force.

Assuming the heroes overcome the Cog Prince, he might become a recurring villain—particularly if he was buried alive in the wreckage of the warehouse. Alternatively, if the heroes capture him, he could be a valuable resource for additional information about Gloriana and any other survivors of the invasion force.

With the exception of Dirk Hargrove, the rescued NPCs are all extremely appreciative of the heroes' arrival. Of course, to restore their lives, the heroes need to eliminate any other Clockwork Doppelgangers that yet reside within the city. Without their help, confusion could continue to reign as a human and an automaton both claim to be the same person.

Dirk Hargrove is an unappreciative wretch. He completely blames the heroes for his capture and the amount of time it took for his rescue. He does everything possible to drag their names through the mud. This should create a long-standing annoyance for the heroes among the broadcast media. Painting himself as a victim, the reporter garners great ratings as some portion of the incredulous populace believes his stories.

# NPC Section

## Clockwork Doppelgangers

### Abilities

Prowess 4  
Coordination 4  
Strength 5  
Intellect 3  
Awareness 2  
Willpower –  
Stamina 10

### Specialties

Performance (Impersonation) Expert  
Stealth

### Powers

Invulnerability 3  
Paralysis 5 (close range)

### Qualities

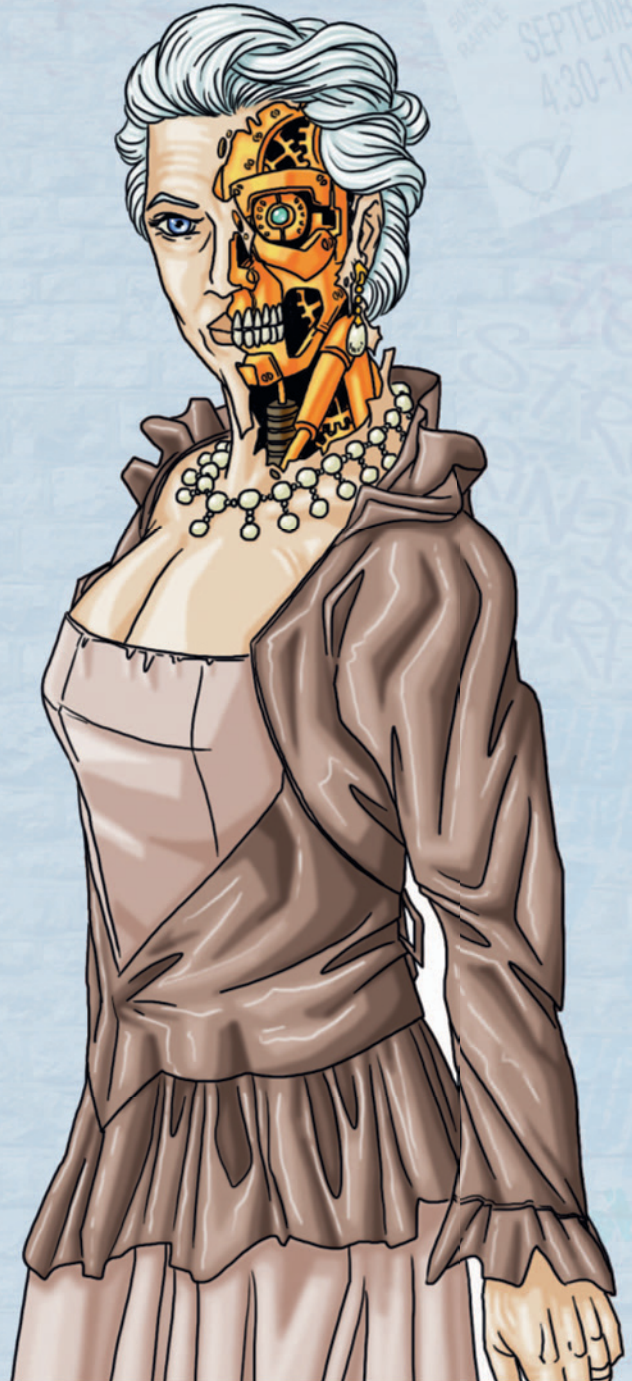
A nearly perfect replica!  
Mechanical determination  
Hybrid of magic and technology

### Challenges

Clockwork is winding down  
In the service of a madman  
Imperfect programming

**Background:** A complex clockwork automaton wearing a shell crafted of cloned flesh; these creatures are determined to infiltrate Stark City society, and assist the Cog Prince in preparing his invasion efforts. With the city's leadership in disarray, the villain believes that Gloriana could at last triumph over the city's defenders.

The Clockwork Doppelgangers are immune to anything affecting a living metabolism or mind. They have no Willpower, but Stamina equal to twice their Strength instead.



# Dirk Hargrove

## Abilities

- Prowess 2
- Coordination 3
- Strength 3
- Intellect 3
- Awareness 2
- Willpower 4
- Stamina 7

## Specialties

- Athletics
- Investigation
- Performance (Acting) Expert

## Qualities

- First on the scene!
- Devoted, true believers.
- Perfect hair and smile.

## Challenges

- Flattery gets you everywhere.
- Unreliable sources.

**Background:** Dirk Hargrove, from WKBR 7 Action News, is an on-the-spot reporter. He specializes in catching the latest exclusives as they happen. He is a willing risk taker, often dragging his cameraman along into incredibly dangerous situations in order to record a story as it happens.

The complication for his work in Stark City is that Dirk despises metahuman vigilantes. He believes that only the legitimate, mundane law enforcement should have the authority to resolve dangerous situations. Consequently, he always works to cast blame towards any heroes involved in a conflict. Often, this can happen as he moves in to question a hero as a battle is taking place.



## Cog Prince

### Abilities

Prowess 5  
Coordination 6  
Strength 5  
Intellect 8  
Awareness 7  
Willpower 6  
Stamina 11

### Specialties

Mechanics Master  
Military  
Occult Master

### Powers

Wizardry (Magic, Willpower) 8 [Dimension Travel, Force Field, Mental Blast]

### Qualities

Clockwork Upgrades  
“You are but a cog in my plans!”  
Master of magic and technology

### Challenges

Devoted to Gloriana  
Winds down

**Background:** The Cog Prince is Huge St. Laurent—Price of Saxony from Gloriana's world and one of the super-powered lances of the 1972 invasion force. After being stranded in our world when the invasion failed. He did a scrying ritual and he learned of the prophecy from ancient times in the world of Gloriana. Deciding it must pertain to his situation he cast a spell that put him in a state of suspended animation until the date of the prophecy drew near.

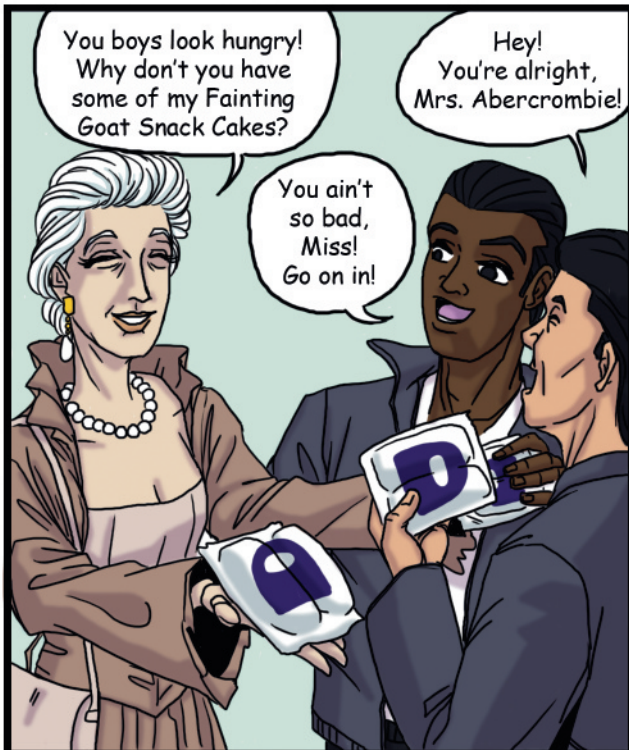
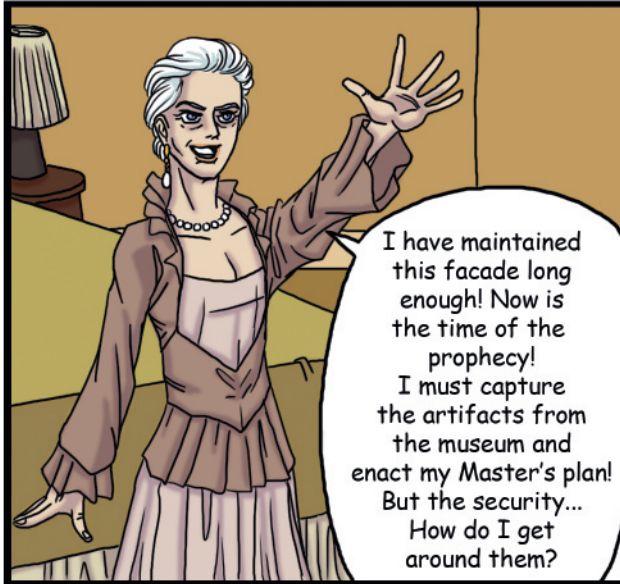
The Cog Prince is focused upon fulfilling the prophecy and triggering a renewed Gloriana invasion, no matter the cost to the citizens of Stark City. He hopes to disrupt the city's leadership and government as part of his quest, and he believes that the prophesied time has come. However, he is unwilling to take unnecessary personal risks. While he desperately wants to succeed, if his plans go awry, he recognizes that another opportunity may yet come. He is nothing if not patient.



# ABERCROMBIE'S

# CAKED

# CAPER!



The Fainting Goat bakers do not condone the use of Fainting Goat Snack Cakes in the pursuit of evil schemes.



STARK CITY  
HERSMEN  
50/50 RAFFLE  
SEPTEMBER 11  
10:30-10:30PM

Live At  
here

LAFFING

MON GIVE  
A KISS  
EINSTEIN'S  
SISTER  
NEW

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