

# The Fantasy Trip™ The Clockwork Tower™



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Many centuries ago, a very unusual Mechanician appeared in the world of Cidri. His name is lost to time; he is known as the Tinker. He built clockwork automatons the like of which has not been approached by anyone since. But these are no ordinary toys built for the amusement of the rich. They are capable of independent action, and never run down or need winding. Indeed, their power source is among their greatest mysteries. It is assumed to be magical, but they have no aura of magic. Some resemble animals, while others look like no creature known to man. They seem to have no purpose other than self-perpetuation.

To this end, the Tinker scattered “hives” of automatons across Cidri. Each is centered around at least one of the mechanical marvels called Assemblers. These “mother” machines, like their automatons, never run down nor need any maintenance beyond what they and their creations can provide – and they do provide! The automatons, often called Bronze Beasts, collect raw materials that the Assemblers use to build more automatons.



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Stock #37-5534

thefantasytrip.game

Version 1.0 February 2019



Because of the havoc that an active Assembler can create, most colonies that are found have been destroyed. But occasionally a new Seed (p. 9) becomes active, and sends units out to “acquire” raw materials. If there are people in the area, they will soon start noticing things, mostly metal, going missing. Of course, because any number of people and creatures like to collect unsupervised items, no one may immediately suspect the presence of a Bronze colony.

The Bronze Beasts will steal almost any metal that isn’t nailed down (and, later on, many items that *are* nailed down, as well as the nails). The automatons, scavenging by stealth, are almost never seen at first. It isn’t until they become a direct danger to local residents that a Bronze infestation is normally revealed. By then, there are enough Bronze Beasts that cleaning them out is not a task for a few villagers.

## STARTING POINTS

This adventure begins in a village or crossroads inn. There are no other villages, let alone towns, within at least a day’s travel; most of the land is unoccupied, traveled only by hunters. Thus, a mystery can grow unnoticed in the wilderness, and the people of the village will have no one better to turn to than the visiting party.

This adventure is designed for four characters. It can easily be slipped in as a part of an ongoing campaign. If it’s used as a stand-alone adventure, have players create 32-point characters, either heroes or wizards. Each character starts with their weapon and armor of choice plus \$500 to buy supplies and other equipment.

This may also be a jumping-off point for other adventures featuring the Bronze Beasts (see the *Epilogue*, p. 10).

If, during the first encounters, the characters are struggling, the GM may drop the Bronze Beasts back either 1 or 2 ST or 1 DX. Likewise, feel free to adjust the number of turns between new Beast arrivals in the final battle. In an existing campaign with experienced players and advanced characters, add more Bronze Beasts to encounters to ratchet up the threat level; if the Beasts are too easy to kill, they can be given another point of armor and their DX increased by 1.



## OPENING ENCOUNTERS

### GOOD INN, GOOD COMPANY

The character party is passing through the village of Thistlewaite and decides to stop for the night. There is a very nice inn, with good food and pleasant company. The innkeeper is Willem Sethson, a solid fellow in his early thirties. Along with his wife, Siva, and his two sons, Jakob and Will, he has built a very comfortable resting place. The common room is large, filled with the smell of stew cooking in the hearth. The stew turns out to be quite tasty, as is the ale and wine Willem serves. Several farmers and merchants are present, and many stories are swapped over the course of the evening. The adventurers are made to feel welcome and encouraged to tell tales of their own exploits.

If a situation leads to a reaction roll, fudge it so the PCs get very good reactions. This is intended to be a genuinely friendly spot, and unless the PCs are actually out to start a fight, everything will go well.

This pleasant atmosphere will lead to the party’s retiring somewhat later than they had initially planned. They may well have had a bit more to drink than usual. None are drunk (unless such was their intent), but all are probably pleasantly sleepy, as appropriate to their characters.

When the PCs do retire, their “room” is actually a small separate building, with two rooms and an indoor privy. Luxury! There are four separate beds. The mattresses are down-filled and quite comfortable, and the room has a fresh, clean smell. (Again, accept any variations the players specify as fits their characters and desires.) All settle into their beds and fall into a deep, sound sleep. The GM can play out any amount of this desired, or even build it in to a small encounter at the inn as they choose. Avoid any hint of danger; we do not want the PCs deciding to post a guard. If they do, or if having a wakeful guard is the normal habit of a particularly paranoid PC group, the clever GM can find stealthy ways around this.

### THEFT IN THE NIGHT

When the first party member awakens, he or she will discover that something is amiss. The area around the lock has been sawed through. A couple of fairly valuable metallic items (to be chosen by the GM) have been stolen, along with a number of less important things. The stolen items should not be critical to their completion of this adventure, but sufficiently valuable that the characters will certainly want them back. If a weapon was stolen, the town blacksmith can provide a loaner of the same type, but the quality will not be quite as good as the character’s original. Another possibility might be an amulet, charm, or keepsake, such as a locket or some other piece of jewelry, magical or not.

The characters are likely to complain to Willem, who will then tell the party about the myriad thefts that have been going on in Thistlewaite. The items that have gone missing started out small and easily overlooked, but as time passed, larger, more important, and more obvious items started disappearing. However, this is the first time that a lock has been removed this way; Willem is both embarrassed and angry that it happened to him and his guests. The innkeeper asks the party to wait while he summons other members of the town council to discuss the matter.

Once the other members of the council arrive, they examine the room and discuss the situation with Willem and the party. While this discussion is taking place (and before any real offers can be made to repay the party member or replace the stolen item), a young farm boy bursts into the inn and breathlessly reports that his father has been attacked by a strange creature that ran off with, of all things, a rake!

The council quickly comes to a decision. Willem asks the party if they would be interested in investigating the thefts and the assault of the farmer. He will offer \$200 per party member as payment, provided by the council members. He also tells them that any shop will give them a discount on supplies they need before and during the investigation.



## SUPPLIES

The party can get supplies at any point while in the village. If they do so after having accepted the commission to investigate, they will be given a discount of about 10% on common items. Otherwise, supplies are priced as normal.

**Blacksmith Shop:** Arvin, the village blacksmith, is very capable and has a decent inventory of weapons, should a member of the party wish to purchase one. He has suffered repeatedly from the thefts and will gratefully offer about 10% off the price listed in *In the Labyrinth*. He will only have standard weapons of average quality, such as swords, maces, and similar weapons. No exotic weapons are available, nor are fine or enchanted weapons. He can repair existing metal armor but has no new armor for sale.

**Saddlery:** The saddle-maker, Merle, is quite capable of making repairs to any cloth or leather armor owned by the party but has none for sale at this time.

**General Goods:** There is a general store where the townspeople get common household merchandise. Most of the supplies and other materials listed in *In the Labyrinth* are available. Only items worth more than \$50 will be discounted to the party.

**Wizards' Shop:** Karla Bluestone, the local wizard, is not notably powerful but she is a skilled chemist and alchemist who sells charms, potions, and small magical trinkets. Because the party is helping out the village, she will discount her items to the party a bit. Karla has five doses of Healing Potion that she will sell for \$100 each. She also has one dose each of Increase ST (\$400) and Increase DX (\$550) potions. The GM should feel free to offer any other small magical items that aren't too powerful for a small discount (no more than 10% off).

Karla will tell the party that she hasn't (as far as she knows) lost any magical goods to the mysterious thief . . . but she will be interested in hearing what the party knows so far. She's no fighter and has no desire to accompany the party.

## THE FARM ATTACK

At some point – depending on how dire the emergency seems to be – Tel Reston, the boy who reported the attack, will lead the party and several of the village council members out to the farm. They will find the farmer, Silas Reston, resting inside his home. His splinted leg is propped up, and he's obviously had a rough time of it.

Silas says he went out to milk his cows in the early dawn. The sun hadn't completely risen. Approaching his barn, he saw a bronze-colored animal the size of a large dog coming out. It was carrying his hay rake in its mouth, at the end of a very long neck. He yelled at it, hoping to scare it away.

Instead of running, however, the creature darted toward him and whacked at his leg with the rake. He leaped backward and fell . . . and heard his knee pop. The creature then darted off into the bushes and he lost sight of it.

He started crawling toward the farmhouse, calling for his wife, Mara. She made him comfortable and, as soon as the sun was up, sent their son to town to get help.

When asked about the creature, Silas will tell them he didn't get a very good look at it in the semi-dark. It had an odd, long body and four legs, and didn't move like any animal he'd ever seen before. Also, as near as he could tell, it did not have any eyes, but could apparently see very well in the dim, predawn light. When the creature swung the rake at him, he noticed its neck was unnaturally long and seemed to have a joint right in the middle so that it could fold its neck back along its body. Finally, he will tell the party he got the impression that the creature was stiffer than flesh – as if it wore armor.

The group will easily find the site where the encounter took place. There are signs of a scuffle in the dirt of the path; they quickly locate the stone that the farmer tripped over. Leading out of the barn are odd circular tracks. Someone with the Tracking talent will *not* know what created the tracks. The circular "footprints" appear to be in a four-legged walking pattern. Given that the tracks are circular, it will not be obvious which way the tracks are facing, though the gait will indicate a general direction of movement. A successful 3/IQ roll will reveal the direction the creature fled.

As the party is looking around, one of them will catch sight of something on top of a nearby ridge. It's the silhouette of a four-legged creature, with a long neck and an odd head right at the front of its lean body. They will not be able to make out any details, and the creature will quickly move down the other side of the ridge. It's at least a half mile away, so there is no hope of catching the creature immediately, but now they know where to look for more tracks.

## THE CHASE BEGINS

As the party moves toward the ridge where they saw the silhouette, any PC who has tracking skills will start to notice signs of activity. Many twigs and branches have been broken, and even though the area is fairly wild, there are few large branches or stones that one would expect to find in such a rough wooded area. They will also note a couple of spots where leaf litter had been moved aside and something dug out from the dirt, and there are round tracks in the fresh earth.

When they reach the ridgeline, a look back downhill will confirm their position. From this vantage point, they can see the farmer's house and barn. Anyone can search for signs of the mysterious creature and will soon find more of the circular tracks.

As the party begins following the tracks, they will come across a fairly large wolf in their path. Surprisingly, though, the wolf will whimper and flee into the brush. The party, already looking for a wolf-like creature, may pursue . . . but they will soon realize it could not have created the tracks they have followed.

Members of the party should be given the impression that something had badly spooked the wolf.

Eventually, the PCs will come across a large clearing with more of the strange round footprints. At the center is the ruined foundation of a circular tower. Its walls are broken and crumbling, and there is a lot of rocky debris around and inside the tower's walls. The remaining walls are anywhere from one to 12 feet tall, with a ragged appearance at the top.

### THE OLD WATCHTOWER

If the party hides and watches the tower, they won't see anything; the Beasts are aware that there are intruders, and won't show themselves.

If the party goes back to the village to report and ask more questions, they'll learn that this is an ancient watchtower, with tunnels and rooms underneath. No one goes there. In their grandparents' time, it was quarried for building stone, until it was close to collapse and too dangerous to work there. The party should realize that the tower they saw looks far more finished and stable than that . . . so somebody has worked to clean it up, make it usable, and then make it look like it is still a ruin.



Anyone with talents such as Architect, Engineer, or Naturalist will feel there is something odd about the ruins but may not be able to put their finger on what that is. If they ask about the surface of the walls, or make a 4/IQ roll, they will realize that, while the walls appear to be crumbling, there are no climbing plants on them, and the moss on the wall appears to be on individual stones and not spreading to adjacent stones. The "ruins" seem to be more stage-dressing than the result of aging on a natural structure.

## IN THE TOWER

From here on, use the map on p 5. The map shows the tower-ruins footprint – each hex of the map represents a megahex for combat in the standard "labyrinth scale" from *In the Labyrinth*. The GM may lay out the tower using the hex tiles from *The Fantasy Trip Legacy Edition*. The darker lines on the map indicate where megahex tiles go to make up the tower ruins. The GM should scatter debris counters around the perimeter and a couple in the interior of the map to provide obstacles for the combatants. Here, and in the warrens below, these debris piles can be moved through, but may trip characters. Treat the debris piles the same as a fallen body when rolling to avoid tripping.

### 1. THE RUINS

From the outside, all that is visible is the ruined stump of the tower. Well inside the doorway, where it can see but not be seen, is a lone Digger acting as lookout. It should be easy to dispatch, possibly giving the party a false sense of confidence.

#### *The Bronze Digger*

The smallest version of the Bronze Beast is the first type of automaton that the Assembler creates. These are about the size of a large house cat and are designed for digging and light scavenging. Because of their size, Diggers can fit where other Beasts cannot. The body is boxy, long, and skinny. It has no head, but a small arm attached where the neck would be. At the end of this arm is a humanoid hand for picking up items; it can use tools for scooping soil. From within the hand, the Digger can extrude a small, powered saw blade for cutting tree roots or other jobs; it was such a saw that broke into the PC's room. This can be used for combat, but it is short and does little damage.

The four legs can splay like those of a lizard, giving the Digger a flatter, lower-slung profile when it burrows.

It weighs about 25 pounds and is 2 feet long.

#### **Bronze Digger**

ST 8

DX 12

IQ n/a

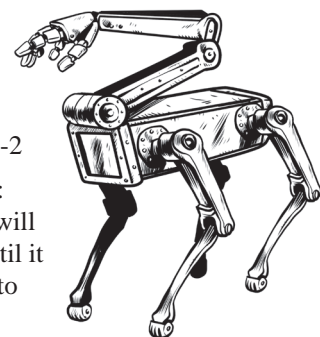
MA 12

Armor: 1

Attacks and damage: Saw, 1d-2

Special Abilities/Weaknesses:

Always attacks nearest foe and will continue attacking that target until it is eliminated before moving on to the next target.



The party may wish to search the debris piles inside, but will find only rocks of varying size. Nothing of value is there.

## 2. THE STAIRWAY

Once the guard has been dispatched, the party will find the spiral stairway into the tunnels beneath the tower. At the bottom of the stairway is a narrow (1 hex wide) tunnel leading to the east.

The Bronze Beast in the next area, and all others encountered, will be alerted by the Beasts' mysterious communication system. They won't know exactly where the party is unless there is a Beast that can see them, but they know they have been invaded and the Digger was destroyed.

## BELOW GROUND

Again, the megahex tiles may be used to build the encounter maps for the players. The entire upper corridor can be made with one set of tiles; each encounter room uses those same tiles. Of course, if you have two or more sets of tiles, you can leave the corridor in place and build the rooms as the players reach them. In all cases, the doorway into each room from the corridors is a single-hex-wide opening. Close to the surface, the rooms and corridors are lined with ancient stone. Farther on is the area the Diggers have excavated; those rooms and corridors are roughly cut from the surrounding stone and dirt. The smell is of freshly dug soil, with just a slight metallic odor.

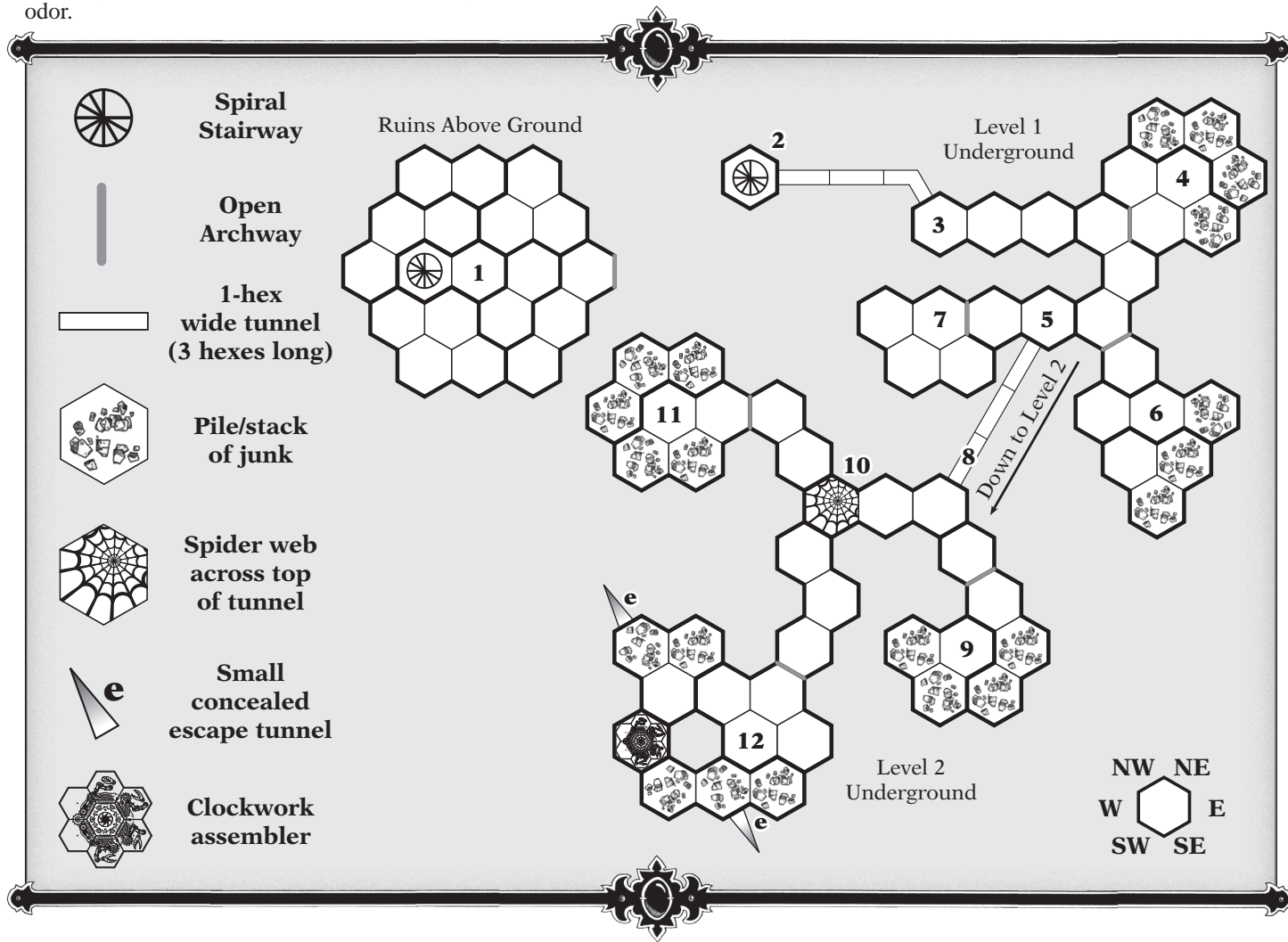
### THE BRONZE CREATIONS

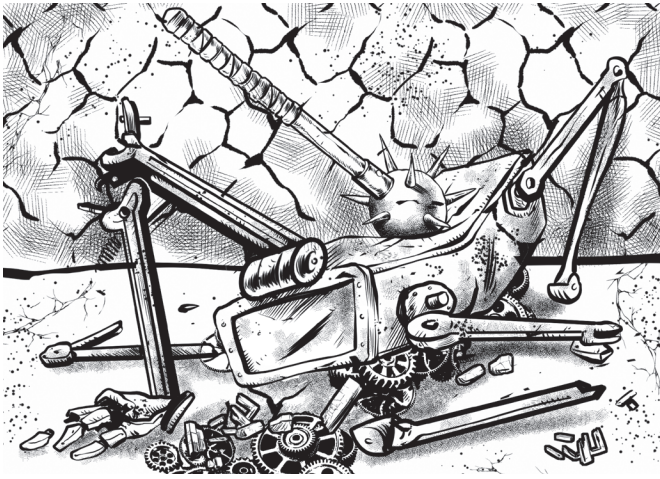
There are three types of Bronze Beast here.

All Beasts have sensors that "see" in all directions, with light or without it, and their arms are mounted on a rotating joint that allows them to position it in all directions. This means that Bronze Beasts have no side or rear hexes in combat.

Bronzes are mechanical and have no brain like a living creature. They can "see" Images and Illusions, but though they can see an Illusion, it cannot touch or cause any damage to the Beast. As mechanisms, they cannot "believe" or "disbelieve." A Beast may be distracted by an Illusion, but only for a little while. When an Illusion attacks a Beast, or vice versa, the attack passes harmlessly through the target, and the Beast's programming allows it to ignore that illusion henceforth.

Bronzes communicate with each other in some unknown fashion. They make no sound at all. The gears are totally silent in their operation.





It should also be noted that the warrens underground are completely unlit. The Bronze Beasts don't need visible light to move about. The party will need to provide their own torches or lanterns to see where they are going and what they are fighting.

### 3. IN THE SHADOWS

After rounding a bend toward the southeast, the tunnel widens (1 megahex wide). There is quite a bit of rocky debris here. Place several debris counters along the outer wall to the southwest. There is also a Bronze Builder rummaging through one of the piles of debris. The Builder is obscured by the debris piles and partially hidden in the shadows. This will make it hard to see initially and will require the party to make a successful 3/IQ roll to spot the Beast before it attacks. If the party fails the roll, the Builder gets both initiative and a free turn of attack. It will choose the person who is nearest and lock onto them. It will continue to attack that character until they fall or it is destroyed.

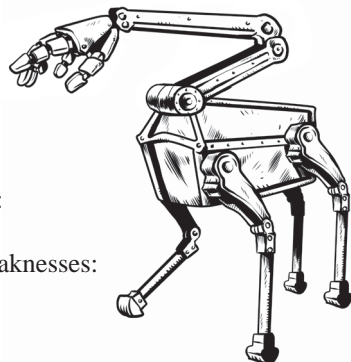
### THE BRONZE BUILDER

The Bronze Builder is the second level of Beast that the Assembler creates. It was a Builder that attacked the farmer. A Builder is about the size of a large wolf. The body is boxy and long and skinny. It is armored to protect the mechanisms inside. It has four oddly shaped legs positioned at each corner of the body. However, rather than a head, it has a jointed arm projecting from the top front of the body. The arm is tipped with a single "hand" that looks like a mechanical copy of a human hand, complete with opposable thumb. The hand can extrude various tools, but none is especially fitted for combat.

It weighs about 100 pounds and is not quite 4 feet long.

#### Bronze Builder

ST 10  
 DX 12  
 IQ n/a  
 MA 12  
 Armor: 2  
 Attacks and damage:  
 Manipulator Arm, 1d  
 Special Abilities/Weaknesses:  
 As for Digger.



There is nothing to find if the debris is searched. It is mostly just stone, possibly stockpiled to support further excavation.

### 4. LONE WOLF

The first true chamber the party will find is a seven-megahex space with a one-hex-wide opening. There is no door. This room has rocky debris scattered around the walls, as well as piles of odds and ends that the Beasts have scavenged. As soon as the party enters the room, they will be assaulted by the pungent odor of animal waste. This is due to a lone, near-starving wolf hiding there. It is the mate of the one they saw earlier. The wolves were hunting close to the tower, encountered Builders, and were attacked. It fled inside and retreated here. It will attack immediately.

#### Wolf

ST 8  
 DX 14  
 IQ 6  
 MA 12  
 Armor: 1  
 Attacks and damage: Bite, 1d+1



Once the wolf has been dispatched, a search of the scavenged piles will reveal a few small items of junk (broken farm implements, barrel staves, wheel hubs, and similar worthless debris), a small case containing one Healing Potion, a small box containing 10 silver coins, and a dagger worth about \$10.

### 5. TIGHT SQUEEZE

To the southwest, the party will find a narrow tunnel (1 hex wide) sloping down. The wider tunnel continues on to the west. The dank smell of the underground is even stronger coming from the narrow tunnel. Observant characters might notice a slight air current coming up from the sloping tunnel.

### 6. MORE MECHANISMS

A one-hex opening leads into this room. The room smells musty and slightly metallic. Place debris counters around the walls in the indicated megahexes. Two Bronze Builders were rummaging through a large pile of items. Place these next to the debris piles in the southmost megahex.

As the party enters the room, both Beasts will attack, locking on to the first one through the opening.

Once the Builders are both dealt with, the party may search through the debris. They will find a package of field rations (two-day supply for one person), a ring worth \$20, and a small pouch containing 10 silver coins. The items stolen from the PCs' own rooms are also in one of the piles here.

If in the GM's opinion the party spends too long in this area, the Beasts will come to them: the Warrior and two Builders from area 12 will attack, followed very closely by the Builders from area 11, and the three diggers from area 7 as a third wave. Unless the characters are truly doughty, they may have to retreat, or downright flee, from this onslaught, especially since they have no way of knowing that there is not a fourth wave, a fifth . . . In fact, if they don't have to flee from this many foes at once, the GM needs to increase the power of the Beasts, not just their number.

## CAN WE TALK TO THEM?

This particular “hive” will not communicate. It is quite possible that a larger hive might develop the ability, and might even be willing to trade for what it needs, limit its reproduction, and co-exist peacefully. It is even possible that such a communicative Assembler could become an ally. But this Assembler neither understands the tongues of other races nor possesses any way to make the sounds. The Beasts have keen hearing; they just don’t understand words.

Attempts to communicate with the Beasts will be ignored. A Beast out in the open will flee while the PCs are trying to talk. A Beast in the tower will attack while the PCs are trying to talk. Gestures, telepathy, and so on will be equally futile. In a sense, there is *no one there* to talk to!

## 7. DIG WE MUST

This room is an additional storeroom in progress. Again, the doorway is a 1-hex wide opening. The room smells heavily of freshly dug dirt. Here, three Bronze Diggers have been scraping at the far wall to expand the room. All three Diggers will attack the first person through the doorway as soon as he or she enters.

The debris piles in this room are just piles of stone and dirt, and there is no treasure to be found here.

## LOWER LEVEL

Once the party starts down the narrow (1-hex-wide) passage, you can use the megahex tiles to build the corridors of the second level. As with the first level, the walls are rough-cut stone. The air has a slightly musty smell, and there is a light air current coming up from the area below.

## 8. CLOSE QUARTERS SURPRISE

This is a narrow passage (1 hex wide) sloping down to a lower level. As the party reaches the halfway point of the narrow tunnel, a Bronze Builder will come around the corner and enter the narrow tunnel. It will attack immediately. Because the tunnel is only one hex across, only the lead character will be able to fight, unless he or she can push the Builder back into the wider corridor below.

## 9. UNEXPECTED LURKER

This is another chamber used to store stolen materials. Place the debris pile around the walls in the megahexes indicated. In addition to the musty, stale smell, the party may also detect (3/IQ) a musty, musky smell as well. The room seems empty and the party will see no movement inside. All they can see are the piles of junk. If, however, the party begins to search the piles of salvaged materials, they will disturb a large constrictor snake that was nesting among the salvage (and is the origin of the musty smell). It will attack immediately, gaining one free attack round. The snake is also hard to hit; -3 from DX when attacking it.

## Constrictor Snake

ST 12

DX 12

IQ 6

MA 6 -3 to hit.

Attacks and damage: Bite, 1d+1

Once the snake is dealt with, a successful search of the salvage piles will reveal a nice hatchet worth about \$15 and a pouch containing 2d6 silver coins. The rest of the debris is more broken or intact tools, mostly metallic.

Again, if the party spends too long here, the Bronze Beasts from below will counterattack. But if they move onward, they face another danger.

## 10. LOOK UP!

There is a giant spider web woven in the shadows across the top of the middle three hexes of the center megahex of this corridor. There is enough clearance beneath it for the Bronze Diggers and Builders (as well as halflings and dwarves) to go under, but it will snare any human-sized character about the shoulder and head. The party member in the lead must make a 3/IQ roll to see the web before getting stuck. Anyone who gets stuck must roll 4/ST to break free or deal at least 5 damage from an edged weapon to cut free. The spider itself will quickly descend from its hiding place above and attack any character stuck, or the one nearest to the web otherwise. The spider’s bite will only cause 1 point of damage, but any character bitten must make a 4/ST roll or take 2 dice damage from the venom. Of course, once they are free of the web, applying a torch will effectively burn it all away. If this should happen while the spider is still alive, it will immediately jump from the web and attack on the ground.

## Giant Spider

ST 6

DX 10

IQ1

MA 12

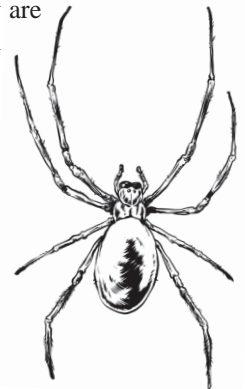
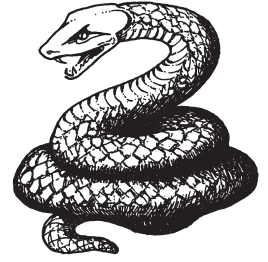
Attacks and damage:

Bite, 1 pt. and save 4/ST or take 2d venom damage.

## 11. LYING IN WAIT

This is another storage area containing several piles of salvaged items. The doorway into the room is a one-hex opening with no door. There are two Bronze Builders here, positioned on either side of the doorway, lying in wait for the first person to come through. Both will lock onto that first character and will get a free attack unless the party enters with weapons drawn, ready for combat.

Once the Bronze Beasts are defeated, a search of the debris piles will reveal some nice items amidst the random metal junk. Among the loot is a very finely balanced shortsword (+1 to DX when attacking) worth about \$800, a pouch containing 2d6 silver, and another case containing one healing potion.



## 12: FACING THE ASSEMBLER

Once again, entry to this room is through a one-hex-wide opening with no door. The air has the typical musty smell, with a strong metallic smell as well. The party may notice (3/IQ) a slight air current blowing from this room as they enter. This is a large room with piles of items and rocky debris lining the walls (use all the debris counters and place in the hexes next to the walls in the indicated megahexes). At the far end of the room is a large mechanical contraption with several arms and various openings. This is the Assembler, responsible for building and running this colony. To the party, it will look like a metal octopus, with waving arms and gnashing claws. It's obviously a menace, even if they don't understand it (the *players* will understand better than the characters, unless there is a Mechanician present).

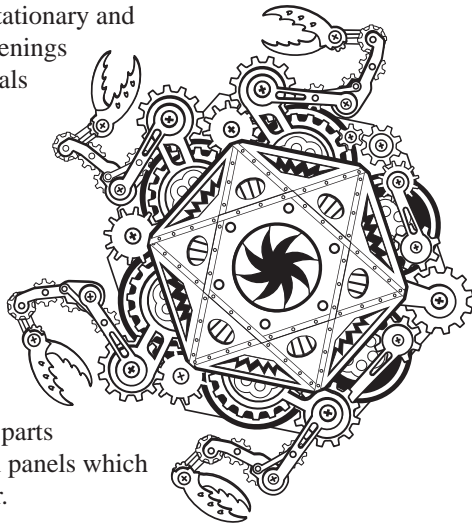
### *The Assembler*

The Assembler is represented by a seven-hex tile that takes up one full megahex above the tunnel floor. Below it is the real "works" of the device, an underground factory with no room for even a small humanoid among the systems. The Bronze Beasts do not work directly on the Assembler after it is activated; it is serviced inside by its own snake-like manipulators and servo units. The above-ground segment was expanded from the original Seed's body and now houses both the major materials input ports and the "brains" of the assembly complex. This is the system's vulnerable point. If it is broken (reduced to ST 0), the entire Assembler will cease to function.

The Assembler's visible section has four heavy arms that it uses to help feed raw materials into its interior. Unlike the intricate and subtle manipulators of the mobile units, the Assembler's primary arms are simply for moving, scooping, and breaking down raw materials to get them into the "innards" of the assembly plant.

Those arms can also be used in its defense, and it can attack with all four at once. They can reach any target in any hex adjacent to the one in which the base of the arm is attached. This means that in some hexes, a target may be attacked by two separate arms in the same turn. All reachable hexes are front hexes for the Assembler. Should anyone manage to make it past the flailing arms to get atop the mechanism, they will be in reach of all four arms at the same time!

The Assembler is stationary and has slots, bins, and openings into which raw materials are loaded. Because it has arms on all sides, treat all hexes surrounding the Assembler as front hexes. Because of its large size, all attacks against the Assembler are at a +1 DX bonus. Its visible and accessible parts are protected by metal panels which serve as 4-point armor.



The Assembler will never be found alone. There will always be at least two Builders bringing raw materials from piles of ore and stolen goods. They will immediately attack any intruders, and more will continue to arrive the longer the combat takes.

When it is completed, the Bronze Seed will exit one of the hidden openings in the sides of the Assembler and scurry toward the nearest escape tunnel. Half of the Beasts in the room will make a fighting retreat to the tunnel and try to escape as well. The rest will continue to protect the Assembler. Once the Seed escapes, no more Beasts will arrive, as all now have the directive to escape – or to cause distractions – and help the Seed rebuild somewhere else.

### **Assembler**

ST 20

DX 10

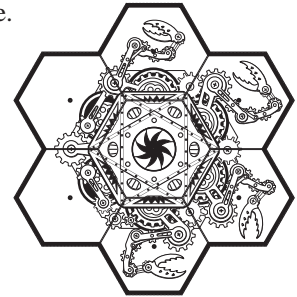
IQ n/a

MA 0

Armor: 4

Attacks and damage:

Heavy-Duty Arms (4): 1d+2



Note that this Assembler is hardly more than a baby. If it had expected discovery this soon, it would have prepared better. An older Assembler would have much stronger armor, perhaps heavy enough to be completely immune to hand weapons, and other defenses as well.

There are three Bronze Beasts in this room. Two are the standard Builders, while the third is the first Bronze Warrior that the Assembler has created.

### *The Bronze Warrior*

The Bronze Warrior is a soldier, and is the third type of Beast created by this Assembler. The Warrior is usually not created until it's needed. While they can be used for scavenging, they are large enough that they will not pass unnoticed. As such, they will usually be kept "at home" for defense purposes until there are enough of them that they can become a small army and escort other automatons on large-scale raids.

The Warrior is about the size of a small pony, and has a shape more like a centaur without a head. It has four legs that look like larger versions of those on the Bronze Builder. Mounted on the forward torso are two arms like those of the Builder, but larger. Each has the humanoid "hand" of the Builder, as well as an extensible blade that strikes like a shortsword (2d-1). The Warrior is also capable of attacking with both arms at the same time.

It weighs about 250 pounds and is 5 feet long.

### **Bronze Warrior**

ST 14

DX 12

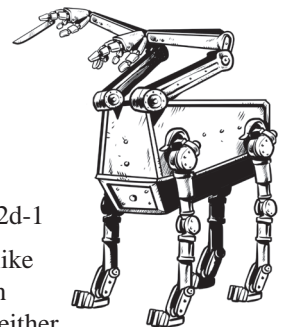
IQ n/a

MA 12

Armor: 3

Attacks and damage: Arm Blade, 2d-1

Special Abilities/Weaknesses: Unlike other Bronze Beasts, the Warrior can attack with both arms at once, using either the extensible blade or any other weapon held in the hand.





When the party enters the room, two Builders are standing next to the Assembler, feeding salvaged items into the openings below each arm. The Warrior is standing in the alcove to the north and will not be visible to the party as they enter. As before, all three of these Beasts will lock onto the first adventurer into the room and remain focused on them until they are dead.

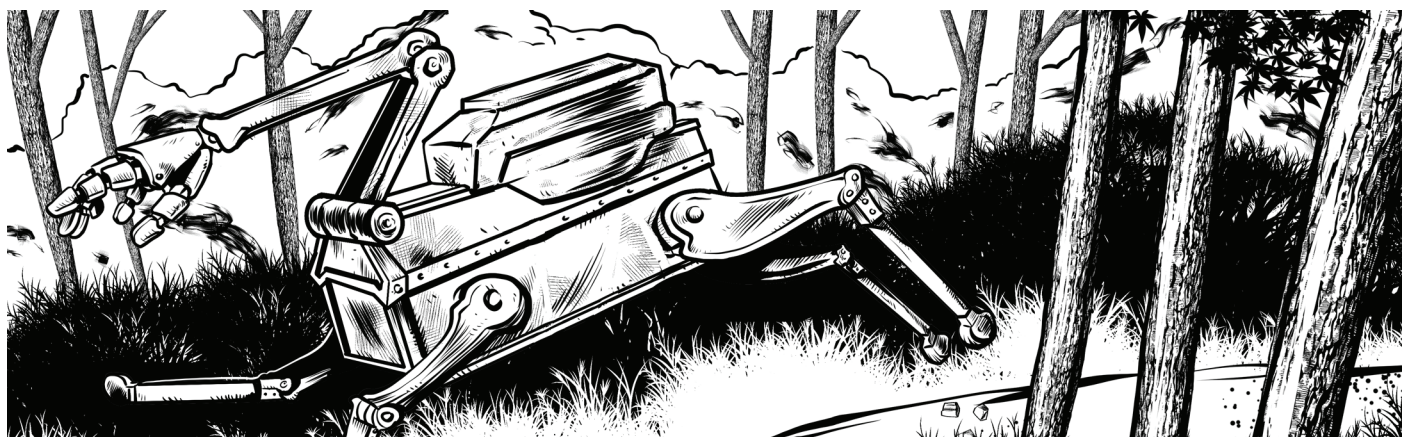
While this combat is going on, the GM should keep track of elapsed time. Starting with the fourth turn after the party enters the room, roll a die every turn. On a 1 or 2, a new Builder appears. Positioning a party member at the door will block any new Beast from entering the room until that person retreats or dies. All Builders in the area are headed toward the Tower now; a total of eight are available to join the combat. (Though there are also three Diggers outside the Tower, they will not join the battle, because, at this point, it's clear to the Tower that the intruders can easily defeat them.)

### *The Flight of the Seed*

Two turns into the battle, a third Builder will emerge from a door in the Assembler; the door quickly closes. Anyone facing that direction gets a 3/IQ roll to notice that the Beast seems to be wearing a large saddle!

This Builder is carrying the Assembler's Seed (see box below) to safety. It runs to a small hole in the northwest corner of the room, and flees.

After the Seed escapes, one of the Beasts already in the room will break off its attack, run to the hole that the Seed escaped into, and back in. Wedging itself firmly into the hole to completely block anyone or anything from following the Seed, it will fight from that position until destroyed. Once destroyed, it will take the party several minutes to pull it out of the hole.



### SEEDS

A “seed” is the reproductive mechanism of the Assemblers. It is designed to be carried and “planted” by the Beasts which that Assembler creates. The Seed created by this Assembler is shaped roughly like a saddle and would fit over the back of one of its Builders or Warriors.

A Seed is even more of a marvel of miniaturization than the rest of the Clockwork Beasts. In a package weighing less than 50 pounds is a self-assembling factory that can eventually grow into a whole new Assembler. It includes memories, instructions, at least two very tiny motile automatons (Bronze Mice, as it were), and fabricating devices that can self-replicate. It is intended to be delivered by one or more Beasts, which will protect it, prepare a location for it to grow, and collect materials. Whether a lone Seed could start growing without a helping Builder is a good question. Perhaps, over undisturbed decades or centuries, the Mice it carries could find enough material to start the growth process, but many things can befall a little mouse, even if it's made of metal.

A Seed is very time-consuming and “expensive” to create, and very vulnerable to accident or attack while it is first growing, which is why the Bronze Beasts do not rule Cidri. Normally, an Assembler will prepare one Seed early in its life but will not deploy it unless a perfect location is found or the Assembler is threatened with destruction. Once it has one Seed prepared, it will not create more unless it has scouted a perfect location and can spare a party of Beasts to escort it.

The best location for a Seed is far away from people, yet perhaps near enough that metal goods can be stolen – that's risky, but far more efficient than refining raw ore. It should be protected from the weather, which probably means underground but well above the groundwater line. A large Assembler complex will have at least one Seed hidden on site, to give it a chance of regrowth if it is destroyed (after all, the ruins of an Assembler are a perfect source for exactly the materials that a new Assembler needs to grow). A dead city far from civilization, perhaps lost in a jungle or killed by spreading deserts, would be a perfect location, with lots of metals available and little chance of interference. Or Beasts could be found in a lightless cavern deep underground, slowly mining for ore and patiently building up their numbers.

*For more ideas about self-replicating systems like the Bronze Beasts and their Assemblers, look up “Von Neumann Machine.”*

All remaining Beasts in the room will continue to fight and defend the Assembler. Because the Assembler is immobile, it can only attack any opponent who might stray within one hex. The Beasts in the room will try to force the party members into the Assembler's attack zone if they can. They will fight to the death, or until the Assembler is destroyed. If any Beasts are left after the Assembler is demolished, they will try to make it to any hex marked with an "e" and escape through a concealed small tunnel. Any Beast that escapes will do so in a way that allows it to fight anything that might follow. The crack is too small for anything larger than a Halfling to enter, and doing so would be foolhardy even if possible; there would be almost no room to swing a weapon. If any in the party is foolish enough to try, use a one-hex row that must be entered on hands and knees. Any attacks made within the tunnel are at a -3 DX because of the close confines, while the Bronze Beasts with their flexible manipulator arm have no such disadvantage.

Any escaped Beasts, plus the three Diggers outside, will rendezvous with the one carrying the Seed and go . . . where? Probably a long ways away. They may also dig a hole, bury themselves, and go dormant for the next ten years. Even if the party pursues as soon as they get out of the tower, the Beasts will not be found.

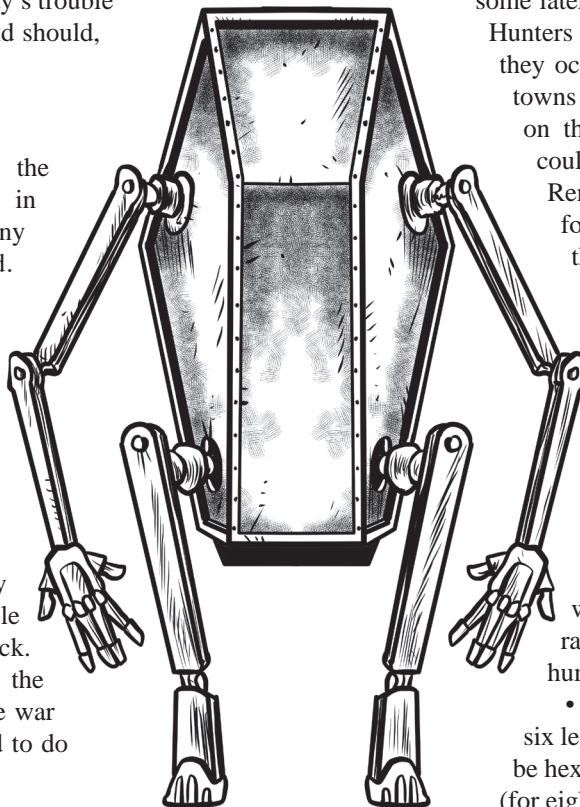
#### *A Last Bit of Looting*

Once the Assembler is defeated, the party is free to search the debris piles in the room. Among the loot to be found are 1d+3 pouches or containers each containing 2d+3 silver coins and another case containing one healing potion, and two weapons chosen at random from the weapons table in *In the Labyrinth*.

As for the Assembler itself: it contains a lot of good metal, but it's probably not worth the party's trouble to salvage it. The villagers can, and should, make good use of it.

## EPILOGUE

Once the party has defeated the Assembler and the Beasts left in the room, they will find that any remaining automatons have fled. The rooms are empty of any threat, and can be searched in detail. Of course, any "dead" Bronze Beast will still be there, and if the party chooses to take one or more back, they can do so. The Diggers only weigh about 25 pounds, and one could fit in a knapsack. The others would require a mule or a wagon to carry back. Note, though, that a reasonable party should fear a counterattack. The GM should not give them the impression that they have won the war and have all the time in the world to do whatever they want.



When the party returns to the inn, Willem summons the village council. Among them is the wizard Karla. She talked to the farmer who was injured, and the description of the attacker sounded familiar. Referring to an old book she brought with her, she will tell the party and the Council more about the creatures they have defeated. She will have little to add about the mobile Beasts, but she can explain what the "mechanical octopus" Assembler really was, and tell something of how the Assemblers reproduce. Particular attention should be paid to the flight of the rest of the Beasts, since that probably indicates that a Seed (p. 9) has escaped – as indeed it did. If the villagers are wise, they will thoroughly pillage the old tower, break the ruined Assembler into bits and carry them far away, and keep watch forever against another plague of thefts . . . just in case.

If the party salvaged a Beast, Karla will offer to buy it, or (more likely) trade for a reasonable amount of magic. She won't offer a fortune, though, because she suspects that there might be others to be picked up for free at the old tower.

She will also suggest that, while of course there is no Mechanician's Guild in this tiny village, one in a larger city would likely be very interested in buying defunct Beasts and would pay for the locations of any Bronze colonies found in the future.

The grateful council will gladly pay the agreed-upon fee. Additionally, innkeeper Willem will offer them another two nights room and board for free as a thank-you for stopping the menace. (Willem is no fool. He doesn't know for sure that the troubles are over, and this is a relatively cheap and pleasant way to keep the party in town for a little while . . . just in case.)

#### *Further Adventures*

The GM is encouraged to expand on the material in this adventure. The PCs might stumble across another nest at some later date, or even decide to become Bronze Hunters to seek out the infestations wherever they occur. The Mechanicians' Guilds in larger towns and cities may have more information on the Bronze Beasts, and further research could reveal new secrets and information.

Remember that the Beasts need not follow the same configuration seen in this adventure. Possible types of Beasts include:

- Spies – tiny units that do nothing but watch and listen. They might have legs, or they might fly. The Assembler in this adventure had no Spies.
- Bear-like Warriors that walk on all four legs but will rise to their hind legs to attack. These would likely be smaller than a real bear.
- Small humanoid Bronze Builders with two arms and two legs that could range anywhere from hobbit-sized to human-sized.
- Crab-like Bronze Diggers with four or six legs and two manipulators. The body could be hexagonal (for six appendages) or octagonal (for eight appendages).

- Elongated ant-like Diggers or Builders that have six legs and one arm where the head would be.
- Ball-shaped units that roll everywhere, with two arms that stick out from a central “axis” or that are retractable and hide inside to create a perfect sphere.
- Warriors with missile-weapon capability.

The possibilities here are endless. When designing your own Bronze Beasts, keep a few guidelines in mind:

- Remember that only a few types of Beasts normally appear in any but the largest colony. The progression will always be some form of Digger, then a form of Builder, and finally a type of Warrior. Specialist units like Spies or heavy excavators might come later if the Assembler thinks they are needed.
- Match the capabilities of the Beasts to the locale and to whatever they will be scavenging. Beasts may look and act like a swarm of rats, working as groups. Those near water could be capable of moving or working under water. Ones that burrow like moles, climb vertical surfaces like insects, or even fly could be adapted for special environments.
- Except for Spies, a Beast should have one or more arms. These could be hinged as in this adventure or might be more serpentine and tentacle-like. The “hand” at the end could have any number of “fingers” that may be jointed like human fingers, pincers, or even smaller tentacles. As long as the Beast can use them to dig, build, and carry salvaged goods, they will work.

In a “Bronze Hunter” campaign, eventually the players could come across multiple complexes in a single general area (cooperating or even competing), or a larger complex with two or more Assemblers and multiple types of Beasts. Campaign adventures can start with simple raids on Assemblers and move on to:

- helping locals build defenses, and training them to help fight the infestations.
- competing or cooperating with other groups of hunters, scholars, wizards, or Mechanics investigating the phenomenon.
- dealing with Mechanics who try, with various degrees of success, to disassemble, reassemble, duplicate, or exploit the Bronze mechanisms.
- becoming “ambassadors” to the Assemblers, if any can be found that are able and willing to communicate.
- investigating the origins of the Bronze Beasts, and perhaps discovering the true story behind the Tinker himself.

Any Bronze Beasts that are captured intact and “alive” can be disassembled and reassembled with some basic Mechanician skills. Interestingly, if a Beast is partially disassembled and then reassembled in the exact same way, it will come alive again. Replacing even one damaged part with a seemingly exact duplicate from another Beast will rarely work, and building replacement parts will never work. Of course, the Beast will violently oppose its disassembly, and will probably attack as soon as it comes “alive,” but that is the problem of the Mechanician who wants to experiment with it.

## AND NOW, THE SCIENCE

**GMs** – This information is not for players. In fact, you should not read it yourself if you want to preserve for yourself all of the mysterious aura of the metal Beasts.

- **Power** – They may be powered by tiny fusion plants, or by some battery technology we haven’t dreamed of. They are definitely not magic, though, and there is no chance of sudden catastrophic explosion when the PCs smite a Beast. (Unless you want them to catch fire like a B-movie vampire, of course.)

- **Communications** – Probably radio with a very high bandwidth. The Assembler is in constant real-time contact with all its automatons, though if something happens to the comm link or the Assembler itself, the machines will continue about their work.

- **Sensors** – Visible light, IR, sound at all frequencies, magnetism, and probably more. It is hard to surprise Beasts, especially on their home ground.

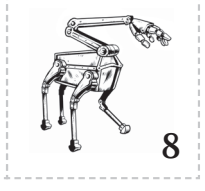
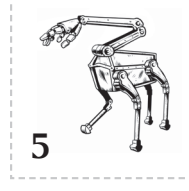
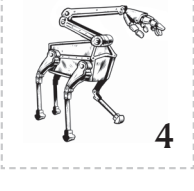
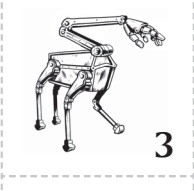
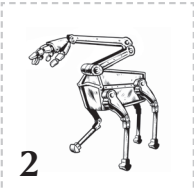
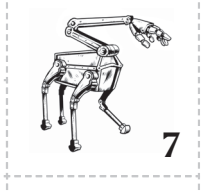
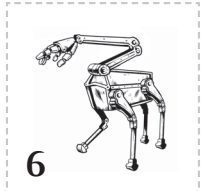
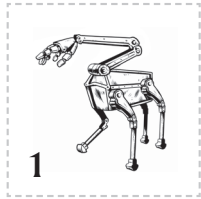
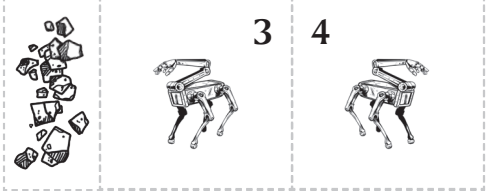
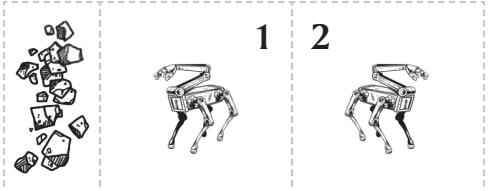
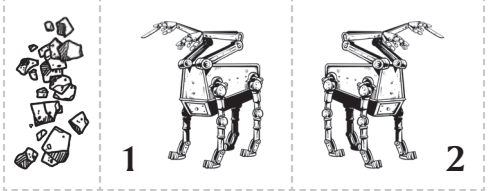
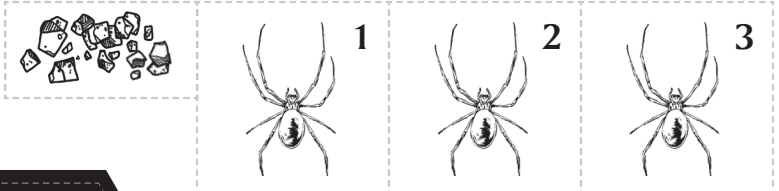
- **Clockwork?** Yes, really – at least, that’s what the folk of Cidri would call any such mechanical device. In fact, we can create our own “Beasts” now, albeit without the everlasting power source or the good-as-human hands. But it takes a huge factory and skilled workers to build one.

- **Intelligence** – A “not applicable” IQ score has been assigned to the automatons. It could just as well have been zero or 20; machine intelligence is very different from human, and since the Beasts do not communicate, roll to disbelieve, or have to try to figure things out, their intelligence, or lack of it, is not an issue.

- **Programmed Reactions** – The colony does not react to living creatures in quite the way that humans may expect. The colony could be called paranoid about remaining undetected, hiding from searchers, and lashing out if confronted. But it makes no attempt to communicate, instead stealing material in a way that guarantees a hostile reaction from humans. This is just the way it’s programmed. It obeys the laws of physics but not the “laws” of human behavior or society. No one except the GM knows whether there is really a mind present or whether it’s all an elaborate program, and GMs need not decide that if they don’t want to!

- **Machine Genetics** – It may look as though every Builder, for instance, is alike, but in fact the Assembler is constantly tinkering with the design in small ways, seeking perfection. This is why parts from one Beast are unlikely to work with another one. The Assembler will code its findings into its Seeds, and if there is another Assembler nearby, it will share the information, so gradually the whole system improves.

# The Clockwork Tower Counter Sheet



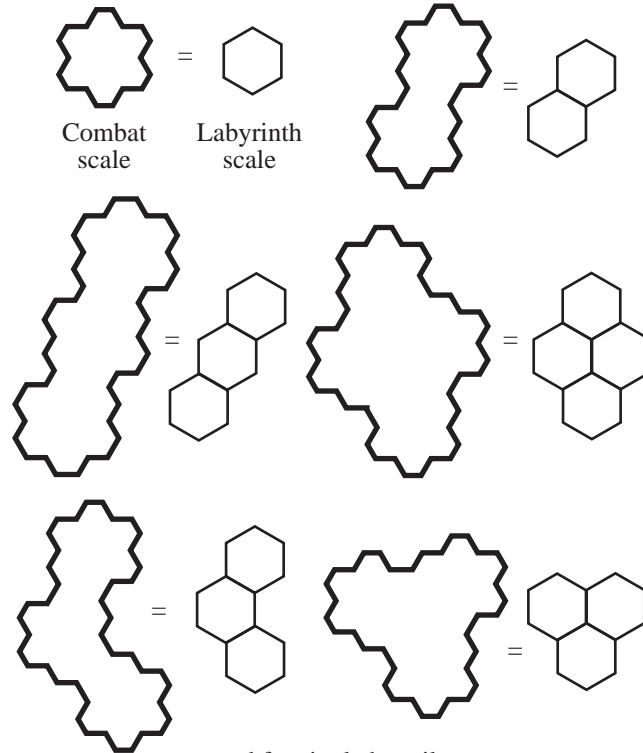
Because we had the room, this page contains extra Assemblers, Bronze Beasts, and even spiders, to let you make the adventure larger and more challenging.

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The megahex tiles used to make the Special Scenery are provided on p. 12, and can be printed and mounted on cardboard.

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