

THE CLOCKWORK CATAclysm



CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW

Title: The Clockwork Cataclysm

Theme/Genre: Steampunk Fantasy with Mystery undertones

Tone: Heroic with a touch of intrigue and tension

Target Level for Players: Level 5

Expected Duration: 2 hours

PLAYER FOCUS PREFERENCES

- **Combat:** Medium
- **Roleplay:** High
- **Exploration:** Medium

BACKSTORY AND SETTING

The world is a vibrant blend of magic and technology, where steam-powered cities bustle with innovation, and mechanized wonders are powered by arcane energy. The adventure takes place in **Gildspire**, a sprawling steampunk metropolis known for its towering spires, brass-clad streets, and the rhythmic hum of clockwork machinery.

In recent weeks, the city has been plagued by a bizarre series of malfunctions in its clockwork systems. From public automaton servants suddenly running

amok to the great city clocktower freezing mid-chime, the people are panicking. Whispers of the “Clockwork Cataclysm” grow louder, as many suspect sabotage or a malfunction in the city’s mysterious “Core Engine”—the massive device beneath the city powering all of Gildspire’s mechanical marvels.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Fifty years ago, the Core Engine was crafted by the brilliant inventor **Eshara Wintock**, who disappeared mysteriously shortly afterward. Many considered the city’s reliance on the device risky, but its efficiency silenced the critics. Rumors persist that Eshara’s inventions were partially inspired by forbidden arcane magic fused with machinery.

IMPORTANT NPCs

1. **Professor Thalín Gearwright (Questgiver):** A jittery, eccentric engineer with wild grey hair and goggles perpetually on his forehead. He’s the city’s leading expert on the Core Engine and desperately seeks help to prevent a disaster.
2. **Lady Orlina Wintock (Potential Antagonist):** The estranged granddaughter of Eshara Wintock. A cunning and embittered woman, she harbors a dangerous secret tied to the Core Engine’s instability.
3. **Clockwork Golem Experiment #07 (Final Boss):** An unstable, semi-sentient construct that may or may not want to destroy everything it sees.
4. **Captain Brom Helmshade (Ally/Potential Obstacle):** The no-nonsense head of the Gildspire City Guard. While skeptical of adventurers, he can provide information or resources if convinced.

PLOT HOOK

The adventure kicks off as the party receives a summons to the **Inventors’ Guild Hall** from Professor Thalín Gearwright, who seeks urgent assistance. He explains the dire citywide crisis:

“The Core Engine—it’s unstable! If it collapses, the entire city could fall into chaos! Please, I need someone to investigate the lower levels of the engine and stop whatever’s causing it to destabilize. Oh, and do hurry! The clock is literally ticking...”

OBJECTIVES

- **Primary Objective:** Investigate the Core Engine and prevent a catastrophic mechanical meltdown.
- **Secondary Objective:** Uncover who or what is behind the sabotage—and why.

KEY LOCATIONS

1. THE INVENTORS' GUILD HALL (STARTING AREA)

Atmosphere: An enormous, cluttered workshop filled with half-finished automata, bubbling alchemical concoctions, and stacks of schematics. A sense of frantic urgency fills the air.

NPCs and Encounters:

- **Professor Thalín Gearwright** introduces the problem. Players can gather details about the Core Engine and the area's dangers.
- One of the automata malfunctions during the briefing and attacks the party, offering a simple introductory combat encounter.

Skill Challenges:

- Investigation/Arcana check (DC 15) to gather more info about the Core Engine's design, providing helpful clues for later.

2. THE CATACOMB CONDUITS (INTERMEDIATE AREA)

Atmosphere: A network of underground tunnels running with steam pipes and glowing energy conduits. The air is hot and humid, and strange echoes of moving machinery emanate from the walls.

Encounters:

- **Puzzle:** The party encounters a locked access panel guarded by a complex **gear mechanism puzzle**. They must align rotating brass rings to open the way forward.
 - *Puzzle Mechanics:* Players must solve a riddle and make Intelligence or Dexterity checks (DC 14) to carefully rotate the dials.
 - Hint: A clue nearby references "Eshara's favorite mantra: 'Begin always at the third chime.'"
- **Combat:** Three rogue **Clockwork Sentinels (Modded Animated Armors)** ambush the party when they activate a wrong gear. The sentinels fight defensively, using tight corridors for cover.

3. THE CORE ENGINE CHAMBER (FINAL AREA)

Atmosphere: A cavernous, echoing chamber dominated by the mighty Core Engine—a crackling device of gears, crystals, and steam, suspended over a massive open pit. The air thrums with unstable magic and mechanical whirring.

Encounters:

1. **Final Confrontation:** Inside the chamber, **Lady Orlina Wintock** reveals herself. She intends to destroy the Core Engine, claiming the city has become too dependent on her ancestor's device. She argues passionately, blaming the city for neglecting people in favor of progress.

- Players must decide whether to try to reason with her (Persuasion/Intimidation DC 16) or prepare for battle.

2. **Boss Fight:** If diplomacy fails, Lady Orlina activates **Clockwork Golem Experiment #07**. The unstable construct is powerful but prone to glitches that players can exploit. For example, Intelligence or Arcana checks (DC 15) can disable certain functions mid-battle.

Environmental Hazards:

- Overloading arcs of magic energy from the Core Engine. (Dexterity saving throw DC 14 to avoid damage.)
- Collapsing catwalks during the fight (Dexterity saving throw DC 12 to maintain balance).

ENCOUNTERS AND CHALLENGES

COMBAT ENCOUNTERS

- **Clockwork Automaton (CR 1)** in the Guild Hall for a warm-up fight.
- **Clockwork Sentinels (CR 2 each)** in the Catacomb Conduits as minor enemies.
- **Clockwork Golem Experiment #07 (CR 6)** as the final boss, capable of multiattacks, steam jets, and temporary shielding.

ROLEPLAY ENCOUNTERS

- Convincing **Captain Brom Helmshade** to share secret city blueprints. (Persuasion/Intimidation DC 15.)
- Debate with Lady Orlina—if players succeed, they avoid the final boss fight by changing her mind.

PUZZLE/TRAP

- Gear mechanism puzzle to open the Catacomb Conduits.

CLIMAX AND RESOLUTION

If the party defeats the Golem or convinces Orlina to stand down, they stabilize the Core Engine just in time to prevent a catastrophic meltdown. However, if they fail, the device spirals out of control, causing a city-wide shutdown of all clockwork systems. The populace will suffer, but opportunities for deeper adventures might arise as factions scramble for control.

REWARDS

1. **Gold:** 1,200 gp found in the Core Engine chamber treasury.
2. **Magical Item: “Eshara’s Wrench”** (Homebrew Magic Item): Grants a +1 bonus to Strength-based attack rolls and can act as Thieves’ Tools for tinkering purposes.
3. **Story Rewards:** Favor from Professor Thalin and the Inventors’ Guild, potential animosity from Lady Orlina (if spared), and recognition from the Gildspire populace.
4. **Experience Points:** Enough to potentially level players to Level 6.

SUPPORTING DETAILS

- **Stat Blocks:** Custom Clockwork Golem (AC 17, HP 95, Multiattack, Steam Burst).
- **Maps:** Hand-drawn schematics of the Guild Hall, Conduits, and Core Chamber with labeled hazards.
- **Player Handouts:** A diagram of Eshara’s mantra, blueprints with scribbled notes, and Orlina’s manifesto.
- **Atmospheric Music:** Use tracks with steampunk vibes, like ticking clocks, hissing steam, and heroic orchestral themes.

FLEXIBLE OUTCOMES

- If the players fail early puzzles, allow them alternate paths (e.g., bribing Captain Brom for a shortcut).
- If Orlina is spared, she may become a recurring enemy or ally in future campaigns.
- Encourage player creativity in engineering their own solutions to problems—let them tinker with the environment!

POST-GAME WRAP-UP

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS

- “What part of the campaign did you enjoy the most?”
- “Were the combat encounters/challenges engaging?”

EPILOGUE OPTIONS

- If players wish to continue the story, allow them to involve the politics of the Inventors’ Guild or investigate other ancient Wintock inventions.