



A LIFE, DECONSTRUCTED

6 Difficulty
6 Complexity

A standalone encounter for five adventurers

By Corwin Riddle

A Life, Deconstructed is a standalone encounter designed for five 9th to 11th-level adventurers. The rural farming village of Casai was not prepared for Movasi and his *Magnificent Mechanicals of Mind and Iron*, automated mechanisms that have begun replacing the villagers, one by one. The players must confront Movasi and his automatons and rescue the missing farmers before they're assimilated into Movasi's stock.

BACKGROUND

The farming community of Casai is a long way from the modern cities of the world in both distance and mind-set; the lavish comforts of such ivory towers and luxurious markets are of no concern to those living off the land—survival is their only self-indulgence. All alone in the rural wilderness, each day brings a new difficulty that threatens to snatch away the fleeting and precious lives of the vulnerable villagers; packs of wild animals, inclement weather, and disease could deal irreparable damage to a community reliant on every last body to survive. Without enough farmers, ranchers, or guards, the community would starve or fall to predators and be wiped out, making procreation an urgent necessity in Casai; each child works to take over the duties of their family until they have children of their own.

Although life is tough in Casai, the community is at least free from the troubles of the modern world. There are no power struggles or mindless wars; any loss of life would slow down crop and livestock production and cause a famine that few would survive. But regardless of the dangers, those in Casai serve themselves and no other master—they work their own fields, grow their own food, and spend their nights together in song and dance, free from the greedy and oppressive grasp of kings and their titles. The children are taught this early and often, and even though passing travelers and their stories pique interest in the pleasures found in the outside world, few are willing to leave their families behind, unprotected. After all, there is joy to be found in a simple life.

However, the simple life of Casai has suddenly become a little complicated with the arrival of a mysterious merchant

promising the end to all worldly inconvenience. The trader, an eccentric eladrin artificer named Movasi, has come to Casai to set up his unique shop: *Movasi's Magnificent Mechanicals of Mind and Iron*, a magical emporium of custom-designed automated machines, capable of everything a human could do—and more. Isolated from guild laws and prying eyes, Movasi has replicated a girl from the village and sent back a magical automaton in her place. Now, his deception in the open, the villagers seek help in finding the girl and bringing justice to Movasi for his crime, and, more importantly, protecting their beloved children—the future of Casai depends on it.

GETTING THE PLAYERS INVOLVED

A Life, Deconstructed is a standalone encounter, but can easily be turned into a full adventure. The PCs can stumble on the rural settlement of Casai, be sent there specifically in order to help, or be following Movasi's trail through the country. You can send your players to Movasi's shop with one or more of the following hooks:

HOOK 1: PUT MOVASI OUT OF BUSINESS

Vonodan is one of Casai's older farmers and has endured more trying seasons than most. He tells the PCs that he's seen enough to recognize a problem before it becomes a problem, and he knew Movasi was the worst kind of trouble as soon as he came to town. Now it's become apparent that he's kidnapped one of their own, replacing her with a mechanical construct, as if no one would notice.

Vonodan tells the PCs that this is just the beginning. Every day for months, Movasi's shop has been working overtime, churning out those mechanical monsters. It's only a matter of time before the artificer has an entire army of these robots to do with what he will, and it's already become apparent that he sees the village of Casai as nothing but a place to test his creations. He and his kin are mere farmers, incapable of stopping such a powerful force, and every day that goes by

the eladrin grows his army—their doom is inevitable.

Fortunately, Vonodan has done some research and discovered that Movasi's assembly line, and all its robots, are powered by a series of strange, magical crystals, embedded deep in the metal mechanisms of the assembly line. Destroy those and all of the robots should stop working. It's the only way to overpower him and remove him from the area. Only then can Casai live in simple peace, safe from the meddling of the outside world.

Vonodan asks the PCs to shut down the assembly line. He warns the PCs that Movasi will probably be carrying one of the controlling crystals on his person and that they should do whatever necessary to ensure its destruction. He says that he can't afford to pay the PCs, but there should be more than enough material wealth at the shop, free for the taking.

Quest XP: 1,000 XP for shutting down Movasi's assembly line.

HOOK 2: SHE, ROBOT

A distraught farmer named Calvos approaches the PCs and tells them his tale of woe. His teenage daughter, Sulas, has always been a rebellious child with an insatiable curiosity of Simth and fast-paced lives, and despite his orders, she snuck off to see the wonders of Movasi's shop. Weeks later, she was horribly injured in an unfortunate accident and crushed by a pile of stones. Upon closer inspection, the body was a mechanical construct that perfectly represented his daughter—sending everyone in the village into a wild panic.

Clearly, Movasi has kidnapped Sulas for some purpose, sending a robot to replace her so as not to arouse suspicion. Calvos and the rest of the farmers are eager to break into Movasi's shop and rescue her, but they can't get past his security. A group of the PC's experience should be able to break in and force Movasi to tell them what he knows of the girl. He offers the PCs an expensive family heirloom if they bring him any information about Sulas.

Quest XP: 500 XP and a ring worth 1,000 gp for finding out what became of Sulas.

SPECIAL FEATURES

FACSIMILE

The automatons have a melee ability called *Facsimile* that copies another player to confuse the party:

- The automaton magically changes to perfectly replicate the targeted PC, but retains its normal defenses and abilities.
- The automaton and the targeted PC are teleported up to 4 squares in opposite directions when *Facsimile* hits.

- Alert the players that the minis (if you are using them) do not represent which one is which. Mark that information down yourself where they can't see.
- Not even the replicated player will know which one they are (until their turn begins).
- Other players can not tell the difference between that automaton and the player: if the replicated player speaks, the automaton speaks identically.
- To discern which one is which, a different player can make a **DC 20 Perception** or **DC 20 Insight** check as a minor action. A successful check reveals which one is the automaton and which one is their ally.
- Regardless of successful checks, when the replicated player's turn starts, inform that player which mini they are so they can take their turn normally. At this point, it should be clear to the other players who is who.
- If a player attacks their ally accidentally, do the attack as normal. If a player heals an automaton on accident, use the ability as normal and the automaton gains the hit points.

This works best if you have at least five doubles of humanoid minis. As the battle goes on, more and more players will be replicated by robots, which can get very confusing for everyone if there is no visual component to knowing who is copied by which robot. When a player is replicated, take their mini off the table and use the two doubled minis (one for the automaton and one for the so the other players can see who is replicated by which robot. Also make sure you're keeping track of this on a piece of paper!

ASSEMBLY LINE

The players fight in the middle of Movasi's assembly line:

- Conveyor belt 1 begins going north. Belt 2 begins going west and belt 3 begins going south. At the end of each round, each belt reverses direction. *Cut out and use the arrows on page 11 to indicate direction of each belt.*
- A player moving with the direction of the conveyor belt moves twice their speed. A player moving in the opposite direction moves half their speed.
- A creature that begins its turn prone is automatically moved 3 squares in the direction of the conveyor belt at the beginning of its turn.
- There are several mechanical arms that extend over the conveyor belts. These are above the actual belts, so creatures can pass below them.
- A mechanical arm has 20 hit points and defenses of 20. It makes the following attack against any creature passing below it:
Attack: +12 vs. AC
Hit: **10 damage** and the target is knocked prone.

GETTING STARTED

Read this as the players approach Movasi's Magnificent Mechanicals of Mind and Iron:

Detecting your presence, the building appears to come alive. Large mechanical arms raise themselves high, waving in your direction. Above the doorway, a small door opens, a strange-looking automaton emerging, wearing a top hat and brandishing a gear-laden cane. "Come one, come all! Welcome to Movasi's Magnificent Mechanicals of Mind and Iron! The future awaits!" Below, the shop's sign lights up with shimmering colors, and the doors open.

AREA: MOVASI'S SHOP

Read this when the PCs reach Movasi's assembly line:

The room bursts into bright lights as mechanical lamps turn on overhead, one by one. You seem to be in the middle of a production facility; large pieces of machinery take up most of the room, placed between conveyor belts and stacks of inanimate automatons. There is a loud crack, and an eladrin appears in the rear of the room.

"You're not the first group of adventurers those insufferable peasants have sent my way," he says, sighing, "and you won't be the last." He snaps his fingers, and the room springs to life—the belts begin to turn, and mechanical contraptions start to shake and churn. A group of automatons step off the assembly line, approaching menac-

ingly. "Forgive the aggressive sell, friends. I know it's bad business, but I also know why you've come and, sadly, there's nothing to be done about past sales. Contracts were signed, after all."

Perception (DC 12): The conveyor belts move erratically along the assembly line. The belts seem stable enough to easily support the weight of you and your allies.

Perception (DC 18): Several mechanical arms sweep above the conveyor belts in a threatening manner, randomly swinging below in a blur of grinding gears and electrified prongs.

SETUP

1 Movasi (M)

8 Auto-Magic Automatons (A)

FEATURES OF THE AREA

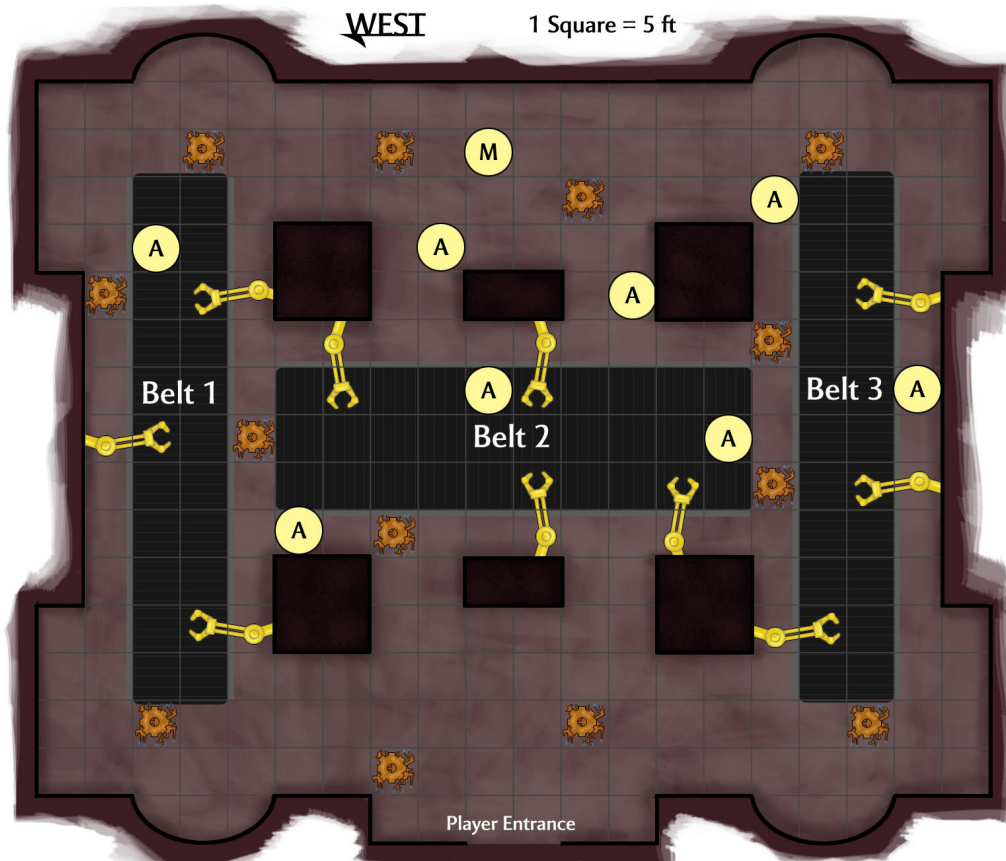
Height: The ceiling is 30' high.

Illumination: The shop is well-lit.

Conveyor Belts: Marked as black conveyor belts, see **Special Features** for details.

Mechanical Arms: Marked as yellow mechanical claws, see **Special Features** for details.

Machinery: Marked as orange gears and spikes. A creature entering one of these squares is pushed 2 squares and takes 1d6 damage.



MOVASI IN COMBAT

Movasi is unsure of the player's abilities, and will try to keep his automatons in front of him until he sees the players in action. He will move around using his teleportation powers to stay behind automatons and the assembly line, hoping to trap the players on the conveyor belts.

Movasi will use *Charged Bolt* to teleport nearby players away from him or distant players into danger or adjacent to automatons. He is in control of the automatons and will have them group up on a player or two before casting *Auto-Magic Empowerment* on a group. Both *Robotic Recall* and *Fey Step* are used to escape combat or put an enemy between himself and attackers.

AUTO-MAGIC AUTOMATONS IN COMBAT

The automatons are clever robots controlled by Movasi, who can command them without any kind of visible or verbal orders. Their biggest priority is to protect Movasi and stay between the players and him, attempting to keep them on the conveyor belts and push them into any machinery if possible. They are not stupid and will avoid walking into the mechanical arms or dangerous machinery.

An automaton uses *Facsimile* as soon as possible on a player, hoping to confuse the rest of the party. Automatons will target separate players to add to the confusion, making it difficult for the allies to attack the correct target without making a check or damaging their ally. When an automaton's replication is discovered at the beginning of its target's turn, it will try to copy that player again or another nearby player.

Once a player has been replicated, the automaton that copied it will try to make use of *Empowered Replication*, attacking that same target if possible with *Slam* for the bonus damage. When an automaton is about to die, it will try to get as close as possible to nearby players to damage them with *Shrapnel Explosion*.

COMBAT FLAVOR

If you dislike reading powers and effects to your players, give them hints with the following flavor text.

When Movasi uses *Robotic Recall*, read:

Movasi snaps his fingers and one of the automatons briefly vanishes, reappearing next to its master.

When Movasi uses *Auto-Magic Empowerment*, read:

The artificer unleashes a ball of pulsing lightning, which energizes any automatons caught in the blast.

Movasi, Eladrin Artificer		Level 11 Elite Controller
Medium natural humanoid		XP 1,200
HP 210; Bloodied 105		Initiative +7
AC 24, Fortitude 22, Reflex 23, Will 24		Perception +6
Speed 6		Low-Light Vision
Saving Throws +7 against charm effects; Action Points 1		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
Ⓢ Quarterstaff (weapon) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: +13 vs. AC		
Hit: 1d10 + 8 damage.		
Ⓢ Charged Bolt (lightning, teleportation) ♦ At-Will		
Attack: Ranged 10, +15 vs. Reflex		
Hit: 3d6 + 15 lightning damage and teleport the target up to 2 squares.		
⚡ Auto-Magic Empowerment (lightning) ♦ Recharge [Ⓢ][Ⓢ][Ⓢ]		
Attack: Area burst 1 within 10; +15 vs Reflex		
Hit: 2d12 + 18 lightning damage to every enemy in the burst. Any automatons in the burst gain a temporary +5 damage to all attacks until the start of Movasi's next turn.		
MINOR ACTIONS		
Ⓢ Robotic Recall (teleportation) ♦ Recharge [Ⓢ][Ⓢ][Ⓢ][Ⓢ]		
Effect: An automaton within 10 squares is teleported adjacent to Movasi.		
MOVE ACTIONS		
Ⓢ Fey Step (teleportation) ♦ Recharge [Ⓢ][Ⓢ][Ⓢ]		
Effect: Movasi can teleport 5 squares.		
Skills Arcana +16, History +16, Nature +10		
Str 11 (+5)	Dex 15 (+7)	Wis 11 (+5)
Con 9 (+4)	Int 19 (+9)	Cha 15 (+7)
Alignment Unaligned		Languages Common, Elven
Equipment Robes, Quarterstaff		

Auto-Magic Automaton		Level 9 Skirmisher
Medium natural animate (construct)		XP 400
HP 90; Bloodied 45		Initiative +11
AC 23, Fortitude 21, Reflex 23, Will 19		Perception +2
Speed 5		
Immune disease, poison		
TRAITS		
Empowered Replication		
As long as the automaton is under the effect of <i>Facsimile</i> , it gains +2 to all attack rolls against the replicated target and deals an additional 1d6 damage with all attacks against the replicated target.		
STANDARD ACTIONS		
Ⓢ Slam ♦ At-Will		
Attack: +12 vs. AC		
Hit: 1d10 + 7 damage.		
Ⓢ Facsimile ♦ Recharge [Ⓢ][Ⓢ][Ⓢ]		
Attack: +14 vs. Reflex		
Hit: 2d6 + 10 damage.		
Effect: The automaton turns into an exact physical copy of the target. This lasts until the automaton uses this ability again on a different target. See Special Features for details.		
TRIGGERED ACTIONS		
Shrapnel Explosion		
Trigger: The automaton is reduced to 0 hit points.		
Effect: The automaton explodes. Every creature within 1 square takes 1d6 damage and is pushed 1 square.		
Str 15 (+6)	Dex 20 (+9)	Wis 7 (+2)
Con 11 (+4)	Int 3 (+0)	Cha 3 (+0)
Alignment Unaligned		Languages –

When an automaton uses *Facsimile* on a player, read:

The automaton begins to change shape, taking on the physical attributes of its target. Within seconds it appears to be a perfect copy of you and your mannerisms. Suddenly, you both disappear and reappear in a flash—turning toward your allies, you notice them looking back and forth to you and the robot, unsure which one is their ally.

If a player tries to discern a replicated player's position, read (to encourage them to make a check):

Both the automaton and your ally call out in unison, pleading with you to attack the other. Only those keen enough to perceive the smallest difference or find insight into their intentions could tell them apart.

When a player uses *Perception* or *Insight* to discern their ally, read one of the following:

- *Your ally shouts a key phrase to you that only he would know, identifying him as the real version.*
- *You notice one of the copies twitch suddenly with an unnatural jerk—not the movement of a humanoid.*
- *You watch one of the copies favor a particular leg, revealing an injury your ally received on a previous adventure.*
- *One of the copies speaks slightly out of tune, its mechanical parts betraying its identity.*

When an automaton uses *Empowered Replication*, read:

The automaton is familiar with your physical structure, taking advantage to empower its attacks.

When a replicated player begins his turn, read:

After a few moments, you recognize your ally's familiar movement and words, identifying him as the real thing.

When an automaton uses *Shrapnel Explosion*, read:

The automaton begins to twitch and shake, sparks flying out in random directions—suddenly it explodes in a shower of metal shards, damaging those close to the blast.

CONCLUSION

When defeated, Movasi falls to his knees. He reaches into his robes and pulls out the control crystal before dashing it on the ground in front of him. He turns to the PCs with a look of surprise and gasping, says: "I would gladly offer a refund to any unsatisfied customers... pending a valid receipt, of course..." On his body is a level 12 magic item and 2,000 gp. Around the shop is another 3,500 gp in jewels and crystals. The PCs can easily dismantle the assembly line, destroying the crystals inside. When the last crystal is destroyed, all of the remaining automatons lining the walls fall apart in a concentrated pile of gears, bolts, and metal.

If the players investigate further, they will find a desk full of ledgers and receipts. The PCs notice that most of the receipts are signed by residents of Casai, including one by Sulas, who left a forwarding address to the nearest big city, Simth. Depending on how much they interacted with the farmers, they might or might not realize these are almost all of Casai's younger residents and workers.

Upon returning to town, read the following to the players:

Though you are some distance from Casai, you can already make out the tortured cries and moans of pain from its villagers. As you hurry to investigate the commotion, you notice several families crowded around many different areas in tight circles, standing over something that glimmers in the mid-day sun.

Littering the ground all over the farmland are piles of bolts, gears, and metal parts. You count dozens of these automatons, each one a unique and perfect representation of one of the farm's younger residents, all of whom seem to be missing. "Our children!" one of the older farmers cries, distraught, "I told you we should have killed that Movasi when he first showed up—you can't trust those city people."

ADJUSTMENTS

If you like this encounter but aren't sure how to fit it into your campaign, here is some advice:

We have too few or too many players:

For 4 players, subtract 2 of the automatons. For 6 players, add two automatons and increase Movasi's hit points and damage.

We aren't the right level:

*Movasi is based off one of the many eladrin wizards found in the **Monster Builder**. The automatons are also found there, based on any construct of the appropriate level.*

It's too easy:

If the fight is too simple, have the automatons push targets 1 or 2 squares with slam so they can knock players into the machinery.

It's too hard:

*If the players are having trouble catching Movasi or focusing down automatons, consider only letting two of the automatons use *Facsimile* at once, keeping the confusion to a minimum.*

I don't get the story:

I was trying to be subtle, but maybe didn't explain it well enough in the conclusion. See all these kids didn't want to live in the country and had what some might call 'big city dreams,' so they paid Movasi to make copies of them to take their places so they could head off to the big city of Simth without leaving their parents empty-handed. By encroaching on Movasi's shop and destroying the crystals, they inadvertently (and ironically) destroyed their automatons, revealing that all their kids had run away (and leaving them short-handed).

