

The Clockwork Crackdown in Halloweentown

by Jack W. Shear

Setting

The death of the Pumpkin King ushered in chaos and tumult within Halloweentown. The Pumpkin King had groomed young Voodoo Dolly to be his successor, but the on the day of her coronation she went missing.

Unbeknownst to even the most ancient of Samhain elders, an enemy had been watching Halloweentown for years. The Iron Man, the long-exiled Duke of Screamework, returned with an army of steam-powered horrors to take over Halloweentown. The Iron Man's forces made war against the denizens of Halloweentown, but soon conquered the land of eternal Oct. 31st. Now the denizens of that spooky realm must live under the heavy metal fist of the grim-faced Iron Man.

The Iron Man's aim was simple: in place of the traditional, organic way in which the residents of Halloweentown went about the business of crafting nightmares, planting fears that turn delight into dread, and spinning yarns that contain a nugget of worldly wisdom with a tale of terror, the Iron Man industrialized the purpose of Halloween. Vast, smoke-belching factories now dot the landscape of Halloweentown; where fears and shivers were once made with an artisan's care for the people of the day-lit world, they are now produced on an assembly line. No care goes into their production, no thought or passion goes into their design. And the morbid creatures of Halloweentown must labor at the machines that create these stereotypical and commonplace dreads.

Nevertheless, the very machinery that is reducing the art of crafting night-time thrills to a mere process and the steam-powered weaponry used by the Iron Man's agents might prove to be the undoing of the Duke of Screamework's regime. A rebellion is brewing amongst Halloweentown's repressed populace. There are those who gather in the shadows to plot the Iron Man's overthrow, who will stop at nothing to break free from the monotonous shackles of the Screamework factories, and who are beginning to appropriate the Duke's technology for their own ends. This is where the player characters come in.

Things to read: Neil Gaiman's *The Graveyard Book*; Ray Bradbury's *The Halloween Tree*; Tim Burton's *The Melancholy Death of Oyster Boy*; Roger Zelazny's *A Night in the Lonesome October*

Things to watch: *A Nightmare Before Christmas*; *Coraline*; *The Corpse Bride*

Things to listen to: Abney Park's *End of Days*; Voltaire's *Ooky-Spooky*; Rasputina's *How We Quit the Forest*; Emilie Autumn's *Opheliac*; Unwoman's *The Fires I Started*

Cliches

Boogieman (or Boogiewoman) – appearing in closets and under beds, jump-scares, summoning creepy-crawlies

Trickster – magical feats of toilet-papering and window-soaping, deception, getting away with murder

Corpse Bride (or Phantom Husband) – making things go deeply weird within houses, summoning domestic horrors, magical use of stitchery

Boneman (or Bonewoman) – disassembling and reassembling your skeleton, rattling up the dead, giving the creeps

Graveyard Kid – opening portals to the other towns, summoning ghosts, knowing what graves contain the items you need

Steal These Steam-Powered Devices for the Revolution!

Spring-Healed Boots – jump enormous heights!

Pneumatic Hammer – smash the control machines!

Ripper Claws – affix these to your forearms and go to town on the agents of the Iron Man!

BatThropter – strap this batwing-shaped orinthropter pack to your back and take the fight to the skies!

Steam-Tank – you'll really have the Duke of Screamework's goons on the run with this steam-spouting war-machine!

Foes

Ironbones – iron-plated skeleton warriors animated by clockwork mechanisms (grunt soldiers 3, lunkheads 2)

Steamwitches – the creators and maintainers of the Iron Man's forces (mechanics 3, steam-wizardry 4, cackle 3)

Mechaspiders – clockwork spies on the look-out for insurrection (devious 3, sneakers 4, biters 2)

Things to Do in Halloweentown When You're (Kinda Sorta) Dead

Monkeywrench the Iron Man's Factories – infiltrate the factory, find allies, avoid detection, and wreck the machines of production in the name of true nightmare craftsmanship!

Turn the Means of Oppression Against the

Oppressor – make contacts within the resistance, discover the location of the warehouses where the Iron Man keeps his steam-powered weapons, break in and liberate them, distribute them to your comrades

Rescue Voodoo Dolly – where did the Pumpkin King's successor get to anyway? Was she abducted by the Iron King's agents or did she run off with that scamp Cupid from Valentinetown? Track down the leads, case the joint where Voodoo Dolly is being held, plot her escape, bust in guns a-blazing and make it happen