Clockwork Wonders

The Matryoshka Matron
Part 1 of 14
By Wolfgang Baur

The statue seemed to wink at Regdar. "Look at that!" said the fighter. "She's a fine looking woman."

Mialee squinted. "Looks like your mother, Regdar, but I would say she's had a few children."

The artificer Thondred cleared his throat. "You're both right and wrong. Inside, she looks just like my grandmother."

The statue often called the Matryoshka Matron is a legendary set of three small, nested statues, built by the legendary artificer Agostin and dedicated to the creation of constructs and great works of artifice.

The statue has been reported in the hands of dozens of master artificers, advising them and leading them to discover new infusions, new constructs -- even to have created the first arcane forge itself. Some believe it is an avatar of the forge-god Onatar himself, and some warforged refer to it as "our saintly mother," believing it is a powerful archon or avatar of Onatar that inspired the creation of their race.

Appearance

The small statue stands about one foot high and it is made of enameled mithral with titanium gearing, diamond pivots and bearings, brass weights and copper wire. Its outer appearance is layered, and what one thinks of the statue depends on the keen eye of the viewer. Most see it as a statue sculpted to resemble a beautiful young maiden. Others see that as just one of the matryoshka's sides; the older, more powerful magic is hidden beneath the surface, in its series of three nested female figures.

Those who make a successful DC 18 Spot check see the maiden but notice that surface is just a covering for a second sculpture within. If a button is pressed, the maiden surface disappears and a new shape takes form. The new outer shell resembles a kindly mother, a bit larger around the belly and breasts and with a few streaks of grey in her hairs. Her smile is more tender than alluring.

Characters with artificer levels always spot both the maiden and the mother, but if they make a successful artificer level check (DC 14) they uncover a third face hidden at the very center of the construct. Those who fail this check can try again upon gaining another artificer level. At the core is the smallest portion of the clockwork statue, a stoop-shouldered crone with laugh lines at eyes and mouth, white hair, and gnarled fingers. She wears a dark shawl over her shoulders and brims with power.

Use and Powers

The statue can walk with a speed of 10 feet per round, but it cannot double move or run. It has no attacks or other offensive abilities, and is treated as an item rather than an animated object for this reason. The device has 15 hp and hardness 15. The three faces of the Matron are alluring, healing, and wisdom, and each has a different power.

The alluring maiden offers protection to its owner. Hostile creatures seeing it are entitled to a Will save (DC 10 + owner's Cha bonus + half the owner's artificer class levels); if the save fails, the maiden statue grants the owner the protection of a *sanctuary* spell cast at 10th level.

The motherly face of the statue can be used by anyone who made the initial Spot check and who has ranks in the Heal skill. The matron statue advises the owner so that all Heal checks made to stabilize a character at negative hit points gain a +3 divine bonus.

The grandmother serves as an advisor to an artificer who perceives her, and aids his work on items through her Wisdom. As long as the artificer remains true to the faith of Onatar, he or she gains a +3 divine bonus to all Craft skills checks. If the artificer ever breaks his oath to Onatar or fails to make offerings to the god of Fire and Forge, the Grandmother's advice stops and cannot be regained. The bonus is lost to that character forever.

CL 15th; Price 20,000 gp.

Campaign Hooks

The Matron is said never to be passed from one artificer to another. Instead, somehow it always disappears when its current owner dies and reappears in the workshop or home of a worthy successor. It can still be stolen, sold, or taken by force. An artificer who pawned it or lost it to bandits might ask the party to recover it for him.

A warforged may know the matron's current location, and seeks to recover it to put it in an elaborate shrine at the edge of the Mournlands. When the owner refuses to sell, the warforged approaches the party to recover it by more direct means, all the while claiming it was stolen from him in the first place.

About the Author

Wolfgang Baur is the author of *Planes of Chaos*, *Secrets of the Lamp*, *Frostburn*, *Book of Roguish Luck*, the Dark*Matter campaign setting, and many other works. He discusses adventure design at the Open Design blog

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"I left it right here!" said Guildmaster Markell. "It was still warm from my touch!"
"Well, I didn't take it," said the apprentice.

"Don't lie to me," said the Guildmaster. His voice grew cold. "Or it will go worse for you." Sparks flew from his fingertips.
"I'm not lying!" yelped the apprentice.

The squabbling covered the noise of a scuttling black thing moving along the ceiling, step by careful step, its claws holding a gleaming prize.

The spider thief is a living construct built to steal and scuttle away with small valuables. Some believe it was originally made by one of Agostin's apprentices to steal ingredients, expensive components, and funds for beer-swilling for the normally impoverished apprentices. The story claims that the scam was eventually discovered and the spider thief was destroyed at their master's hands, but the knowledge of how to build one was not so easily extinguished – and apprentices have built dozens or hundreds of the noxious things ever since, each with its own small refinements.

Appearance

To look at it, a spider thief is just a collection of eight to twelve mechanical claws around a central mechanical iris that serves as a sort of eye. The whole thing often painted black or grey. The genius of it is that it moves very silently and its claw-legs are capable of climbing any surface, even along ceilings and sometimes glass, because of a slightly stickiness at the tip of each claw. When not climbing or moving silently through a room, spider thieves can roll up into a ball and roll like a pillbug. This seems especially effective on slopes and stairs, where it allows them to "run" at rate of 160 feet per round.

Use and Powers

The spider thief is a sort of a mechanical mage hand with a kleptomanical streak. Spider thieves love to take small objects and inspect them, even when not ordered to do so, and they "worry" at stones, bits of bright cloth, coins, and the like.

A spider thief responds only to its maker and those who know its secret command word. It ignores all others. It knows really just two commands: "Bring me (X)" and "Give this to (Y)". When ordered to, a spider thief can go out and carry away objects weighing up to 1 pound. If carefully instructed, it can also carry an object weighing up to 1 pound to a particular location.

A spider thief only fights in self-defense, and only when trapped and unable to escape.

Many attempts have been made to make a spider thief into a spy. They seem ideally suited for the role, but their animating spirits always seem entirely uninterested in the task. Spider thieves sent as observers usually return with reports of what treasures they saw at a location (from buttons to gemstones), what interesting garbage they found on their journey to and from a location, and so on.

CL 3; Craft Construct, *mage hand, spider climb*; Price 750 gp; Cost 375 gp + 30 XP.

Spider Thief CR 2
Always N Diminutive Construct
Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Listen +1, Spot +1
Languages Common (cannot speak)

AC 19, touch 19, flat-footed 14
(+5 Dex, +4 size)
hp 16 (3 HD)
Immune mind-affecting effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, necromantic effects, critical hits, nonlethal damage, ability damage, ability drain, fatigue, exhaustion, energy drain, any effect that requires a Fort save (unless it affects objects)
Fort +1, **Ref** +6, **Will** +0

Speed 20 ft. (4 squares), climb 20 ft.
Melee claw +11 (1 + poison)
Ranged claw +11 (1 + poison); 5 ft. no range increment
Space 2 1/2 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.
Base Atk +2; **Grp** -15
Atk Options poison

Abilities Str 1, Dex 21, Con --, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 8
SQ construct traits

Feats Alertness, Deft Hands, Weapon Finesse(B)
Skills Appraise +4, Climb +13, Hide +17, Listen +1, Move Silently +6, Open Lock +6, Ride +6, Sleight of Hand +7, Spot +1, Use Rope +7
Advancement 4– 6 HD (Tiny)

Poison (Ex): Each claw of a spider thief is loaded with three doses of a sleeping poison (injury, Fort DC 11, initial sleep 1d4 minutes, secondary none). If a spider thief wishes to, it can throw its claws like a syringe up with a five foot range increment. It takes a full round action for the spider thief to recover and reattach its claw.

Skills: A spider thief uses its Dexterity modifier for Climb checks instead of its Strength modifier. A spider thief can climb ropes, can use its Climb skill to scuttle along a ceiling. It gains a +8 racial bonus to Climb checks. It can use its claws to "ride" a mount by spurring it in the appropriate direction with sharp claw jabs (opposed Spot check vs. its Hide check required to notice it as a rider).

About the Author

Wolfgang Baur is the author of *Frostburn*, *Planes of Law*, the Dark*Matter campaign setting, *Assassin Mountain*, *A Gathering of Winds* for the Age of Worms adventure path, and many other things. He discusses adventure design and writes tailored modules for patrons of the [Open Design blog](#).

"You look like an idiot with that turtle crawling all over you," said Regdar. "Why don't you learn a little basic footwork or something?"

"Throw a dagger at me," said Mialee.

"This is a trick, right?" said Regdar. "It's too good to be true. I've dreamed of this day."

"Shut up and throw it."
"Just remember, you asked for it. Hey, how are you moving that thing?"

A crawling shield is a mobile construct about the size of a standard buckler shield. It detects motion and moves to protect its wearer, somehow moving by prescience to ward off true threats and ignoring false ones.

The crawling shields are believed to be items of drow manufacture from Xen'drik, and so far the secrets of their construction have resisted investigation by all of Khorvaire's finest artificers and scholars. They are still found with some regularity by expeditions to the dark continent.

Appearance

The typical crawling shield is made of mithral, and has three or four hooked legs that it uses to swing, jump, or climb around the body of its owner. It rarely moves at all when not in a combat situation, but during combat it scuttles slowly from place to place like an aggressive turtle on its hooked legs.

A crawling shield is roughly 15 inches in diameter, with a curve like a shield boss or turtle shell. Sometimes it is reinforced with metal strips or bars. Some have been found with enameled eyes on the outside, and others have silver, amber, or even mithral specks and dots. The theme of putting eyes on the shell is both quite obvious and quite common. However, a few have been decorated with spirals or zigzags.

A crawling shield seems to bond with whoever picks it up and touches it to his or her wrist. Once bonded this way, the shield doesn't obey anyone but its owner. A crawling shield abandons an owner only after being left behind for seven days or more without use.

Use and Powers

The beauty of the crawling shield is that it doesn't require shield proficiency to function – the shield itself knows where to go to provide the best protection. So far, the only crawling shields found have been made for Small and Medium creatures; no larger ones are known to exist.

A crawling shield provides a +1 shield bonus to Armor Class and weighs as much as a standard buckler. This protection applies even when the owner is unconscious or flat-footed because the crawling shield is still active. It takes up a bracer slot on the body, so the owner could use another shield. The shield bonuses would overlap, but the crawling shield could be enchanted with different abilities than the other shield and both sets of special properties would work.

This strange clockwork construct is not without its flaws. The largest problem is that its movement sometimes interferes with the owner's attack rolls and spellcasting. Any character wearing a crawling shield suffers a -1 circumstance penalty to all melee and ranged attack rolls, and a 10% chance for spell failure.

The crawling shield can move 5 feet per round on its own, but rarely does so unless separated from its owner. It always moves directly toward the owner or in the last known direction of the owner.

CL 9th; Craft Construct; Price 9,000 gp; Cost 4,500 gp + 360 XP.

Campaign Hooks

The crawling shields may be very popular with wizards and artificers looking for a little protection, but documents found at a drow or giant steading on Xen'drik seem to suggest that the devices also serve some kind of spying function, perhaps even recording what happens around them and sending the information magically to a Crawling Council somewhere in the Xen'drik wilderness.

This theory of the spying eyes of the crawling shields was probably started because eye patterns are so commonly used in decorating the devices. It may be true, or it may be pure paranoia. Regardless, House Cannith is willing to pay someone to investigate the rumored location of the council to ease the fears of their customers – they hope to sell hundreds or thousands of a knock-off version of these constructs, but not if the design is compromised.

Spy version of crawling shield: CL 9th; Craft Construct, *blindsight, sending, Nystul's magic aura*; Price 9,000 gp; Cost 21,632 gp + 1,730 XP.

About the Author

Wolfgang Baur writes about Vikings and trolls because it amuses him; his most recent fiction can be found in "The Further Adventures of Beowulf". He discusses adventure design at the [Open Design blog](#).

"That's the last of the wine," said Guildmaster Markell. "I think we found it at the House Cannith standing."
"Well, I'm thirsty," said Thondred, prying off the stopper. He upended the bottle over his goblet and the whistling began, the sound of metal under arcane stress…

The universal key is a mechanical swarm device that unlocks, unbelts, unstoppers, and unbuckles everything nearby when activated. It is often found sealed into potion bottles or even in kegs. Some sages believe that the universal key is only a construct in a technical sense, and that it is really the collected waters of a gear fountain (see "The Clockwork Fortress" in *Dungeon* magazine #114) enchanted with a simple *knock* spell. In this case, its magic comes from extraplanar sources.

Appearance

To look at it, a universal key is a mass of tiny devices, called the "teeth" of the key. Each is about the size of a marble and capable of moving using a single main spring-powered friction wheel. Each tooth of the swarm can squeeze through a pin hole, can reshape itself almost fluidly and spring back to its original shape, and can grip and hold surfaces using five fingers covered with wiry hair.

In practice, though, no one ever sees a universal key in this level of detail. Instead, it always appears as a swarm filling one or more 5 ft. squares and coating every surface in that area. The statistics below describe a 5 ft. universal key; for larger ones use multiples of the 5 ft. one.

Use and Powers

When the container holding the tiny elements of the universal key is opened, they rush out faster than water, with an air-like whistle and begins its work: to unlock, unfasten, unbolt, unscrew, unnail, unbuckle, untie, unstopper, and unglue any objects or items held together in the area of the swarm. It cannot, however, reduce masonry into its component bricks (buildings are simply too big for it, and it seems that the universal key will misidentify them as natural terrain).

The key does not affect living matter, but does affect inert items held by a living creature (such as shields, belts, potion bottles, armor buckles, shoelaces, buttons, etc). In particular, a universal key is known for disconnecting each and every ring in a suit of chain from all other rings, a rather spectacular sight as months of smithwork are literally unraveled in a single round. Creatures in its area are entitled to a Reflex save to avoid the affect entirely. This is not a magical effect, however.

The universal key cannot open any magically sealed lock, but it can undo the physical aspect of whatever is affected by the magic. For example, if a universal key encountered a door with *arcane lock* cast on it, the key could not unlock the door. It would, however, remove the hinges from the door and possibly detach the lock itself from the door if that were possible.

While a universal key cannot be ordered to fight, it can be ordered to move in a certain direction. Any creature making a successful Charisma check (DC 14) can order the key to move in a particular direction, but not against a particular foe. If the check is successful, the key moves in that direction immediately and cannot be commanded again until it has spent a round unlocking or unbinding objects in the first square in that direction where it finds such things (even if that is not the square that the commander wanted the key to reach). It unbinds all objects in a total of four of its spaces, and then it seeks a small container to hibernate in, closing the stopper behind itself until released again. It can be activated once per day.

CL: 5th; Craft Construct, *knock*, *heat metal*; Price 2,400 gp; Cost 1,200 gp + 96 XP.

Universal Key CR 2
Always N Fine Construct (Swarm)
Init +5; **Senses** blindsense 30 ft.
Languages None

AC 23, touch 23, flat-footed 18
(+5 Dex, +8 size)
hp 16 (4 HD)
Immune mind-affecting effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, necromantic effects, critical hits, flanking, nonlethal damage, ability damage, ability drain, fatigue, exhaustion, energy drain, any effect that requires a Fort save (unless it affects objects), weapon damage, spells or effects that target creatures, cannot be tripped or grappled or bull rushed
Fort +1, **Ref** +6, **Will** +0
Weakness vulnerable to area effect spells and effects, cannot grapple

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Speed 20 ft. (4 squares), climb 10 ft.

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.
Base Atk +3; **Grp** -
Special Actions Unbind

Abilities Str 1, Dex 20, Con --, Int --, Wis 10, Cha 2
SQ construct traits, swarm traits
Feats Combat Expertise, Dodge

Unbind (Ex) When released, a universal key immediately fills its space and proceeds to unlock, unravel, and otherwise take apart every composite object not made of masonry in the square. If there are none, it seeks such objects in adjacent squares until it finds some. Objects are rendered into piles of their separate components. Unbinding objects is a full-round action that does not provoke attacks of opportunity. A successful Reflex save (DC 12) allows creatures and their carried equipment to avoid the effect by moving immediately to an adjacent clear square (if there are no clear adjacent squares, the creature cannot avoid the effect).

Campaign Hooks

A universal key might be part of a trap encounter, or it might be something that the guildmaster of a Thieves Guild asks the party to obtain from a magewright or artificer's workshop.

About the Author

Wolfgang Baur is the author of far too many RPG supplements. He discusses adventure design and writes tailored modules for patrons of the Open Design blog. His morbid streak is usually kept under control but his evil DM laughter is an all too familiar sound around the gaming table.

Thondred thought that nothing could make Forley cry; the man was a revenger of Cyre, a warrior from his blond head to his iron gut. But there he was, holding two strangely-geared boots in his hands, pointing at the scuffed button at their toes, sniffling. "They were just a fad in Cyre, part of the Cyran appreciation, for dancing. Gliding along the city streets, women, children street-gliding, even at the height of the war. Oh, you wouldn't understand."

Thondred shook his head. "I'm sorry, Forley. We all lost someone."

"Stupid boots," said Forley.

"So you don't want them, then?" asked Thondred.

"Keep your filthy paws off them," said Forley, wiping his eyes. He kicked off his hobnailed marching boots and his fingers quickly laced up the new ones. "They even fit."

Now largely forgotten except by a few of the survivors of the Day of Mourning, gliding boots were a very fashionable item in Metrol and Making during the last 10 years of the Last War. Both artificers and magewright shoemakers turned them out in dozens of variations, and they were the preferred footgear of young bravos and the most desirable debutantes of the city. Young people wore them to the "Gliding Balls" held to begin the social season in the fall. The boots never caught on in the other Five Nations, who considered them, like so many elements of the Cyran appreciation, frivolous at best and decadent and soft at worst.

Oddly enough, the goblins of Darguul love gliding boots, and they are said to have perfected a version with slightly tougher wheels for use in hills, streambeds, and in Marguul Pass. They claim that gliding boots are a goblin invention stolen by the Cyrans, but this seems unlikely.

Appearance

Though they are highly fashionable items, gliding boots are a bit cumbersome and awkward-looking. They have between 20 and 100 geared wheels on the sole and heel that control the glide, and a large wooden or rubber button on the toe (used for braking). They are laced up with heavy hooks and buttons to provide stability to the ankle. Many of the gliding boots sold to Cyran nobility are of soft calfskin dyed in bright colors such as red, green, or yellow.

Use and Powers

Gliding boots use ball bearings, small wheels, and a simple braking system to add speed and smooth motion to the wearer's steps, without becoming as difficult to control as ice skates or similar items. They enhance existing motion rather than requiring the wearer to learn a whole new way to move. As a result, gliding boots allow the wearer to make a 10 ft. adjustment in combat as a free action rather than a 5 ft. adjustment; this adjustment follows all the rules for the normal 5 ft. adjustment, and can be used 3 times/day. The boots add a 10 ft. enhancement bonus to the base land speed of the wearer when the wearer is moving down a slope or across a flat surface such as a road or trail.

Gliding boots add a +2 circumstance bonus to all Tumble and Jump checks made on solid ground. The boots must be able to glide for this bonus to apply; they don't work in heavy brush or in marshy ground, but are fine on streets, packed mud trails, boardwalks, stone dungeon corridors, and so forth.

Spellcasters can use gliding boots in combination with a *gust of wind* spell to travel at double their normal speed for a single round (the duration of the spell).

Limitations

Gliding boots are not serviceable at all times. When trying to move up a slope, the wearer moves as if in difficult terrain (movement halved, cannot run or charge). Gliding boots impose a -2 circumstance penalty to Climb and Swim checks if worn while attempting climbing or swimming movement.

Gliding boots are difficult to use when standing on a slippery flat surface. The wearer must make a Balance check (DC 17) to remain standing and to move on wet, icy, or otherwise slick surfaces (including the area of a *sleet storm* spell). On a slippery slope, a Balance check (DC 27) is required.

If kept properly oiled, they have no effect on Move Silently checks.

CL 2nd; Craft Construct, Craft (leatherworking or shoemaking), *longstrider*; Price 14,000 gp; Cost 7,000 gp + 560 XP.

Campaign Hooks

A gang of pursesnatchers may use gliding boots on a sloping promenade to make quick escapes; a reward is offered for their capture.

A noble in New Cyre may hope to hold a Gliding Ball, to restore some of the luster of Old Cyre to the refugees there. He asks the party to investigate a claim that the halflings of the Talenta Plains have acquired a shipment of a hundred such boots and might be willing to sell them.

About the Author

Wolfgang Baur enjoys steampunk anime and Cthulhoid fiction, and he is a co-author of the original Dark*Matter campaign setting as well as the upcoming "Expedition to the Demonweb Pits" campaign-adventure. He discusses adventure design at the Open Design blog {http://customadventure.livejournal.com type=external}.

"That's not a trap, Lidda. That's a pile of Mournland junk."
"You saying I'm wrong, Tordek?"
"I'm saying it's a pile of junk. It's rusted. It's too small to be dangerous."
"Small things can be pretty fierce," said Lidda. "Why don't you walk up to it?"

House Cannith worked on many constructs and mechanical soldier prototypes before its successes with the warforged titan and the warforged themselves. One of the near-misses was a ranged attack call the Camp Guardian -- a design that went terribly wrong and was abandoned by 944 YK. The design papers disappeared at some point after 949 YK.

The original design has been discovered and rebuilt by the Lord of Blades throughout the Mournland. Called the razordisc nightmare by the Lord of Blades, these small devices work off a single powerful spring and are triggered by movement -- but the ones found in the Mournland are able to see even in darkness and sometimes see invisible creatures as well. They never attack warforged or other living constructs.

Appearance

The razordisc nightmare is a trilaterally symmetrical heap of iron that contains double-jointed throwing arms and a central pillar, all topped by a black set of irises and glass lenses that whir and focus on targets. The internal gearing is simple, but is hidden under a thick layer of camouflage material: scrap iron in the Mournlands battlefields, greenery along more fertile locations, sometimes stony or even brick materials. Spotting a camouflaged razordisc nightmare requires a DC 20 Spot or Search check. Getting close to one requires a successful Hide check (the device has a +20 Spot modifier).

In action, the mithral alloyed arms are powered by three separate mechanisms: one slow but powerful arm throws two discs over distances in trebuchet style, and two faster torsion screw devices hurl one razordisc each but only at close range. The discs that the nightmare throws are round, entirely sharp-edged hunks of steel that spin as they fly to their targets. Some varieties whistle or make a distinct "shirrrrring" noise as they are ejected from the launcher.

Use and Powers

A razordisc nightmare can be set to two modes, either "defensive line" or "ambush mode." When in a defensive line setting, the device fires with its power arm at its maximum range of 180 feet (minimum range 90 feet). The other two arms fire with a range of 60 ft. (2 range increments only, so maximum range is 120 ft. with a -2 attack modifier). The idea of the setting is to protect a battle line with maximum fire against a known foe.

In ambush mode, the razordisc nightmare does not fire until a target is 60 feet or closer, then unleashes the two short-range arms each round. It saves the power arm for targets that are at least 90 feet away.

Unlike triggered single-shot traps, the clockwork nightmare resets itself automatically each round and just keeps firing until it uses up all 40 of its discs.

Original Razordisc Nightmare: CR 4; mechanical; proximity trigger; automatic reset (40 discs total) then manual reset; Atk +10 ranged (1d6+1, disc); multiple targets (fires 2 discs at each target in adjacent 5 ft. squares with range increment 60 ft. (max 120 ft.), plus 2 discs at a single target 90 to 180 ft. away); Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 20. *Market Price* 10,400 gp.

Lord of Blades Razordisc Nightmare: CR 6; mechanical; proximity trigger; automatic reset (40 discs total) then manual reset; Atk +14 ranged (1d8+1, disc); multiple targets (fires 2 discs at each target in adjacent 5 ft. squares with range increment 60 ft. (max 120 ft.), plus 2 discs at a single target 90 to 180 ft. away); Search DC 21; Disable Device DC 25. *Market Price* 27,600 gp.

Modifications: If the trap is enchanted with *darkvision* or *see invisibility* spells, or both, it has those modes of sight constantly. In this case it becomes a magical item and has the following creation requirements on top of building the device in the first place.

CL 3rd; Craft Construct, *darkvision, see invisibility*; Price gp base device + 12,000 per spell; Cost 1/2 base device + 6,000 gp per spell + 480 XP per spell.

Campaign Hooks

Razordisc nightmares are used by a group of warforged bandits to ambush House Orien caravans traveling near the Mournlands. The devices are set up along a roadway, camouflaged, and set to tear apart a caravan in a crossfire once it is very close. The party must protect one such caravan from ambush, and destroy the devices

and the ambushers. Ideally, the party will pursue the warforged followers of the Lord of Blades to the artificer who is making more of the devices.

As another option, House Cannith might hire the party to recover the plans from the Lord of Blades, ending the manufacture of these things in the Mournlands -- and allowing House Cannith to work on improving the design themselves.

About the Author

Wolfgang Baur is the author of *Planes of Chaos*, *Secrets of the Lamp*, *Frostburn*, *Book of Roguish Luck*, the Dark*Matter campaign setting, and many other works. He discusses adventure design at the Open Design blog

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"That's interesting," said Mialee the wizard.
"Good interesting or bad interesting?" said Krusk. "Should I smash it?"
"If you smash it, you ruin our best chances of figuring out why this tomb was built," said Mialee.
"So should I smash it?"

The brass book is a large brass volume with an inset lock and nubbly leather cover, but only the sculpted semblance of pages. Instead, the book has a single page that clanks and clatters as its internal gearing rewrites its contents to answer any question its owner might ask. It functions as a magical repository of Knowledge (Arcana), Knowledge (History), and Knowledge (Nature), but it also has opinions on party members and plans of action.

The book is believed to have been created by an artificer of House Cannith in collaboration with the arcanists of Aundair's colleges of wizardry, but no more than that is known. Only one copy exists.

Appearance

The brass book is fully two feet square and six inches think, bound in cured gorgon's hide with an underskeleton of brass plating. It weighs 34 pounds. It has no paper pages, though the edges of the book are scratched to resemble a thick tome. When it is in operation, it is sometimes quite noisy, whirring and riffling and even chiming. When an answer is complete (see below), the page displays the text in Common.

The brass book has no movement or attacks. It AC 15, hardness 4, and 30 hp. Smashed, it is worth little more than 100 gp in scrap materials.

Use and Powers

When the book's cover is opened, a speaking tube and a blank page are visible. The user must speak a single question into the tube, and the answer appears on the page after a delay of 1d6+4 rounds. After the book cover is closed, the answer disappears and that use of the book is done. If the book is opened again, the page is blank and ready to show a new answer. The brass book answers only 1d4+1 questions per day. Once those questions are done for the day, speaking into its tube returns only silence.

The brass book does not know the answer to everything. It answers questions that depend on Knowledge (History), Knowledge (Nature), and Knowledge (Arcana) as if it had a +10 bonus to those skill checks, and the DM must make a skill check for each question to determine the specifics of the book's answer. A questioner with ranks in those Knowledge areas adds a +2 competence bonus to the book's check, as better questions always provide clearer results. The book does not need to make a skill check to give an answer it has already given to a question it has already been asked that day.

On a roll of "1" the book always answers a question that was not asked. Most often, it provides a clue of the DM's discretion, but it may also insult the owner's intelligence or education, may offer advice on matters of personal taste or hygiene, or may simply mock the current line of inquiry with a statement such as "I refuse to answer your ridiculous questions any further." In any case, after such a result, the book refuses to answer any questions from that particular questioner for a period of 1d4 months.

The brass book is utterly ignorant of other types of Knowledge. Asking questions related not related to its areas of expertise merely makes it click and whirr until the cover is closed.

CL 13th; Craft Construct, *comprehend languages, legend lore*; Price 43,500 gp; Cost 21,750 gp + 1,740 XP.

Campaign Hooks

The brass book can answer questions of fact regarding the Last War, and as such, it is a powerful tool for diplomats, politicians, and scholars alike, to settle factual disputes at the negotiating table. A party of characters might well be hired by Cyrans who wish to ask, "Who set off the apocalyptic weapon that created the Mournlands?"-- and very powerful foes might well want to make sure that the book is destroyed, so the question is never answered.

The brass book might also be used for more scholarly ends, answering questions about the early history of Xen'drik, about the natural history of magebred beasts, or about the creation and manufacture of powerful clockwork devices -- such as itself.

About the Author

Wolfgang Baur writes short fiction and long adventures. He discusses the rules of adventure design and writes tailored modules for patrons of the Open Design blog, and he offers freewheeling freelance observations at the Monkey King blog.

The song echoed down the stony corridor, quiet but always winkling its way into Thondred's mind. "That damn bird keeps getting away from us." The bird's song cut through the corridor like sunlight after rain, golden notes dropping into the shadows.
"Pretty, isn't it?" said Ember.
"It's enchanting your feeble excuse for a brain, yes," said Thondred. "I recommend you wear those earplugs I gave you before it's too late."
"What?" said Mialee. "I can't hear you through these earplugs."

The spellsong nightingale is a wizard's spellbook given the form of a delicate bird that both holds some of his spells and that wards its owner with magical song. It is believed always to require a collaboration between an arcane caster willing to sacrifice some of his hard-won knowledge and an artificer seeking to empower something rather unusual.

Appearance

This bird is made of gold, silver, brass, and sometimes enameled in bright colors or even decorated with real feathers. It always has gems for eyes and an ivory or horn beak. Its wings flap normally, and its claws can grasp a perch. While this type of clockwork bird is usually called a nightingale (and uses song as part of its arcane energies), sometimes it resembles a golden finch, a red cardinal, a green-and-yellow lovebird, or some other relatively showy songbird. Its motion elegantly and perfectly mimics the type of bird it resembles.

If sold only for its workmanship and materials, a spellsong nightingale is worth 2,000 gp. This is fairly common with nightingales that have been abandoned; they don't move or speak until someone recognizes them, claims them as their own, and commands them to sing. A few have been found among soldier companies, serving as mascots for a squadron or company.

Use and Powers

The spellsong nightingale can contain four 1st level spells or two 2nd level spells, plus a warding song and an enchanting song. The warding song and the enchanting songs can be 1st level, 2nd level, or 3rd level arcane spells. Most common protective songs are *protection from evil/good/chaos/law, protection from arrows, shield, resist energy,* or *nondetection*. If a spellsong nightgale is made with enchanting songs, the most common are *calm emotions, crushing despair, charm monster, charm person, deep slumber, enthrall, good hope, touch of idiocy,* or *sleep*.

The owner activates the nightingale as a free action, and it then sings (casts) the requested song at 5th caster level. Casting *silence* on a spellsong nightingale prevents it from generating its spell effects. In addition, the spellsong nightingale can sing a number of non-magical songs and can "remember" short passages up to 500 words that it is taught. For example, the nightingale could recite (in a sing-song way) a poem or a eulogy. It cannot activate magical items, even if taught the command words.

A spellsong nightingale can sing spells a total of 25 times before needing to be recharged. Recharging it requires 250 gp of diamond dust and 10 XP per charge; the songs cannot be changed during the recharging process.

CL 12th; Craft Construct, Scribe Scroll, Craft (metalworking), *fly, imbue with spell ability*; Price 26,250 gp; Cost 13,125 gp + 1,050 XP.

Spellsong Nightingale CR -
Always N Diminutive Construct
Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Listen +4, Spot +4
Languages Common (cannot speak)

AC 17, touch 16, flat-footed 15
(+2 Dex, +4 size, +1 natural)
hp 6 (1 HD); hardness 2
Immune mind-affecting effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, necromantic effects, critical hits, nonlethal damage, ability damage, ability drain, fatigue, exhaustion, energy drain, any effect that requires a Fort save (unless it affects objects)
Fort +0, **Ref** +2, **Will** +0

Speed fly 40 ft. (average)
Space 2 1/2 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.
Base Atk +0; **Grp** -17

Abilities Str 1, Dex 14, Con -, Int -, Wis 10, Cha 2
SQ construct traits, stored spells
Feats Alertness

Skills Hide +14, Listen +4, Spot +4

Stored Spells (Sp) A spellsong nightingale can cast one of its stored spells each round at the command of its owner, as long as it has charges remaining. It casts spells as a 5th level sorcerer.

Campaign Hooks

Spellsong nightingales were popular among the wealthiest of Cyran dilettantes. Some are believed to have survived the Day of Mourning, and there is a persistent story that they are capable of remembering human voices and mimicking them. A Cyran might wish the party to enter the Mournland to recover an especially beloved spellsong nightingale that contained such a potent, sentimental value of the voice of a husband, wife, or child.

A priest of the Sovereign Host might also wish for the party to recover such a bird that was looted by soldiers during the Last War. The bird not only sang sweetly, attracting the curious to attend services at the temple, but it also provided some protection against violence along the lawless frontiers of the kingdoms. The bird is currently held by a group of monstrous humanoids, who find it charming and are under the bird's sway. Unlike most spellsong nightingales, this one was created with enough intelligence to act on its own, and it has become a ringleader of banditry. If its charmed followers are taken away...

About the Author

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"That fan at the back, we can use that as a weapon, right?" said Jozan.

"No, that's what moves it forward," said Agostino. "I have the instructional diagrams right here and they say--"

"Don't the sails move it forward?"

"Well, yes, but you see--"

"So we can use the pointy mast as a ram!" said Jozan. "We can ram a dragon midair!"

"If you try anything stupid, I swear I'll toss you overboard, Jozan," said the artificer.

"Some people have no sense of possibilities."

The Xen'drik Flying Boat is an automated sailing ship that also flies when it is powered by arcane energy. The design is full of quirks, and only a handful such boats are still known to be functional. They are believed to be items of giant manufacture, as their masts and doors are all built to larger-than-human scale.

Appearance

The Xendrik flying boats are seaworthy, 60 ft. long dhows with two lateen-rigged masts, a narrow rudder for water navigation, a main deck, and a rear castle. It has a profusion of pulleys, and spider-silk ropes raise, shift, and lower the sails. The ropes are treated with waterproofing wax. A mechanical mirrored light is available for cutting through dark or foggy conditions.

The rear castle contains not only a gigantic fan but also a second rudder, a huge one more than 10 feet square, mounted directly behind the fan. This is an aerial rudder, meant to shift the boat's course quickly in mid-air.

In flight, the flying boat deploys two additional masts and rigs their sails automatically; these are telescoping metal sails that project horizontally from the keel, and their sails are relatively small compared to the main sail. However, these outrigger sails are not primarily for providing speed; rather they are used for turning (when the right or left outrigger is opened, the boat often pivots around that sail more quickly than it could around the main sails) or for chases, when all sails count.

Use and Powers

A Xendrik flying boat can move as a normal dhow on the ocean, showing no sign of its flying ability. A *fly* spell cast on the boat's wheel will allow it move at 40 feet per round with average maneuverability in the air. A *mass fly* spell increases that to 60 feet per round and good maneuverability. Artificers have a greater understanding of the boat's functions, and thus any 2nd level or higher artificer spell can cause the boat to fly as if an *overland* flight spell was used. Any 5th or higher artificer spell can make the boat act as if a *mass fly* spell was used.

When a spell's duration runs out, the flying boat returns to the surface as if affected by a *feather fall* spell. It and its passengers suffer no damage from landing on either water or land. Coming to rest on any land causes the boat to tilt sideways, and everyone on board must make a Balance check DC 15 or fall off and suffer 2d6 point of falling damage.

While the flying boat has no offensive capabilities (though shipboard weapons could be mounted on one), it does have two powerful defensive measures: charged rails and a series of spring-loaded deck plates. Both act as traps.

Charged Rails: CR 4; magic device; touch trigger; automatic reset; spell effect (*shocking grasp*, 3rd level wizard, 3d6 electricity); multiple targets (any creature touching the railing during a boarding action); Search DC 16; Disable Device DC 28.

Spring-Loaded Deck Plate: CR 5; mechanical; proximity trigger; automatic reset; Reflex save DC 20 avoids; spring platform (throws a Medium or smaller creature 10-60 feet in random direction, throws large creature 5-30 feet in random direction); Search DC 21; Disable Device DC 25.

CL 15th; Craft Construct, Craft Magical Arms and Armor, *fly, permanency*; Price 80,000 gp; Cost 40,000 gp + 3,200 XP.

Campaign Hooks

Recently, a Xen'drik flying boat was dismantled with great care, rebuilt, and reenchanted by artificers in the Lhazaar Principalities, who seek to use the design to create swift privateering vessels capable of raiding the Mhor Holds and roving over icebound seas north of Karrnath. Those plans must be stopped.

A flying boat is found adrift at sea, its crew missing entirely. The ship itself seems smarter and more effective than most others of its kind, and the construction new rather than ancient. Is someone building such vessels as living constructs? Are they a freak result of the Day of Mourning, a ship that slaughters its crews? The adventurers is asked to investigate the ship and follow the trail of its log book back to its last port --- in Xen'drik proper.

About the Author

Wolfgang Baur is a prominent adventure designer, with adventures published in all major campaign settings. He discusses adventure design for his patrons at the [Open Design blog](). The first Open Design project, a clockwork and necromantic adventure called "Steam & Brass" was released for the use of a private audience in October.

"We already went through this with that turtle shield," said Mialee. "Clockwork armor is still experimental."

"This is different. You just looked dumb with the turtle buckler," said Ragdar. "With this I feel stronger. Look!" He began moving the mechanism through the steps of a sword exercise, with occasional jerks and clanks.

"Yeah, if only there were armor that made you smarter, we'd be getting somewhere." muttered Mialee under the noise of gears grinding.

The clockwork armor is a powerful mechanical aid to physical prowess that also provides protection against attack and a movement bump, but it has a few engineering issues that have prevented its adoption outside a few of the most enthusiastic practitioners of artifice.

Appearance

A suit of clockwork armor is extremely well machined and made of mithral and adamantine plates. It has steel servos at the elbows and ankles and brass/steel hydraulic pistons around the knees and shoulders. The helmet has a set of protective flaps that lower automatically when the wearer nods in a particular way. The chestplate contains three small unlabeled levers on the inside.

The armor weighs 250 pounds, but adds only 70 pounds to encumbrance, as it supports much of its own weight. It requires 10 minutes to get into or out of the clockwork armor, as sections of it are bolted on, secured with wire cables, and some joints require careful fitting of gears and servo connections.

Use and Powers

When the clockwork armor is worn, the wearer gains an effective +4 circumstance bonus to both Strength and Dexterity, as the armor enhances speed, precision, and raw power of its wearer's movements. In addition, it provides a +8 armor bonus to AC and increases the wearer's base land speed by 5 feet.

That's the good news. The bad news is that the clockwork armor is made from a deeply flawed design; it is dependent on hydraulics and servos that the metals and materials can't quite sustain. The hydraulics are frozen solid by any cold-based attack if the wearer's saving throw fails; requiring the wearer to remove the armor and thaw it (this can also be done more quickly if the wearer is willing to be the target of a fire-based spell that does at least as much damage as the cold-based attack did).

The small levers inside the breastplate control the sensitivity of its strength-boosting and the force amplification of its leg motors. Setting these controls properly requires a successful Craft (construct) check (DC 14) or Spellcraft check (DC 18). Success allows a Medium-size creature of any Strength to use the armor effectively, as long as they have Armor Proficiency (heavy). Creatures without that proficiency may still wear the armor but suffer a -8 Armor Check penalty to all the usual skills and suffer a 90% chance of spell failure. Failure to set the controls properly means that the +4 bonus to Strength still applies, but the armor imposes a -4 penalty to Dexterity instead of a bonus.

Finally, the clockwork armor can be attacked directly, as it has gears and controls that a bludgeoning weapon can warp or jolt out of alignment, a slashing weapon can sever, or a piercing weapon can jam. The suit is treated as an object with base AC 5 that gets the wearer's Dexterity modifier to AC and the wearer's deflection bonus to AC. It has hardness 10 and 100 hp. After 50 hp of damage accrue, the armor may suffer breakdowns; the wearer must make a Reflex save equal to 10 + the damage inflicted by a blow to prevent this. Details of each breakdown are left to the DM but should primarily include partial paralysis (like frozen armor, but affecting only arms or legs), and/or repetitive arm motion (eliminating the wearer's Dex bonus) or leg motion (forcing the wearer to move at base speed each round). Fixing these conditions requires a successful DC 30 Disable Device check and a full-round action by someone outside the armor.

CL 11th; Craft Construct, Craft Magical Arms and Armor; Price 27,250 gp; Cost 18,625 gp + 690 XP.

Campaign Hooks

Any suit of clockwork armor is claimed as the sole property of the fallen kingdom of Cyre. If the PCs even hear of such a suit (much less actually acquire one), they will be sought out by Prince Oargev from the city of New Cyre. He offers 2,000 gp as a finder's fee for it or 200 gp for information leading to a suit's recovery. Failure to return a suit to Cyran hands will bring a visit from a Cyran avenger.

The party might be commissioned to destroy a powerful gnomish bandit in Karrnath who has gained a suit of clockwork armor and is fighting a bit of a one-gnome war against the Karrnath trade routes (he has an ally wearing the suit). The Corpse Captains would very much like to find him and question him; the reward for taking him alive is triple the price for just bringing him in dead.

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The giant's bag was heavy, in the one-ton range, and thousands of coins spilled all over the ground when the thing fell to earth.

"Let's make a fire. We'll be counting that all night," said Ember.

"We'll barely have time to water the horses," said Jozan. He threw a steel sphere toward the gems and coins, and midair it grew legs and arms. It seemed, in fact, to be largely a ball of crablike arms, three-clawed, with an enormous central eye. It hit the ground and immediately began stacking coins in neat piles.

"What if it wants to keep our money?" said Ember.

The Sorting Beast is an accountant's best friend, a clockwork device that divides coins, gems, and other treasures into neat piles, and that can detect and identify magical items. Sometimes it is a little too obsessed with counting.

Appearance

The sorting beast is a six-legged clockwork creature with eyes and antennae at both ends. It has a set of legs on both ends, and either set can manipulate and hold objects up to 30 lbs in weight. The more complex sensors are largely located in the central "thorax" of the device, and include scales, jeweler's lenses and light projecting lenses, small hammers, tuning forks, a tiny gas "puffer" for taking samples of powders, a dipole lightning generator, a filtering system for liquids, scissors for cutting samples, and a sonic thumping resonance device. Most of these are entirely inscrutable to people used to simple machines; not even an artificer is likely to be 100% familiar with all of them.

A small inkwell and metal nib are attached somewhere within the main body of the sorting beast; this scribe writes appraisal results for both gemstones and magical items on strips of paper that it drops near the sorted items.

Sorting beasts move very quickly, using their "puffer" to blow small coins and gems into piles, moving their metal claw-hands in a blur of speed to sort larger objects, and occasionally making strange noises or erupting in sparks or fire as they test various materials.

The sorting beast has AC 14, hardness 3, 10 hit points, a +7 bonus on all saving throws, and speed of 10 ft. (rolling). It has no attacks.

Use and Powers

The sorting beast is created with a +10 bonus to the Appraise skill. It sorts all non-magical objects presented to it into stacks by value: all copper, silver, gold, and platinum coins are sorted and counted (and a small paper label is printed totaling the coinage), all gems are judged by weight and quality (taking 1 minute each) and again sorted to piles worth up to 10 gp, 100 gp, 1000 gp, and more than 1000 gp, with paper labels. The various raw materials, spices, wines, works of art, jewelry, and other items are sorted next, by value in tens, hundreds, and thousands.

Finally, the magical items are dropped into a pile and the sorting beast holds up each one so that its owner can direct whether it should perform a "deeper analysis" consisting of an *identify* spell cast at 10th caster level. If a deeper analysis is not required, then the sorting beast uses metallic probes, tasters, small jets of fire, bending tests, and other mechanical-magical methods to perform its analysis, generally without harming the item being inspected. The results of either analysis are printed in gold and red inks on fine paper strips in a strange code. Anyone reading the slip must make a Spellcraft check (DC 15) to interpret them properly. On a roll of a natural 1, the results are completely misinterpreted with a false meaning. The sorting beast can only use its *identify* power 5 times per day.

The sorting beast damages a magical item rarely, but it does happen. Each item examined using mechanical-magical means must make a saving throw (DC 8). On a failure, the item suffers some cosmetic damage and the item must make a second save (DC 8). A second failure results in the item being broken.

Faint divination; CL 10th; Craft Construct, Craft Wondrous Item, *detect magic, identify*; Price 20,000; Cost 10,000 gp + 800 XP.

Campaign Hooks

A rogue Sorting Beast has become a sort of mechanical magpie that controls several [Spider Thieves](). The spider thieves bring it anything from pretty pebbles to bits of cloth to lost coins, stolen shoes, anything they can carry. The Sorting Beast obsessively goes over each and every item, sorting and reclassifying them in patterns only it understands, building ... something. A summoning circle to the modrons of Mechanus? A clockwork mate for

itself? No one knows. But it is stealing valuables all over town --- and the spate of thefts must eventually draw notice.

About the Author

Wolfgang Baur designs tailored adventures about zombie angels, steam golems, and the Arcane Collegium at the Open Design blog. He is a co-author of the original Dark*Matter campaign setting as well as the upcoming "Expedition to the Demonweb Pits" campaign-adventure.

"What's that ticking?"

"It's a clock."

"So why is it radiating more magic than a helm of brilliance?*"*

Tick. Tick. Boom!

The spell clock is a fusion of clockwork and magic that works as a timer for stored, long-duration spells on a particular place or creature every hour. A cheaper version of the spell clock is a single-use item that serves as a fuse for a dangerous spell to create havoc with a slight delay.

Appearance

A spell clock doesn't look like much; it is usually a square box with a face of enameled pewter or brass covering a simple spring-driven mechanism, with a set of a dozen gears. Its face has either two or three gold or black hands that show the time remaining until the next spell it contains is released. The enamel protects the clock face from moisture, and the exterior casing is made either of rot-resistant tropical hardwoods from Xen'drik, of sturdy brass, or sometimes of corrosion-resistant-but-ugly grayish nickel.

When operating, a spell clock always produces a loud ticking noise. It can be heard in the same room without requiring a Listen check, with DC 5 Listen check through a door, and with DC 15 Listen check in neighboring rooms. Some claim to hear the sound of a spell clock's ticking even when it is muffled and hidden. This is its one weakness when used as a timer for offensive spells, as even when kept in a soundproofed trunk full of wool or blankets, it can be heard with a DC 20 Listen check.

Use and Powers

Most spell clocks are steady, repeating devices that cast relatively non-violent spells. A few are disposable.

A steady spell clock can be used as a simple trap, by casting (for example) a *wall of stone* at a certain time after it is set ticking, thus possibly trapping creatures in a passageway beyond the spell clock. It can be used to buff creatures who know (or are commanded) to visit it on a regular schedule. It is as flexible and powerful as the long-duration spells it casts.

Typical spells used in spell clocks include: *antimagic field, antiplant shell, antilife shell, daylight, dispel magic, energy conversion, elemental swarm, flame arrow, fog cloud, foresight, heroism, glibness, invisibility, invisibility purge, keen edge, magic circle against evil, protection from spells, repel vermin, resist energy, spider climb, stoneskin, telepathic bond, teleportation circle, tongues, web,* and the various wall spells.

Disposable spell clocks typically cast evocations such as *fireball* or *burning hands* within a set period of time after a trigger (typically, a door opening or a noise within 5 ft.) sets them off. These are just proximity or time triggers on standard traps and require little more elaboration here. A few cast summoning spells once set in motion; the summoned creatures attack the people nearby.

Stopping a spell clock requires the use of a command word or a successful Use Magic Device check (DC 20 + creator's spellcasting level).

The material components for spells stored within a spell clock are usually included in the construction. The clock cannot contain spells that require the material components to be somewhere besides the caster's hands (for example, *animate dead* or *mark of justice*).

Moderate evocation; CL 14th; Craft Construct, Craft Wondrous Item, *contingency, imbue with spell ability, permanency*; Price 130,000; Cost 65,000 gp + 5,200 XP.

Campaign Hooks

A spell clock may be used to guard a wizard's palace while he is away on an adventure; the wizard's apprentice asks the party to disable the spell clock so that he can enter a forbidden lab or library while his master is away.

A spell clock might combine with a construct or guardian to create a permanently buffed creature; it casts *stoneskin* and *spider climb* every 2 hours, for example, or *invisibility* once per day.

A spell clock in a village square has been set to cast *mass suggestion* when the clock chimes. As a result, visitors and residents both have begun to obey the demands of a strict and unforgiving priest of the Silver Flame - much to the confusion of the unaffected residents of town.
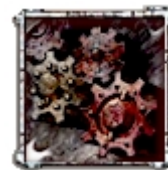
About the Author

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"We're out of ink again," said Mialee, touching the device's half-written sheet of paper. "Regdar, go get some ink from the alchemist."

"I swear you love that thing a little too much."

Mialee sighed. "Regdar, imagine that you had a friend who could do all your fighting for you."

"I don't have to imagine. That's me. I do the fighting, you do spells."

"It's a labor-saving device. I don't *have* to spend days hunched over writing."

"I've been telling you that for years; writing is bad for your posture. So if I get you the ink, will you take a lesson from me in street fighting?"

The autoscribe is an arcane caster's dream: a writing device that can make spell scrolls day and night. Like all devices seemingly too good to be true, though, it comes at a price in XP and materials.

Appearance

The autoscribe resembles a scribe's writing desk. It's taller than it is wide, with three pewter inkpots built into the top, a sloping writing surface, and a metal-nib attached to a series of writing arms and levers. When in operation, it hums and scratches while moving the nib slowly across the paper. It can make use of gold illumination, magical inks, and even special colors and waxes to create the perfect arcane scroll. Its three arms are attached to the top and side of the writing surface and can reach a set of interchangeable quills and inkpots in its interior.

Use and Powers

To use an autoscribe, a spellcaster must use the attached metal quill to write out a fair copy of a spell scroll in the usual way, and make a successful Concentration check (DC 20 + spell level) while doing so. If successful, this process "teaches" the autoscribe that spell. An autoscribe can contain 10 spells in its internal collection at any time; if it already has 10 spells, it cannot learn more until one or more spells are removed. It can be taught arcane or divine spells, but not both at the same time. A divine caster wishing to teach it divine spells must clear out the entire collection if there are arcane spells in the machine's collection. Casting an *erase* spell on an autoscribe removes one spell from its collection, while casting a *feeblemind* on it removes all spells from its collection.

Once taught a spell, the autoscribe knows how to make additional copies of that scroll. Any spellcaster who has that spell on her class spell list can command the autoscribe to make usable scrolls of it. The copies take 1 hour per spell level to create instead of the usual 1 day per 1,000 gp value of the scroll, and the user must spend one additional hour loading the autoscribe with the appropriate materials. The materials cost half the gp value of the scroll, as usual for making scrolls, and the autoscribe can hold enough materials to make 10 copies of all 10 of the spells in its collection before needing to be reloaded. The XP cost for the scroll is doubled (so spell level x caster level x 2), and must be paid by the spellcaster commanding the autoscribe. Spell scrolls are created at the minimum caster level for the spell in question, and the autoscribe can only put one spell on a scroll.

An autoscribe can be commanded by non-spellcasters using Use Magic Device with a successful check DC (20 + caster level of the scroll to be produced). If the check fails, the autoscribe jams or otherwise becomes damaged by the attempt and must be repaired by an artificer. The cost in XP for non-casters is twice the cost that a legitimate spellcaster pays, and the non-caster must still supply the materials if the autoscribe is out.

Faint transmutation; CL 9th; Craft Construct, Scribe Scroll, *read magic, secret page, arcane mark, amanuensis*; Price 55,000; Cost 27,500 gp + 2,200 XP.

Campaign Hooks

Someone has taught an autoscribe to write *charm person* scrolls, and is using them in a series of charmed robberies. The victims only discover later that someone has enchanted them into giving away their wealth.

The local scribe's guild has gone bankrupt trying to compete with an autoscribe-powered shop in Aundair. The head scribe asks the party to either steal the autoscribe or find a way to make it forget the spells it knows.

About the Author

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"*The tower rolled over the plains. Tordek judged its speed and course, and spurred his donkey to bring it alongside. With a grunt and a leap, he was at the door that Mialee had already opened.*

"Why are we going in here?"

"To see who's driving this thing. Get out of the doorway to let Ember in." The fighter swung into the doorway and looked around for whatever magic was driving it forward.

The tower rolled on.

The Moving Tower is a mobile siege tower of iron, with a clockwork interior meant to provide comforts and a variety of tools for travelers. The exterior is rusty and topped with a round dome somewhat like that of an observatory. With a deep enough understanding of the Moving Tower, a warforged or an artificer can learn to rearrange its chambers and walls. The towers are most common in Breland, and they are thought to have been prototypes for the later moving fortresses such as the Argonth.

Appearance

The walls within the Moving Tower are meant to work in three main configurations:

- as a siege tower with treadmill stairs that speed up walking to the top,
- as an airy pleasure dome with open, breezy walls under shades, and
- as a practical traveler's rest, with self-cleaning stables below living and cooking areas.

The tower can also be commanded to enter a self-defense form. In this state, nothing within moves or functions until the tower's owner (or someone else) unlocks it again with the proper command word. This is often the form in which a moving tower is found.

TOWER GROUND LEVEL (1)

TOWER KITCHEN LEVEL (2)

TOWER SLEEPING LEVEL (3)

TOWER PARAPET LEVEL (4)

OBSERVATORY (5)

THE MOVING TOWER

ONE SQUARE = 5 FEET

Use and Powers

The moving tower is not deeply magical, but it contains elements designed to make its inhabitants comfortable and secure. These features include the tower's rolling and rotating movement, interior heat, moving walls, a rotating domed roof, collapsible stairs, exterior walls that double as shaded iron awnings, and a fan-driven lift. The moving tower has AC 15 (touch AC 5), hardness 10, and 1,500 hp.

The tower's owner can activate or shut off any of these elements by spoken commands, except for the tower's movement, which is guided by a wheel and a level at the very top of the building (like a ship's wheel). The tower does not recognize an "owner" in the permanent sense that one owns land. The tower recognizes its "owner" using the following order or priority:

1. any artificer with the Craft Construct feat who makes a successful Spellcraft (DC 25) check and who knows the tower's command words (the higher check results breaks ties)
2. anyone who knows the tower's command words, or
3. anyone who makes a successful Use Magic Device check (DC 25).

If two or more commands conflict, the priority order determines which command the tower responds to.

Rolling Movement: The tower rolls forward on two large rollers and one smaller, steering roller at a rate of 20 feet, but it can only roll in a straight line each round. It can use the double-move action or its owner can use a standard action to rotate the tower to a new line of travel at the beginning or end of its owner's turn. If it strikes a creature while rolling the creature must make a DC 12 Reflex save or take 2d8 points of bludgeoning damage. The tower then overruns the creature and continues its movement. The tower can roll up slopes of up to 8 degrees and can span ditches up to 10 wide. Steeper slopes or wider holes topple the tower, causing falling damage to all creatures inside based on how far the tower fell.

Heating Elements: The tower interior has small heating coils that keep the floors warm through the use of small bound fire elementals. There are no moving parts, but anyone who breaks into the metal flooring releases 1d6 small fire elementals.

The Aerial Walkway: The tower does not contain stairs but instead uses a powerful fan-driven shaft to lift Medium-size or smaller creatures up between floors, or lower them gently when moving down. The aerial walkway does not work on any creature in heavy armor or carrying loads exceeding 50 pounds.

Treadmill Stairs: These stairs move to lift people up when they are heavily encumbered, such as soldiers storming a castle using the tower in its siege tower configuration.

Observatory Dome: This area includes a water tank, a telescope, and a storage area.

Self-Cleaning Stables: The bottom floor can be used to stable up to 20 horses (in somewhat crowded conditions) or 12 comfortably. The stable walls pop up or retract as needed, and the floors can be flushed out using the tower's water tank and venting through small drains to the outside. The resulting slurry of manure is sometimes used defensively.

Retractable Walkway: In siege tower form, the moving tower can cantilever some of its iron plates into a bridge up to 30' long, reaching across even very wide moats. The bridge extends in 10 ft. sections at a time.

Grease and Oil Projectors: The lower section of the tower has sloped rather than vertical walls to deflect heavy missiles or thrown rocks, but this makes it vulnerable to climbing. Fortunately, the tower has grease and oil projectors, which make its rusty outer walls very slick indeed (Climb DC 50). Cruel defenders may light the oil on fire, and those on the walls take 2d6 fire damage and 1d6 smoke damage each round they remain on the wall. Climbing a burning wall requires a DC 20 Concentration check in addition to the Climb check.

Faint transmutation; CL 10th; Craft Construct, Craft (blacksmithing) DC 20, *stoneskin, feather fall, gust of wind*; Price 100,000 gp; Cost 50,000 gp + 4,000 XP.

Campaign Hooks

A moving tower serves as a stronghold for Halfling bandits, who keep their treasure with them as they roam over the Talenta Plains, plundering caravans at will or even posing as "waystation" for weary travelers.

A moving tower might serve as the headquarters for a group of warforged in the Mournlands who have not given up the fight for Cyre, and who oppose the Lord of Blades. They might demand "protection money" from others they meet.

A moving tower could be used by a company of expert mercenary goblins as a way to assault a small castle on the border with Droamm or Darguun. They seem to have plundered and slaughtered the entire garrison of one such keep without opening the gates. The only clue is the churned-up earth near the moat, the marks of the tower's passage.

About the Author

Wolfgang Baur designs tailored adventures about zombie angels, steam golems, and the Arcane Collegium at the [Open Design blog](). He is a co-author of the original Dark*Matter campaign setting as well as the upcoming "Expedition to the Demonweb Pits" campaign-adventure.