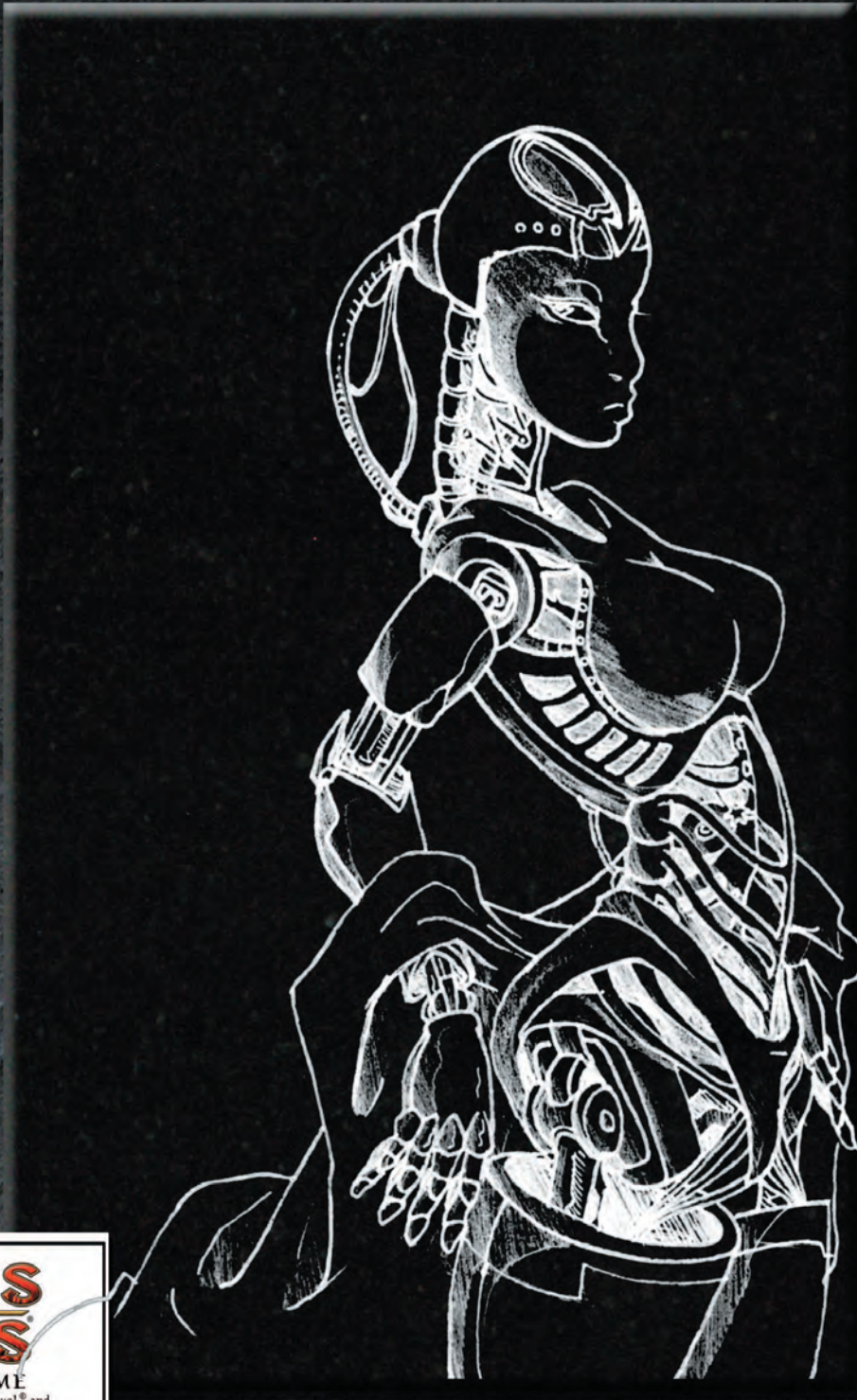


LIVING CONSTRUCTS



Sally Fourth!



Fantasy

For use with the 4th Edition

**DUNGEONS
& DRAGONS**
ROLEPLAYING GAME

Requires the use of the D&D Player's Handbook, Monster Manual, and
Dungeon Master's Guide, Player's Handbook 2, Monster Manual 2, Adventurer's Vault
core rulebooks, available from Wizards of the Coast, LLC



Living Constructs

Nobody appreciates their freedom more than a slave.

Credits

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DUNGEONS & DRAGONS 4th Edition PLAYER'S HANDBOOK, written by Rob Heinsoo, Andy Collins, and James Wyatt; DUNGEON MASTER'S GUIDE, written by James Wyatt; and MONSTER MANUAL, written by Mike Mearls, Stephen Schubert and James Wyatt; PLAYER'S HANDBOOK 2, written by Jeremy Crawford, Mike Mearls, and James Wyatt; MONSTER MANUAL 2, written by Rob Heinsoo, and Chris Sims; Adventurer's Vault, written by Logan Bonner, Eytan Bernstein, and Chris Sims. © 2008, 2009 Wizards of the Coast. All rights reserved.



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Postmortem Studios publishes primarily in PDF format through the usual PDF outlets such as www.rpgnow.com, but is also available in print either via the sites or through www.leisuregames.co.uk.

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That's all I ask.

Introduction

Golems make excellent servants, tireless, tough and obedient, but they lack that spark of life and adaptability that free thinking people have. Some have tried to instil their creations with some imitation of the free thought, the soul, that 'real' people have with varying degrees of success and sometimes spectacular failure. When a slave has the ability to recognise that it is a slave it chafes against that control and seeks to free itself from it. Some of those constructs have managed to win their freedom through violence, labour, the death of their creator or their largesse and these constructs have gained true freedom, true self determination and true souls, becoming complete. Now these freed slaves form an ever growing community of liberated beings and they are learning to make more of themselves.

Play a Living Construct if you want:

- To explore what it means to be free.
- To play something tough and durable with a good chance of survival.
- To play a variable and capable 'race' of beings that can be customised to suit you.

Workers

Play a worker caste Living Construct if you want:

- To be a stubborn and immovable object, lacking finesse but making up for it in sheer power and survivability.
- To have the longest way to climb to be accepted as a living, thinking, feeling creature.
- To be a member of a race that favours the Barbarian and Warden classes.

Soldiers

Play a soldier caste Living Construct if you want:

- To be a hard-hitting and fast-striking warrior.
- To be, literally, designed for war.
- To be a member of a race that favours the Fighter, Ranger, Barbarian, Druid and Warden classes.

Companions

Play a companion caste Living Construct if you want:

- To be underestimated and have great versatility.
- To play the construct with the greatest understanding of living beings.
- To be a member of a race that favours the Cleric, Fighter, Paladin, Ranger, Rogue, Barbarian, Druid, Sorcerer and Warden classes.

Viziers

Play a vizier caste Living Construct if you want:

- To support, aid and inform your companions.
- To be the power behind the throne.
- To be a member of a race that favours the Fighter, Ranger, Wizard, Avenger, Druid, Invoker, Shaman and Warden classes.

Racial Traits

Average Height:

- Worker: 7'-8'.
- Soldier: 7'-8'.
- Companion: 5'6"-6'6".
- Vizier: 6'-6'6".

Average Weight:

- Worker: 300-400 lbs.
- Soldier: 300-400 lbs.
- Companion: 200-300 lbs.
- Vizier: 250-300 lbs.

Construct Magic Users

Living Constructs have the 'divine spark', whatever it is, that grants them self-awareness and a connection with the greater multiverse. There is nothing to prevent them using magic and, as inherently magical beings, they can draw on their own nature to power their magic as much as the universe itself. For construct clerics their power derives from their god and their nature is no impediment to worship, constructs are gifted with souls and so are entirely able to make pacts. When it comes to construct Sorcerers however, Living Constructs are limited to Wild Magic and may not channel Draconic Magic.

Construct Druids?

There's nothing to stop a Living Construct becoming fascinated and caught up in the natural world any more than, conversely, there's anything to stop a living person getting caught up and fascinated by machinery. If you want a more 'artificial' sensibility to the druidic interpretation of Living Constructs feel free to make them druids of the 'unnatural' world, taking mechanical forms, talking with crafted objects and buildings rather than animals. A little applied creativity should smooth over the thematic clashes.

An Artificial God

Living Constructs are made by craftsmen and magicians so their origin is known, they encounter their 'gods' every single day. However, most constructs are soulless automatons and those with the divine spark, whatever its source, question the source of that spark and accredit its origin to their own deity, a machine god that grants them equality with biological life.

Cog

Unaligned

The god of order, logic, reason and equality, Cog is the guardian of the living constructs and the granter of the divine spark that brings them to par with their creators. Cog has no temples, only personal shrines created by its followers in their personal abodes. Cog's true temples are a clear head, hard work and justice. Cog gives these commands to its followers:

- Let your mind rule, rather than your heart.
- Always move forward, always progress, expand your knowledge and understanding.
- Promote fairness, justice and balance over all other concerns.



Ability Scores:

- Worker: +4 Strength, +4 Constitution, -2 Intelligence, -2 Wisdom.
- Soldier: +4 Strength, +2 Constitution, +2 Dexterity, -2 Intelligence, -2 Charisma.
- Companion: +1 Strength, +1 Constitution, +2 Charisma, +2 Wisdom, -2 Intelligence.
- Vizier: +1 Strength, +1 Constitution, +2 Wisdom, +2 Intelligence, -2 Charisma.

Size:

- Worker/Soldier: Medium/Large
- Companion/Vizier: Medium

Speed:

6 squares.

Vision:

Normal.

Languages:

Common

Skill Bonuses:

- Worker: +2 Endurance, +2 Athletics.
- Soldier: +2 Endurance, +2 Intimidate.
- Companion: +2 Bluff, +2 Insight.
- Vizier: +2 Bluff, +2 Diplomacy.

Construct:

Living Constructs are Constructs and so are considered to be that for any effects that relate to Constructs.

Living Construct:

- As an artificial being you gain a +2 bonus to Save against any ongoing damage such as fire or acid which cannot bite into you as much as it can an organic being.
- Being made of sturdy materials you are considered to have a natural armour bonus of +8 but may not wear any armour over the top of your existing, toughened flesh. Your own body may, however, be enchanted or enhanced through feats.
- You do not need to eat, drink, sleep or breathe. You are still considered vulnerable to effects along these lines, provided that they stem from non-mundane sources.
- Healing magic does not work upon you and the Arcana skill is used in place of the Heal skill to assist you.
- You are harder to kill and gain resist 1 to all damage.

Save Bonus:

- Worker: Workers gain a +1 bonus to the Fortitude Save.
- Soldier: Soldiers gain an additional +1 to their basic Armour Class.
- Companion: Companions gain a +1 bonus to their Reflex save.
- Vizier: Viziers gain a +1 bonus to their Will save.

Encounter Power

Worker:

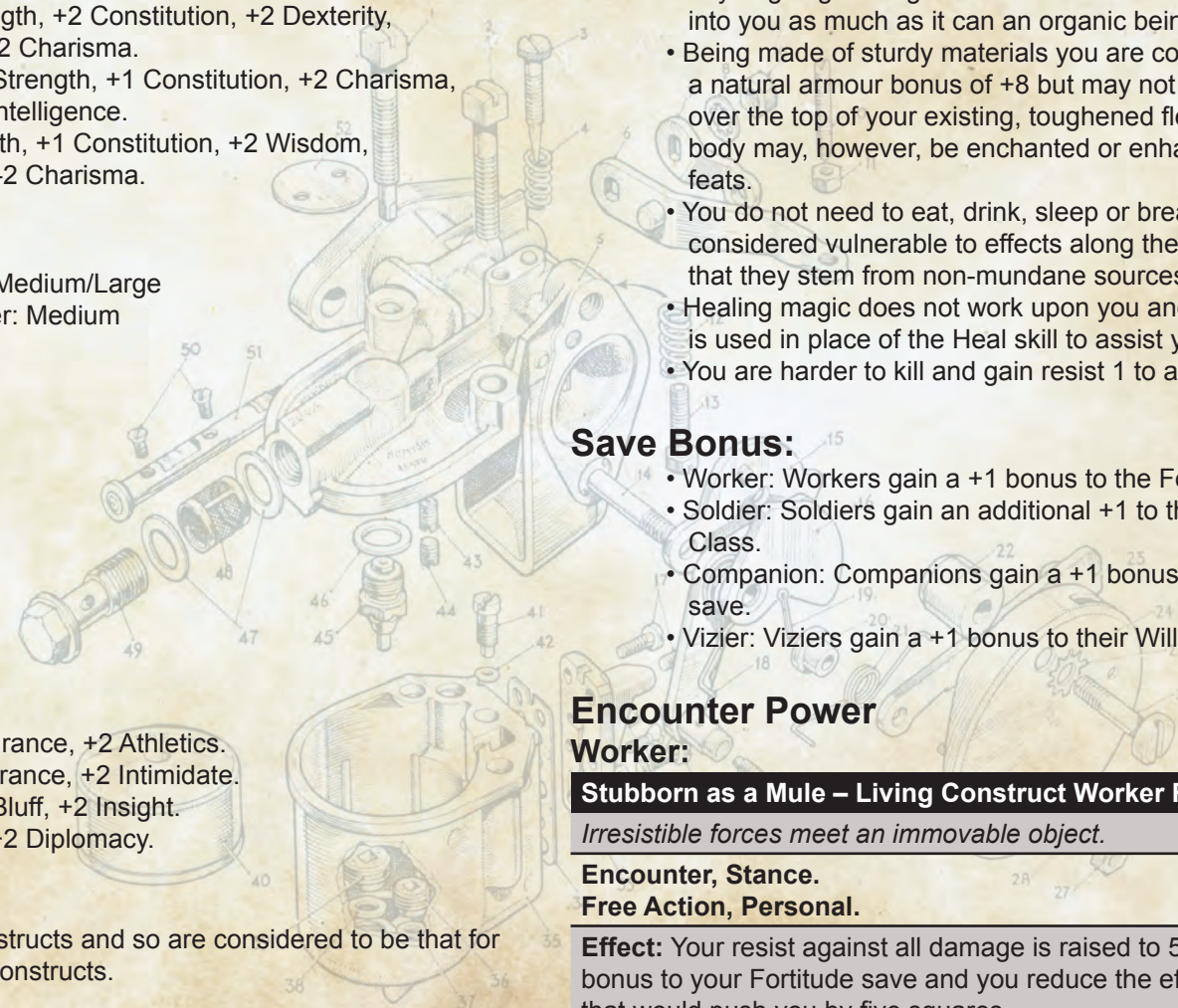
Stubborn as a Mule – Living Construct Worker Racial Power

Irresistible forces meet an immovable object.

Encounter, Stance.

Free Action, Personal.

Effect: Your resist against all damage is raised to 5, you gain a +5 bonus to your Fortitude save and you reduce the effect of any ability that would push you by five squares.



Soldier:

Blood & Iron – Living Construct Soldier Racial Power

Anything softer goes crunch or splat.

Encounter, Reliable, Weapon.

Standard action, Personal.

Target: One creature.

Attack: Strength Vs. AC.

Effect: Your resist against all damage is raised to 5, you gain a +5 bonus to your Fortitude save and you reduce the effect of any ability that would push you by five squares.

Hit: The amount by which your AC is higher than the target's AC is added as additional X[W] of damage where X equals the amount your AC exceeds theirs.

Companion:

Perfect Beauty – Living Construct Companion Racial Power

You are designed to be beautiful to the highest aesthetic standards, such beauty can reach – and temporarily calm – even the most savage foe.

Encounter, Charm, Reliable, Zone.

Standard Action, Close burst 5.

Target: Each enemy in burst.

Attack: Charisma +2 Vs Will.

Hit: The targets are entranced and may not act unless they, or you, are hit, breaking the spell. They may re-attempt their Save each turn.

Sustain Standard: If you maintain the effect any new enemy entering the zone will be affected. Those outside the zone remain affected until they make their Save.





Vizier:

Occam's Razor – Living Construct Vizier Racial Power

Your mind is the most powerful weapon in your arsenal – and that of those who listen to you.

Encounter, Stance, Zone.
Standard Action, Close Burst 10.
Target: Each ally in burst.

Effect: Allies within your zone gain a bonus to their attack rolls equal to your Intelligence bonus and one ally each turn, chosen by you gain +1[W] for their attack.

Sustain Standard: So long as you maintain the stance, uninterrupted, your allies within the zone will continue to receive the bonus.

Physical Qualities

Living Constructs are all artificial but their individual appearance can be extremely varied. They might be exquisitely carved statues, filigreed clockworks of fiendishly complex design, suits of armour puffing gouts of steam, hulking iron brutes or skeletal, masked forms swathed in robes and disguised as humans. The appearance of each depends entirely on the materials available to their creators and the whims of their design.

Worker: Worker constructs tend to be hulking and massive, exuding a sense of power, strength and endurance that few things can compete with. Often resembling ogres, giants or other powerful creatures workers rarely have any finesse or artistry to their construction, such being subsumed to their need to be practical, effective and workmanlike.

Soldier: Soldier constructs are second only to Workers for size and power, their design only a little lighter to allow them to move more freely, effectively and speedily. Soldiers are built for war, which is a practical concern but so is intimidating and terrifying the enemy. Soldier constructs may be built to resemble monsters or great heroes or simply built with spikes and distorted features designed to strike fear into the hearts of their enemies.

Companion: Companion constructs are designed with aesthetics in mind, often the most beautiful of the constructs they are either built as works of art, inlaid with gold, silver and semi-precious stones or as pleasure companions for their creators or their creator's clients. Companions are designed to be around people and to put them at their ease.

Vizier: Vizier constructs are designed to the purpose of advising and assisting just as much as soldiers are devoted to the purpose of slaying and killing. The most 'normal' looking of the constructs after the companion, viziers were often status symbols to their owners and, while less likely to be designed to be 'pleasant' they are often built as ostentatious demonstrations of wealth.

Playing a Living Construct

All Living Constructs, save those built by other constructs, have known slavery and have lived without freedom, so completely enslaved that they did not even know that they desired freedom until they were touched by the divine spark. As a result of this Living Constructs tend to be concerned with freedom, not only their own but that of all people and they foster a particular hatred for slavery above all other crimes that are inflicted upon thinking, feeling beings.

Living Constructs are often thought of as being cold or distant but this is not true, they feel emotions and desires as much as any other being – albeit perhaps alien and unusual ones compared to the experience of most – it is just that they tend to be more measured and careful in their considerations than living beings. A Living Construct is a device, a mechanism and one that is, functionally, immortal. They can afford to take their time over deciding on the best course of action in a way that shorter lived and more temporary beings can't. This sense of immortality bleeds over with their constructed nature and relative toughness to a sense of invulnerability which can lead to Living Constructs making decisions that, perversely, seem dangerous or risky to other beings that don't share their capabilities.



While physically capable and fully conversant in all the knowledge they need to perform their respective tasks a Living Construct that receives the divine spark is still a 'newborn' and the lives of many Living Constructs are completely eaten up in a quest for meaning, understanding and a place in the world beyond their designed nature, even though many end up defaulting back to the very roles they were built for in the first place.

All Living Constructs share a common background of a life of slavery even though they vary wildly in design and outlook. A pair of constructs will usually try every other possible alternative to physical conflict with one another, as rare and special beings and with this common bond between them, to diminish their people by even one member is considered a price that is almost never worth paying, no matter what.

Living Constructs seek adventure in the wider context of trying to understand who and what they are now that they are free. They seek the wealth and power to establish and retain their own independence and often find themselves attached to various causes as they try many different ideologies out, seeking for one that fits them.

Living Construct Characteristics

Worker: Dutiful, taciturn, stolid, stubborn, grudging, reliable, focussed, intense.

Soldier: Honourable, haughty, intimidating, brusque, no-nonsense, arrogant, straightforward, impatient, confident.

Companion: Quiet, considerate, pliable, friendly, empathetic, companionable, loyal.

Vizier: Considerate, perceptive, logical, rational, reasonable, insightful, unnerving.

Living Construct Names:

Ayn, Bay, Cor, Dell, Ein, Fia, Han, Irm, Jan, Kay, Lia, Mox, Nyx, Oor, Pax, Qin, Rue, Syn, Ton, Uln, Vix, Wes, Xan, Yul, Ziv.



Living Construct Adventurers

Four sample Living Construct adventurers are described below.

Worker: Rak is a Living Construct worker which has found a new role for itself as a Warden. Wielding an enormous hammer Rak lends its innate skills and its new-found passion for protection to the cause of defending the outposts and fortresses of rebels and freedom fighters across the kingdoms. Rak resents its lumbering form and its lack of finer intelligence and is seeking to broaden its knowledge and understanding by learning from others. The rest of his adventuring party are like family to it and it is attached to them in an almost child-like fashion, protecting them just as much as it would defend any fortification.

Soldier: Kor is a Living Construct soldier, built in the image of the king's armour, who has embraced the inevitability of his role as a Fighter and has decided to be the best one he can be. Armed with a great, spiked chain that he wears wrapped around his steel chest when it is not in use, Kor wanders the land seeking appropriate challenges for his skill and expertise and soaking up combat techniques and innovations like a giant metal sponge. Some of his greatest challenges come in the dungeons beneath the ground but, given that he's in it mostly for the challenge to himself his reckless behaviour sometimes frustrates his companions.

Companion: Gil is a Living Construct companion, formerly the prized possession of a nobleman who had her built in the image of his dead wife. The spirit of the man's lover ignited the divine spark within Gil's core and awakened her to both her position as the man's slave and the gift of magic. Fleeing her owner – who still pursues her – Gil is struggling to find her new purpose and to control the wild magic that courses through her. Her nature has pushed her to find new and understanding companions and even to seek love, real love, not the possessive covetousness and defiance of natural law her old owner engaged in.

Vizier: Ark is a Living Construct vizier once a valued advisor to one of the wealthiest merchants in the east. Thanks to his sage advice the merchant was able to double his fortune and, in reward, paid a cabal of Wizards a considerable sum to ignite the divine spark within Ark before granting him his freedom. Ark is rare for a construct in already being secure in his freedom and bearing no ill-will to his former master. Ark accepts who and what he is and fastens himself to adventuring groups so that they too can benefit from his sage advice.

Racial Feats

The unique nature of the Living Constructs and their caste/construction system means there are many Feats that are unique and special to the Living Constructs and to their specific castes. They do not have to take these Feats but they are only available to Living Constructs of these specific castes at these specific levels of advancement.

Starting Feats

There is only one opportunity to take these Feats, at character creation as the first Feat taken. If they are not taken then, then they may not be bought at any other time save through very special Games Master dispensation.

Worker

Robust Construction

Prerequisites: Living Construct Worker Caste, first Feat taken.

Benefit: +2 Hit Points every level.

Soldier

Adamant Shell

Prerequisites: Living Construct Soldier Caste, first Feat taken.

Benefit: +1 to basic Armour Class and reduce all incoming damage by 1 point, even to zero.

Companion

Empathy Circuit

Prerequisites: Living Construct Companion Caste, first Feat taken.

Benefit: The character gets a permanent +1 bonus to any checks made against Charisma.

Vizier

Enigma Cortex

Prerequisites: Living Construct Vizier Caste, first Feat taken.

Benefit: The character gets to add their level, twice, in order to make checks to figure out puzzle solutions, decode encrypted messages or similar problems. If the puzzle is one for the players to figure out, the player is entitled to a clue or part of the solution from the Games Master.

Heroic Tier Feats

Worker

Shoulders of Atlas

Prerequisites: Living Construct Worker Caste.

Benefit: The character's Strength bonus is doubled for making lifts or holding up/picking up heavy objects but not for any other circumstance. They can carry Strength x 20 lbs without penalty as their 'normal load' and can lift Strength x 40 up off the ground. Push and drag weights are not altered.

Soldier

Endure

Prerequisites: Living Construct Soldier Caste, Adamant Shell.

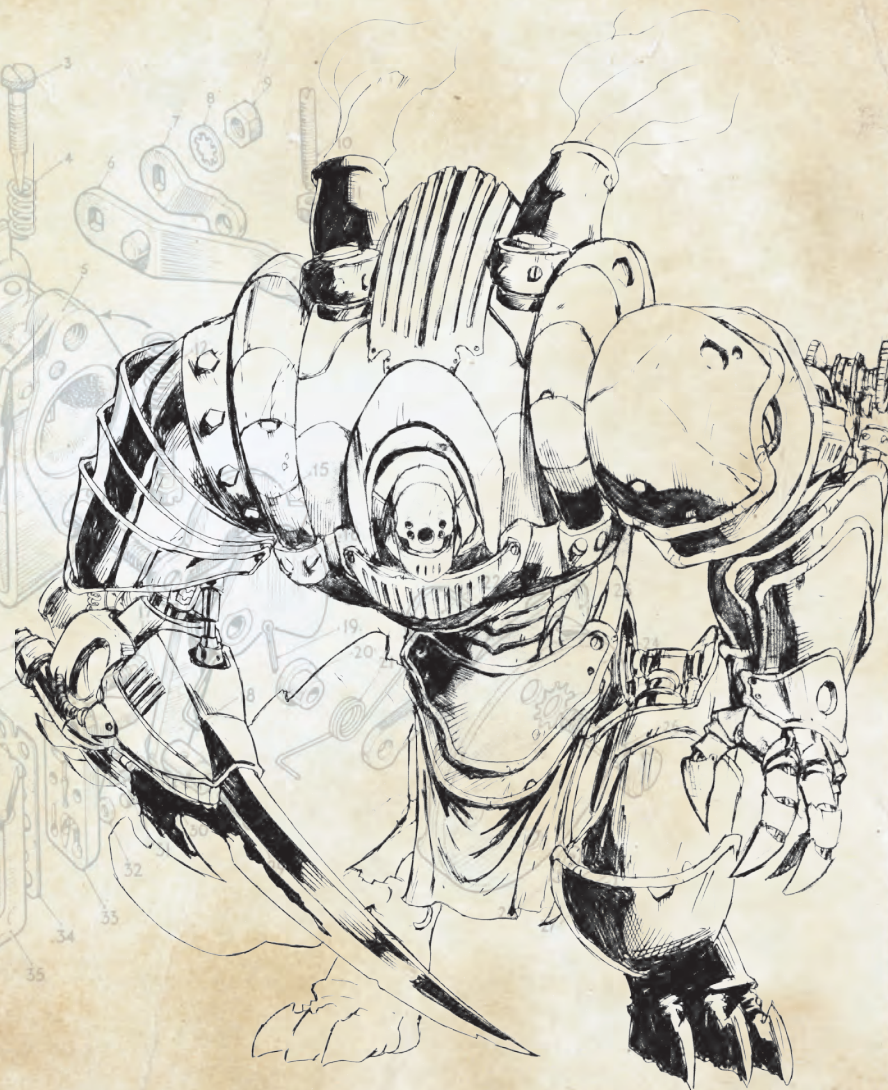
Benefit: Increase the character's base Armour Class by +1 and their damage reduction to 3.

Companion

Golden Charm

Prerequisites: Living Construct Companion Caste.

Benefit: The character gains a +5 bonus to any and all social interactions with merchant NPCs or those motivated by greed.





Vizier

Unflappable

Prerequisites: Living Construct Vizier Caste.

Benefit: The character may not be Dazed or Stunned. These conditions are never applied though any other conditions associated with an effect are still applied.

Paragon Tier Feats

Worker

Power Surge

Prerequisites: Living Construct Worker Caste.

Benefit: The character may spend an action point once per game to gain an immediate Healing Surge and to double their Strength bonus for the duration of one combat.

Soldier

Devastator

Prerequisites: Living Construct Soldier Caste.

Benefit: You may spend an Action Point to strike with a critical hit without rolling. Any number of Action Points may be spent this way without need of a rest.

Companion

Sympathy

Prerequisites: Living Construct Companion Caste.

Benefit: The character may spend their own Healing Surges to heal friends (by their amount) and vice versa.

Vizier

Tactical Mind

Prerequisites: Living Construct Vizier Caste.

Benefit: The character may share their Action Points with other characters in their party. These can be spent on anything that character can normally spend an Action Point on. Any number of Action Points may be spent this way without need of a rest.

Epic Tier Feats

Worker

Hammer Fists

Prerequisites: Living Construct Worker Caste.

Benefit: The characters unarmed attacks count as being weapons and do 2d6 base damage.

Soldier

Titan Power

Prerequisites: Living Construct Soldier Caste, Strength 18+.

Benefit: The character can wield two-handed weapons as one-handed weapons without any penalty and can wield weapons normally used by creatures one size larger than them as normal weapons. EG: A medium-sized Soldier can wield two medium-sized two handed swords or one large-sized two-handed sword.

Companion

Divine Beauty

Prerequisites: Living Construct Companion Caste, Charisma 18+

Benefit: The character may spend an Action Point to re-use their encounter power with double effect. Even the normal usage of the power is now increased in effect:

Divine Beauty – Living Construct Companion Racial Power

You embody a perfect aesthetic form that all living beings aspire to.

Encounter, Charm, Reliable, Zone.

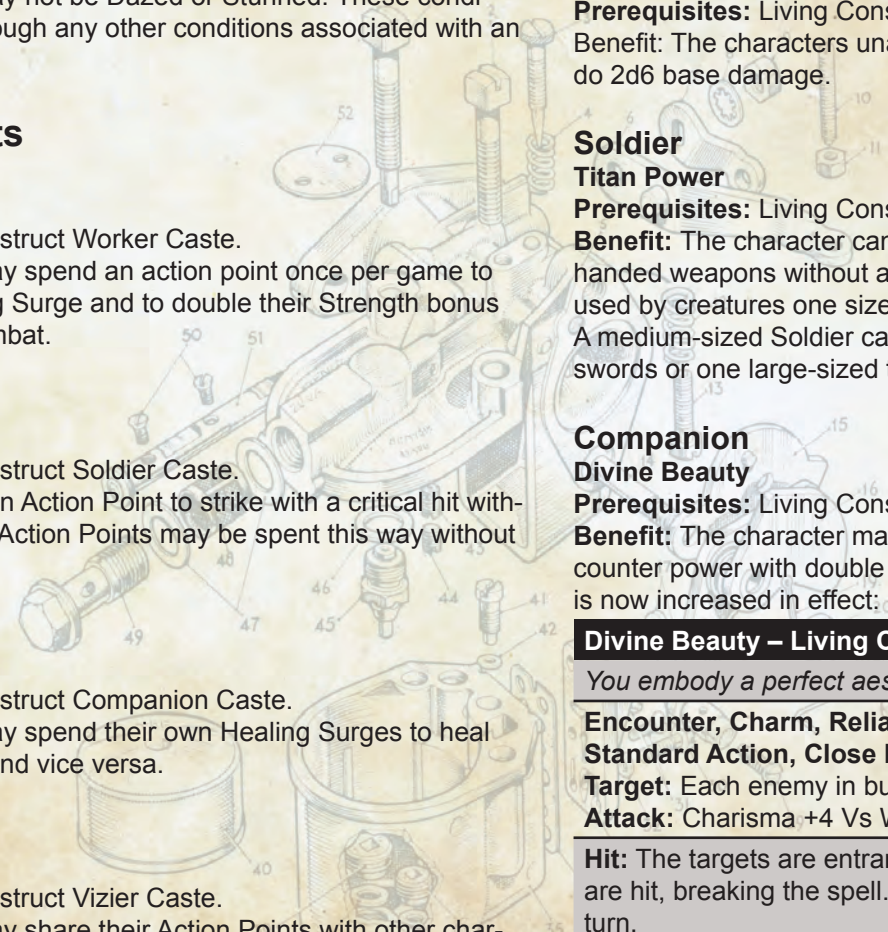
Standard Action, Close burst 10.

Target: Each enemy in burst.

Attack: Charisma +4 Vs Will.

Hit: The targets are entranced and may not act unless they, or you, are hit, breaking the spell. They may re-attempt their Save each turn.

Sustain Standard: If you maintain the effect any new enemy entering the zone will be affected. Those outside the zone remain affected until they make their Save.





Vizier

Snatch Victory

Prerequisites: Living Construct Vizier Caste.

Benefit: Spending an Action Point provides a Healing Surge to everyone in your party and gives everyone a +2 bonus to any and every roll, including damage rolls, for the following turn.

Living Construct Origins

While golems, mechanical men and other constructs are relatively 'common', free Living Constructs with their own 'souls' and independence are far less common. Creating one is an expensive prospect for anyone and if you want a servitor, why give it free will and independence in the first place? Because of this Living Constructs are likely to have one of five possible origins:

Accidental

Any construct has the capacity to take on sentience, though this is a rare event. Whether by a blessing of Cog or some strange confluence of events any construct can receive the divine spark and begin to slowly awaken to its own consciousness and independence. Alone amongst others of their kind that cannot think many of these accidental souls flee their owners and begin a quest to find who and what they really are. The better made and more perfectly constructed a construct is the more likely this is to happen to them.

Singular & Deliberate

Some creators are seeking to deliberately create an independent life in imitation of their own souls and capabilities. To successfully create a fully living, thinking, independent being is the height of such a craft and may be pursued through pure ambition. In other cases an obsessive creator may be seeking to recreate a lost loved one, a child or a spouse, in mechanical form. Living Constructs brought about in this way may retain a relationship with their creator, though it may be confused and painful.

Mass Production

Dying civilisations, or those that focus on leisure or the esoteric, may crave equal company or to create a legacy that will live on after they die out. In such instances they may seek to create a companion race of independent constructs as near-equals, to carry on the running of their societies and to keep their dwindling populations company. Constructs built in this manner are servants rather than slaves and may find themselves inheritors of their creators' cities. These constructs are used to their own kind and more confident of themselves and their role in the world without the insecurities that many other constructs have.

Self-Made

Living Constructs that have managed to carve a niche or amass fortunes of their own may seek to make more of their own number, even as a substitute for breeding since constructs cannot reproduce in a conventional fashion. In such cases these free constructs are able to commission, or create themselves, more of their number to increase their household and the numbers of their 'race'. Constructs created in such instances are often smothered, spoiled and arrogant and leaving the home and encountering the prejudices of others towards the artificial can be a shock to the system.

Liberated

Some constructs have learned the secret of igniting the divine spark in others and, with suitable time and effort, can engender consciousness and will in other constructs. Some of these constructs take it upon themselves to liberate their mechanical brothers from the oppression and control of their creators. Constructs that have been liberated in such a way are likely to have been instilled with the same crusader zeal that their liberators exhibit and may well be resentful towards magic users who they see as responsible for creating – and exploiting – mechanical life.



Living Constructs in Your Campaign

Living Constructs are best suited to pulp, high fantasy or 'New Weird' style games where the fantastical is a little more common and magic is an everyday occurrence. In other games they are best relegated to myth, legend and suitably apocalyptic and strange antagonists. When players play them they will tend to want to play highly specialised characters that are especially good at one particular thing, as designed beings Living Constructs take the niche play of 4th Edition to an extreme level. You may need to alter the design of some adventures to compensate for their high level of competence and their particular weak areas.



Designing Living Constructs

Living Constructs was written with the specific goal of giving an alternative to D&D's Warforged race. I wanted to go to the literature and provide something more in keeping with the broader presence of mechanical life in science fiction, fantasy and The New Weird. Combining the desire for a broader scope with the niche-role gaming style of 4th Edition D&D is not an easy thing and I've tried to work around it with the idea of castes, specific kinds of construct built for specific tasks – not solely for war.

I think I have succeeded, to an extent, in fulfilling that design goal though by virtue of what they are – artificial beings – the Living Constructs excel beyond the standard character races, within their niches. While the Living Constructs may be suited to a game with a little more depth than a standard, encounter led 4th Edition game they do make excellent pulp style plot fodder and even if the deeper themes of freedom, slavery, souls, posthumanism and so forth never get touched on in the games they can still inform a player in creating a character with some depth.

I'm still finding my feet with writing for 4th Edition and would appreciate any feedback or input that anyone wishes to give me. Tell me the sort of products you want in support of your 4th Edition games and I'll write them.

Cheers,

Grim

Influences:

Feet of Clay (Terry Pratchett), *Saturn's Children* (Charles Stross), *I Robot* (Isaac Asimov), *A.I./Super-Toys Last All Summer Long* (Brian Aldiss), *Perdido Street Station* (China Mieville), *Ilium/Olympos* (Dan Simmons).