d20 system

VISIONS

Ancient Engines

by Patrick Younts

Introduction

It is said that in olden days the mortal races made ceaseless war with one another, and that their fury could be quenched by neither tears nor blood. It is said that their armies were without number, that the sound of their marching feet was thunder enough to disturb the gods in their slumber, that their war songs sent the angelic hosts and the demon legions to trembling in their halls of gold and shadow, and that the terrible heat and blood-red light of their war-fires banished night from the face of the world.

And, it is said, that they conceived of terrible engines of war, beasts of wood, steel and magic, with power enough to slay the gods themselves, and to tumble down the gates of heaven. These dreaded weapons, these ancient engines, have long since passed into legend. But they have not passed from world. They slumber in their master's halls, in deep caverns and at the bottom of still pools, and their dreams are dreams of war, of destruction, of sorrow and lament.

They are the widow makers, and the kin slayers. They are the destroyers of hope, and the throne breakers. They are the ancient engines, and their dreams are dreams of death.

The Purpose of this Sourcebook

Ancient Engines is the newest Visions sourcebook, inspired by the lack of mighty war machines in d20 fantasy. The new war machines in this sourcebook are to catapults and ballistae what a vorpal sword is to a dagger, and by introducing them into your campaign, you will bring color and a sense of fantastical wonder to your mass battles. Introduce one of these massive engines into a siege, and watch your players squirm.

What Is An Ancient Engine?

An ancient engine is a war machine from the legendary past, a weapon created by the elder races for the sole purposes of unleashing destruction on a massive scale. An ancient engine is no mere catapult; instead, it is a weapon that holds fury on a biblical scale, a monstrosity that can unleash bolts of pure light or unleash lightning siphoned from the motion of the planets and stars.

An ancient engine is equivalent in power to a major artifact, meaning it cannot be destroyed by cannon, by sword or even by the use of spells, no matter how power-

Visions

Visions is Arcane Runes Press' new line of sourcebooks dealing with folklore, legend and myth. Each sourcebook in the series will present fresh new rules, spells, magic items, monsters or prestige classes dealing with the most compelling elements of real world mythology.

ful. Each ancient engine has a single, specific means of destruction, one that is tied to both its history, and to its nature. Discovering the key to an ancient engine's destruction is a worthy quest for heroes, and should be played as such.

The following are common properties possessed by all ancient engines:

Immunity: Ancient engines are immune to spells of all levels, to magical and non-magical weapons, and to extraordinary, spell-like, and supernatural abilities. They are also immune to environmental damage, though their progress can be stymied by impassible cliffs, or by deep mud and the like. Ancient engines also cannot be destroyed by the power of another ancient engine: each has become a vessel of death, and death protects its own.

In olden days, the engines were not immune to mortal weapons, and could be destroyed with considerable effort. But they have grown fat and powerful on the spirits of those they destroyed, and cannot be so easily dealt with now.

Uniqueness: Every ancient engine is unique: there is only one Hammer of War, and only one Kin Slayer.

Non-Good: The ancient engines are, one and all, soaked with the blood of both the innocent and the damned, and radiate a powerful, sinister aura of sorrow and quiet malevolence. An ancient engine may or may not detect as evil, but it cannot ever be considered "good".

Cunning, but Not Intelligent: Ancient engines are not intelligent, per se, but each of them thirsts for the opportunity to spill blood. This is not something that can truly be quantified with firm mechanics; instead, the GM should make every effort to demon-strate the obscene love for killing an ancient engine possesses through subtle clues. Perhaps the engine shudders when its weapons slay, or it leaks molten energy like a drooling lion, or it turns slightly under its own devices, pulling at it handlers in an effort to come to grips with living flesh. Or, perhaps, the sound of its gears moving is reminiscent of growling wolves, or the laughter of maddened children. In any case, the players and their characters should always suspect that an ancient engine has a malevolent life of its own, and that it is ever hungry.

READING THE ENTRIES

The ancient engines are described in the following format:

Brief History: A suggested history for the ancient engine, designed so that it can be dropped into most campaigns with a minimum of fuss, or discarded in favor of one that better fits the world's history.

Description: A general description of the ancient engine's appearance, and its various powers.

Mechanics: A listing of the ancient engine's specific abilities, written down in standard d20 mechanics.

Legacy of Terror: In addition to any unique powers it may possess, all ancient engines possess an ability called *legacy of terror,* a mechanical rendering of its dread aura and reputation; each legacy of terror is unique, and designed to bring the flavor of the ancient engine to the fore.

Destruction: The suggested means for destroying the ancient engine. As with the history, this is written in a general fashion, and offers guidelines, not firm mechanics.

The Word of God

When the people heard the sound of the horns, they shouted as loud as they could. Suddenly, the walls of Jericho collapsed…

Joshua 6:20-21

The angels were the first, and the greatest of the civilized races. They were the children of the divine, given unto creation that they might serve its will until the end of time. Their homes were glass and light, cloud and holy fire, and the Divine's will was their only desire.

The elves were the second of the civilized mortal races, and the most beautiful. They were the Divine's gift to creation, that it might know grace and joy until age's end. Their homes were wood and leaf, sky and valley, and the Divine's will was their only desire.

The dwarves were the third race, industrious and strong. They too were the Divine's gift to creation, that it might know the joy of honest labor. Their homes were stone and rock, diamond and gold, and the Divine's will was their only desire.

The gnomes were the bridge between elf and dwarf, whose purpose it was to merge beauty and craft, and they were the fourth race. They were the Divine's gift to creation, that it might aspire to wonder. Their homes were earth and mud, grass and flower, and the Divine's will was their only desire.

The halflings were the fifth race, the wanderers and vagabonds, whose purpose was to carry word of beauty, and of craft, to the four corners of the world. They were the Divine's gift to creation, that the lesser beasts might come to aspire to something greater than mere existence. Their homes were open road and boundless sky, wagon and wheel, and the Divine's will was their only desire.

And men? Men were the last race, and the only one without purpose. But in this way, they were the Divine's greatest gift to creation, sent to teach of freedom. Their houses were wood and stone, grass and boundless sky, and what they willed was their desire.

And thus was the world as the Divine intended, and creation knew joy. But the hearts of angels did not. Within the spirits of some a fierce jealousy was kindled, for they knew that their greatness was as nothing compared to freedom of will. And so these angels made war upon men, and in so doing claimed the right of choice, and thus thwarted the will of the Divine.

For an age angel made war upon man, hurling spears of fire and ice, and all of creation shook with the thunder of their rage. And in those days elf and dwarf and gnome and halfling forgot the will of the Divine, and came to know the joy and the burden of choice. And in time, creation forgot grace, forgot the joy of honest labor, forgot wonder and aspiration, and remembered only war.

And the Divine, looking down from the heavenly seat, was sore wroth. In anger, the Divine trod the dreams of men, and gave unto them the gift of two words, spoken in the Divine's own voice, with which to still the fire and ice of the angels, so that the world might be again as was intended. And men did take the words, and despaired, for none who lived dared speak the words that touched the true nature of the Divine. Man chose his desire, and his desire was to fear the Divine.

And so it was that those angels who did not make war upon man, who had not yet claimed the right of choice, chose at last to aid the last race, and in so doing thwarted the will of the Divine. They gave unto men the Horn of Heaven, whose trumpet calls heralded the morning and the night, and bound within it the voice of the Divine, which still echoed in the spirits of men.

And so, at last emboldened, did man step forth and speak the Word of God. And the first word was Wroth. And the second word was Disfavor.

And in Wroth the Word did tear down the proud towers of heaven, and in Wroth bring cease to the fury of fire and ice. And in Disfavor were the angels who claimed choice brought low, the first and the second, and made humble before the Divine. And in Disfavor were the first made as unto beasts, that they might rage eternally – and these were named as demons. And in Disfavor were the second made as unto ants, that they might scheme and build eternally – and these were named as devils.

And so, in Wroth and in Disfavor, was creation made as it is.

Description

The Word of God is an immense horn mounted upon a scaffolding of solid gold, which is in turn anchored to an immense, six wheeled ivory wagon with solid platinum wheels. The wagon is a flat platform 10 ft. wide and 30 ft. long, and its underside stands a full 10 ft. above the ground, for the ivory was made from the fingernail of the creator god, and the Divine must never suffer the touch of mean earth. The platinum wheels are 10 ft. tall, and 1 ft. thick, and are the coalesced tears of the Divine's sorrow at the betrayal of his first children.

The Word of God itself is formed from an unknown metal that resembles star-flecked obsidian and is always cool to the touch. The horn curls over and over upon itself, twisting and turning like a drunken philosopher's logic. It narrows to an almost imperceptible point at its lowest end, and then flares up and up into a wide mouth like an orchid in full bloom.

When the Word of God's powers are awakened, it glows with brilliant, golden light. It does not generate this brilliance from within; rather, the world for a mile around the Word grows dull and lusterless, as though shamed by its flaws in the presence of the Divine.

Mechanics

The Word of God is considered to be Huge size (25 ft. tall x 10 ft. wide x 30 ft. long, 2 squares x 6 squares, 14 tons).

To activate the Word of God, a human or half elf must position himself or herself at the narrow end of the horn, and place his lips against the horn. Then he whisper the true name associated with the effect he wishes to

bring about. The true name comes instantaneously, as soon as the Word is touched, and fades from the mind the instant it is spoken; each time a true name is spoken, the speaker must attempt to steel himself against the flood of Divine energy that flows up and out of his spirit. This requires a successful Will save, with the DC of the save, and the effects of a failed save listed with each power, below.

Wroth (Spell-like): Once an hour, when the word of wroth is whispered into it, the Word can unleash a mighty blast of sonic energy, in the form of a 100 ft. cone shaped burst. The burst of wroth inflicts 10d6 points of damage to living creatures, and 25d6 points of damage to constructs, to structures, and to natural formations like earthen ramparts. The sonic damage ignores hardness entirely, and completely bypasses spell resistance and spell immunities, but does not bypass energy resistance (sonic). In addition to inflicting sonic damage, the word of wroth stuns living creatures and deafens them for 4d6 rounds. A Fortitude save against DC 23 negates the stunning, and halves both sonic damage and duration of the deafness effect; creatures of good alignment receive a +4 sacred bonus to their saving throw, while creatures of evil alignment receive a –4 sacred penalty to their save.

Disfavor (Spell-like): Once every 3 rounds, when the word of disfavor is spoken into it, the Word of God laments the Divine's sorrow at the betrayal of his children. All demons and devils within a 60 ft. radius of the Word are forced to succeed at a Will save against a DC of 20 + 25 – their HD or be banished to their home plane as by the *dismissal* spell. Unlike that spell, there is no chance that a *dismissed* outsider is send to a plane other than its own, and unlike that spell, a *dismissed* outsider cannot return to the plane it was banished from for a period of 1 year. The disfavor ability ignores spell resistance entirely.

The Deep Breath (Side Effect): The Word of God is the tongue of the Divine, and its voice is so awesome in its beauty that all other sounds die away. For 1 round after the disfavor ability is used, and for 3 rounds after the wroth ability is used, a globe of absolute silence surrounds the Word of God, as by the *silence* spell, in a 100 ft. radius. There is no saving throw to resist the effects of this magical silence, nor will spell resistance negate it.

Legacy of Terror

The demons and devils have not forgotten the consequences of their ill-advised attempt to destroy the human race, and they are deathly afraid of the Word given form. When a demon or devil first sees the Word of God, it must succeed at a DC 25 Will save or become panicked for 4d6 rounds. Whether or not the save succeeds, the demon or devil cannot be affected by the legacy of terror for another full day (typically 24 hours). The Word of God's legacy of terror is a mind-affecting, supernatural effect.

Destruction

To destroy the Word of God, a solar must willingly renounce its faith in the presence of the Word, and then speak backwards the first word of creation – the true name of "I". If this is done, then the universe takes a quiet breath, and weeps as the Word of God sings the aria of its own unmaking.

Kurzog (Heart Beater)

"Nothing gives a fearful man more courage than another's fear."

Umberto Eco

In ancient days, the orcs were not as they are now, mighty and savage warriors the equal of any other race. No, in those times the orcs were low as rats, and mean as the roach, feasting on the cast off offal of man, dwarf, and elf alike. They were both pitied by the other races, and despised.

But the orc dreamt of more. They dreamt of crowns, of treasuries filled to bursting, of the fear and adoration of their "betters". They dreamt of greatness, and they dreamt of war. And their dreams were not unheard. Deep within the fiery pits, the devils stirred, their healing sleep haunted by the orc's yearning pleas. Though most devils counseled the destruction of the pests who dared whisper their petty desires into the souls of their betters, the most cunning instead spread forth his wings and gathered the orcish dreams into a web of pure shadow, that he might draw strength from them, might change, might grow as the orcs wished to grow. And so, fed by centuries of spectral hopes and phantom ambitions, he did, becoming the first and greatest of orcish gods, the lord of war.

Under his loving hand, the orcs gathered in shadow, feasted on his flesh and grew strong. They forged weapons of crude iron in smithies torn from the palms of their master, stoking the fires with their own souls. And under his tutelage, and borne from his dim memories of the heavenly choirs, they crafted a weapon of surpassing strength, a drum which would herald the end times, and announce the coming of the age of ruin, of blood and death: the age of Kurzog, the Heartbeat of War.

Description

Kurzog is the ultimate expression of orcish hatred, and primal war fury, a massive pair of drums mounted upon a keep-sized platform of redwood trunks ripped from the heart of the elven birth-forest, and bound together with adamantine and bronze smelted from the thrones of the dwarven father-kings.

The bases of Kurzog's drums are formed from single pieces of obsidian, reinforced in brass. Their rims are studded with hooked brass claws contorted as though by unimaginable agony, which support and anchor the drum's skin. The drum skins are made from the cured flesh of hundreds of elves, dwarves, human, gnomes, and halflings, all stitched together in a hideous tapestry; though the drum skins are eons old, they show no signs of wear, and are supple and wet to the touch. The twin drums are set side by side, and each is fully 40 ft. in diameter.

The platform upon which the drums rest is set upon four enormous wheels, each fully the circumference of a castle tower.

Kurzog weighs uncounted thousands of pounds, and only the massive, tireless strength of dozens of giants, ogres or war elephants can transport it. Kurzog is considered to be of Colossal size (40 ft. high x 100 ft. wide x 100 ft. deep, 60 tons).

Mechanics

Kurzog's abilities are all sonic in nature, and all depend upon the presence of orcish drummers to activate them. Kurzog has a constant ability, which works continuously while the great drums are being beaten, and a second ability that can be activated once an hour.

In order for Kurzog's abilities to be unleashed, it must first be awakened, which requires a minimum of 10 orc or half-orc drummers to beat upon each of its twin drums for a minimum of 2 rounds. After 2 rounds of continuous drumming, Kurzog wakes, and its *heartbeat of primal fury* ability activates. Only orc and half-orc drummers can awaken Kurzog; though other drummers can partake in its song, only the orcish peoples count towards the minimum total.

Kurzog's abilities last a variable number of rounds, as listed below, but only continue for as long as the minimum number of drummers continue to strike each of the Heart Beater's drums. Should a drummer fall in battle, or cease beating for any reason, another must take his place before 1 round has passed, or Kurzog passes into slumber again. For this reason, a minimum of 20 drummers is usually assigned to each drum, so that if one falls, the ancient engine can still unleash its fury. Each drum is large enough to permit 40 simultaneous drummers, but extra drummers beyond the minimum 10 do not grant any additional benefit.

Heartbeat of Primal Fury (Constant) (Sp): At the beginning of the third round of drumming, Kurzog begins to throb with divine power, collecting and focusing the savage fury of the orcish gods and spreading it like a black tide across the battlefield. All orcs and half-orcs within a one-mile radius of Kurzog are affected as though by a *rage* spell that cannot be saved against, *dispelled* or disrupted in any fashion. In addition, orcs and half-orcs within the same radius gain the benefits of the Diehard feat; if they already possess the Diehard feat, then they do not suffer a point of damage when taking a move or standard action while between -1 and –9 hit points.

The duration of the heartbeat of primal fury is continuous for as long as Kurzog is drummed, and for 3 rounds after that; an affected being who passes outside the one-mile radius remains *enraged* for 3 rounds as above, and instantly comes under the effects of the heartbeat of primal fury the instant they come within range of the drum beat again. Heartbeat of primal fury is a spell-like, mind-affecting, compulsion effect.

Deeping Drums (Activated) (Su): After 1 minute of continuous drumming, mighty Kurzog can be made to resound with a deep, throbbing pulse like the thunder of countless subterranean drums. Indeed, that is exactly what it is, for Kurzog is linked to the spirits of the drumming dead, the spirits of mighty orc chieftains of old who dwell in the dark heart of the world and beat out the rhythm of time's end.

In order to activate the Deeping drums, at least one of Kurzog's drummers must have at least 6 ranks in the Perform skill, and must succeed at a Perform skill check against DC 15. If the check fails, nothing happens, but

with a successful check the battlefield begins to shudder, creating an earthquake equivalent to an *earthquake* spell within a 160 ft. radius area anywhere within one-mile of Kurzog. The power of this earthquake against standing buildings is awesome to behold; unlike a standard *earthquake* spell, Kurzog's deeping drum inflicts 200 points of damage to any standing structure on open ground.

Deeping drum can be activated once per hour, and each use requires a separate, successful Perform check.

Legacy of Terror

Kurzog is the slayer of men, and the bane of dwarves, and the hellish pulse of its drums still echo in the mountain folk's hearts when the hearth fires dim, and night comes swift and chill. All humans and dwarves within a 1-mile radius of Kurzog when it is awakened are shaken for 2d6 rounds. This is a mind-affecting, supernatural fear effect, so those who are immune to fear are immune to Kurzog's legacy of terror.

Destruction

Kurzog is the physical manifestation of the fiery heart of the orcish god of war; it was forged in his smithy, was blessed by him, and still carries his loving favor. To destroy Kurzog, its merciless patron must be made to lament his butchery long enough to shed twin tears, which must be made to spill upon the drum skins. Should this happen, the skins will dissolve, and Kurzog's blazing heart will still, and fall unto death.

Hammer of War

"But let it be sword, lance, or bolt that strikes me down: for I should think it shame to die from an iron ball from the fire-crake or bombard or any such unsoldierly weapon, which is only fitted to scare babes with its foolish noise and smoke."

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle – **The White Company**

"In fire we are betrayed, and in fire they be damned! Woe betides those who would slay the lords of the deep! Woes betide their widows, and their beggar children!" So reads the last page in the Annals of Stone, the last work of the Lore King, greatest of the dwarven lords of old.

In ancient days, when the mountains touched the skies, and their roots bound the world in its shape, the dwarves were the unchallenged masters of stone, and their mighty fortresses were vast and without number. The greatest of these was the Hall of Two Score Lords, a citadel so vast that forty different kings ruled forty different kingdoms within its depths, some so deep within the earth the people there believed the sky to be naught but myth. For ten times ten generations the hall of Two Score Lords was a land of peace and plenty, where the only sound was the clash of hammer on anvil, and the crack of pick striking

stone. And then the orcs came, bringing with them fire, and death.

For three centuries the orcs laid siege to the Hall of Two Score Lords, boiling up from the endless midnight of the underearth to slaughter and pillage, and for three centuries the might of the dwarves threw them back. But then the orcs made pact with the giants, who had long coveted the mountain folk's glittering, twilight thrones. The giants smote down the dwarves underground keeps, and devoured the warriors as they screamed for mercy. Within months, the Hall of Two Score Lords was in ruins, its citadels gutted by flames, and its kings devoured; it is said that the blood of the dwarves flowed swift and deep as rivers in the final days, and that the lowest chambers of the Hall are still awash in a cursed, spirit-haunted crimson sea.

But the dwarves who fled the Hall did not do so empty handed. They carried with them pockets full of gems, handfuls of coins, books and scrolls and tapestries and uncounted memories. And they brought one other thing, more precious than any jewel: the central pillar of the Hall of Two Score Lords, placed there by the hands of the father-god himself. The vengeful dwarves prayed to their father-god for the means to avenge their kin, and in a dream they beheld a mighty king beating an anvil of steel with a hammer of stone; the king's breath was steam, and as he toiled, magma rolled down his back like sweat.

Thus was the birth of the Hammer of War. Conceived in fire and dream, and fueled by hatred, it strode as a colossus across the battlefields of old, smiting down the twisted fortresses of orc and giant, until even the dwarves grew weary of death, and bade it rest.

Description

The Hammer of War is a massive juggernaut of steel and stone, squat and broad as a dragon turtle, which rumbles along under its own power on four wheels made of solid hunks of steel.

Hammer of War's stone, turtle-shell carapace covers a dizzying array of steam, coal, and magma-powered turbines, which are surrounded by miles of copper wiring, uncounted numbers of gears, and coiled brass springs that power the immense battering ram from which the ancient engine its name.

Hammer of War's battering ram is made from a solid column of stone, taken from the heart of a dwarven capital city, now lost to history. The stone column is capped on both ends with an adamantine cap; the front cap is worked into the form of a ram's head with coiling, twisting horns and a snarling mouth that jets steam, and oozes molten gold as it strikes. When the ram is activated, steam vents from every corner of the Hammer of War, filling the air with a noxious, sulfur-stinking cloud.

Hammer of War is large enough to support a crew of five dwarven engineers, who stoke its furnaces, monitor its power levels, guide it in battle, and fire its mighty weapon. The engineering compartment is accessible from a small hatch in the ancient engine's belly. The Hammer of War will function so long as at least one dwarf is at its controls, though he must restrict himself to piloting the Hammer, and firing its battering ram (see below).

Mechanics

Hammer of War can move under its own power at a rate of 10 ft. per round, so it is usually pulled into battle by a team of beasts of mighty burden (see below). Though the Hammer of War is as indestructible as any other ancient engine, it is possible to breach the exterior by tearing the crew hatch open, or by picking its lock. Tearing open the crew hatch requires a successful DC 27 Strength check, and popping its lock requires a successful DC 40 Disable Device check.

The Hammer of War's main armament is its immense battering ram, which can be fired once every three rounds. The battering ram has a reach of 15 ft., and can strike any being or object within the three squares directly in front of it. The Hammer of War does not strike individuals, but instead strikes a 5 ft. square, inflicting 15d6 points of damage to all within that square, as well as knocking them prone and stunning them for 1d4 rounds. A Reflex save against DC 19 is allowed for half damage, and with a successful save, the target is left neither stunned nor prone. The force of the battering ram is so overwhelming that those beings in squares adjacent to the targeted square must succeed at a DC 19 Reflex save to avoid being knocked prone and stunned for 1 round as well. The Hammer of War's battering ram is set on a pivot that allows it to rotate up and down a full 90 degrees, so that it can strike at airborne opponents foolish enough to come within range, as well as strike the square directly in front of it. The Hammer of War's ram is capable of taking an attack of opportunity, but only when primed for firing. The battering ram ignores all forms of damage reduction save DR/-.

The true power of the ram is its ability to shatter even the hardest fortress walls. The battering ram ignores object hardness entirely, and instantly destroys any *prismatic wall, prismatic sphere* or other, similar spell that it strikes, without discharging any of the spell's effects.

In addition to the power of the ram, there are four flame nozzles set, one to a side, around the Hammer of War, each of which can jet a stream of fire equivalent to a *burning hands* spell cast by a 5th level sorcerer (5d4 damage, Reflex DC 11 for half damage). The flame nozzles can be fired once every other round, and can be pivoted to fire at any point within a 180 degree firing arc.

The Hammer of War can trample opponents of size Large or smaller, inflicting 10d6 + 20 points of damage with a successful trample. A DC 20 Reflex save is allowed for half damage. The Hammer of War is considered to have a Strength of 50 for the purposes of Strength-based checks, and is considered to be of Huge size (15 ft. tall x 30 ft. long, 3 squares x 6 squares, weight 12 tons).

Five is the nominal number of pilots for the Hammer of War, though only one is required to steer it and fire its battering ram. Steering is a move action, as is firing the ram or a flame nozzle. There is no special training required to steer the hammer or to fire its weapons; any dwarf instinctively knows how to guide the Hammer, for it is the embodiment of their unstoppable martial prowess. A non-dwarf can pilot the Hammer, but must succeed at either a DC 21 Knowledge (arcana) or Use Magic Device check to do so; for a non-dwarf, steering the Hammer or firing any of its weapons requires a full round action. The Hammer will not function, under any circumstances, if an orc, half-orc or giant attempts to control it, or one of its weapons.

Legacy of Terror

The Hammer of War is the bane of giants and orcs, for the stone it was made from well remembers the slaughter of its kings. When the Hammer of War's weapons are used against orcs or half-orcs, or any creature of the giant type, the Reflex DCs to take half damage from its ram or its flame nozzles is increased by +4. In addition, while an orc, half-orc or giant is within 180 ft. of the ancient engine, its speed increases to 20 ft. per round, meaning it can charge up to 40 ft. when performing a trample.

Destruction

In order for the Hammer of War to be destroyed, every dwarf, both the living and the dead, must be made to temporarily forget their ancient hatred for orcs and giants. Should this happen, even for an instant, the great stone pillar that is the ancient engine's battering ram will invert and strike, crushing the Hammer in a mighty conflagration of stone, spirit, memory and flame.

The Sphere Engine

How vast those orbs must be, and how inconsiderable this earth, the Theatre upon which all our mighty Designs, all our Navigations, and all are Wars are transacted, when compared to them. A very fit consideration, and matter of reflection, for those kings and princes who sacrifice the lives of so many people, only to flatter their ambition in being masters of some pitiful corner of this small spot.

Christian Huygens – *In Humanity*

In ancient days, when race made war with race, the gnomes alone looked beyond the small horizons of hill and mountain, ocean and shore, to the vistas of the boundless stars, and to the heavens beyond. They built machines with which to see the grandeur of heaven, and in so doing discovered worlds upon worlds. And they built machines with which to hear the glory of the Divine, and in so doing discovered the secret tones of the stars, and of the worlds upon worlds. And they called these tones the music of the spheres, and drank deep of their beauty for years without end.

In time, the gnomes came to understand that the music of the spheres was the echo of the first days, the song of creation as it was, and as it should be. And they came to understand, too, that their world alone did not sing as the others did, that it alone did not remember the glory of the first days, and so sullied the music of the spheres with its dissonant tone. And so the gnomes set forth to harness the music of the spheres, to gather it unto themselves and release it into the world, that the other races might remember the glory of the first days, and restore the purity of the music.

And so they built a grand engine of brass and crystal, and turned all that they remembered of wonder and craft to its construction. And when it was finished, they set forth in a mighty processional, to bring the glory of the music of the spheres, and of the first days of creation, to a world that had long since forgotten its true voice. But the world knew only war, and desired to know nothing else, and so the music of the spheres was not as the balm that soothes old wounds, but rather as the dagger that opens scars anew. Again and again the gnomes did conduct the music of the spheres across the world, and again and again the world did sear and burn, until at last, in sorrow, the gnomes did abandon all thoughts of healing, and fall away into despair.

And in that despair, the Sphere Engine did become their weapon of war, the knife with which to carve away all that remained of the world, so that the music of the spheres, the song of creation's memory, would no longer be sullied.

Description

The Sphere Engine is a monstrosity of ancient science, beautiful in its crystalline imperfection, with a 30 ft. tall framework of brass supporting an array of seven spindly, multi-segmented arms. When not awakened, the seven arms wrap themselves around the framework, folding over and over upon themselves until they can barely be discerned by the naked eye. When a small wheel located at the base of the Engine is turned, the arms fold out, a process that takes one round. At the end of the round, the arms lock into position, and small orbs set at their tips iris out, like roses unfolding to drink the morning dew. At the beginning of the second round, spheres of light blossom from each iris, hardening into crystal in the blink of an eye; the crystalline spheres are of different sizes, scaled to the relative size of the heavenly bodies that fill the solar system.

When, at last, the Sphere Engine has fully awakened at the end of the second round, the crystalline spheres rise a few inches above the arms that support them, held aloft by chains of mystical sound, and then both spheres and arms begin to rotate faster and faster, approximating the orbits of the planets through the solar system. As they gather speed, crackling chains of lightning, in greens and purples and blues and reds, begin to twine in and around the Sphere Engine, filling the air with enough static electricity to set teeth to humming, and hair to dancing.

The Sphere Engine cannot move under its own power, so it is almost always transported into battle on an enormous wagon pulled by dozens of horses or beasts of mighty burden (see below). The wagon is large and strong (hardness 6, 300 hit points) but is not immune to destruction.

Mechanics

The Sphere Engine's sole purpose is to harvest the harmonic energy given off by the movement of the heavenly bodies – the so-called "music of the spheres" – transform it into pure electrical energy, and release it as torrents of eldritch lightning.

Lightning of the Spheres (Spell-like): The Sphere Engine can unleash one torrent of lightning every other round. The lightning torrent is equivalent to that of a *chain*

lightning spell cast by a 25th level sorcerer, striking to a range of 1200 ft. and inflicting 20d6 points of damage to the first target it strikes, and then 10d6 points of damage to up to 20 additional targets; because the lighting is powered by the celestial music of the spheres, half the damage is electricity, and half the damage is sonic. A Reflex save against DC 20 is allowed for half damage, and spell resistance can overcome the effect; the Sphere Engine is considered to have both the Spell Penetration and Greater Spell Penetration feats for the purposes of defeating spell resistance, giving it a total bonus of +27 to its caster checks.

Void of Silence (Supernatural): While the Sphere Engine is awakened, it greedily sucks down all ambient sound, severely dampening all sonic-based effects except its own. All sonic-based effects used within, or targeted into the 100 ft. radius sphere around the Sphere Engine have their saving throw DCs, if applicable, reduced by –4, and inflict 1 fewer points of damage per die. In order to use any bardic music ability within the void of silence, a bard must expend double the normal uses of bardic music per day required to activate it; if the bard enters the radius of the effect after he has already activated a bardic music ability, he must immediately pay the extra cost as a free action, or else the ability immediately ends.

Legacy of Terror

The music of the spheres is alien to the world, and the beasts, ever the most sensitive to the touch of the unnatural, flee from its tones as they would from a roaring blaze. Creatures of the animal type must attempt a Will save against DC 20 to avoid becoming panicked for 4d6 rounds when the Sphere Engine comes within a 200 ft. radius of them. An animal can only be affected by the legacy of terror once each day, whether it fails its saving throw or not.

Destruction

To destroy the sphere engine, all the planetary bodies in the solar system must be made to still their journeys for the space of a heart's beat. If this is done, the music of the spheres is hushed, the delicate chains of sound that hold the Sphere engine's crystal worlds fade, and the worlds burst apart in a shower of glittering rainbow dust.

Mardokush, The Sunspear

Zeus, most glorious and most great, Thundercloud, throned in the heavens!
Let not the sun go down and the darkness come,
Until I cast down headlong the citadel of Priam in flames
And burn his gates with blazing fire…

Homer – ***The Iliad***

None but the coldbloods remember the coldbloods, and none but the coldbloods remember all that was, and all that will be. The warmbloods believe themselves to be the first people, but the coldbloods remember an age of swamp, of heat, of sunlight and fat summer flies, an age before the time of the warmbloods, and the warmblood's war.

In that age, all was swamp, and all was lazy hunger and the flow of thick, green water. And that age was the age of Mardokush, Lord of Swamp and Summer Flies. Great was Mardokush, and great was his bounty, for he was of the swamp, and was the swamp. Wide stretched his jaws, and from them flowed the swamp, and from them came the fat, summer flies.

And then came the age of warmbloods, and warmblood's war. Into the swamp came the warmblood's god, and from the swamp came the mountains, and the forests, and the clear waters, and the white lands where coldbloods could not go. And Mardokush was angry, and stretched out his jaws to swallow the mountains, and the forests, and the clear waters, and first of all the white lands where coldbloods could not go. But warmblood's god was quick, and the warmblood's god was clever, and he pulled down the sun and fed it to Mardokush - Oh greedy Mardokush. And Mardokush did fill his jaws with the sun, and

Mardokush did breathe no more, for Lord of Swamp and Summer Flies is great, but nothing is greater than the sun.

And so warmbloods took mountain, and took forest, and the clear waters, and the white lands where coldbloods could not go. And so warmbloods took life of Mardokush, Lord of Swamp and Summer Flies. Warmbloods made food of the world, but still warmbloods not full. And so warmbloods come for coldbloods, with their fury, and their metal, and their fire.

But while coldbloods live, swamp live, and swamp is hungrier than warmbloods. And so swamp swallowed warmbloods down, swallowed down their fury, and their metal, and their fire. But warmblood's kings not like coldblood chiefs, and do not care that swamp must feed. And so warmblood's kings lift up their hands, and warmbloods rise up from swamp, fat and black like summer flies.

But while coldbloods live, swamp live, and while swamp live, Mardokush exists, even if he does not live. And so coldblood chiefs lift up their hands, and lift up Mardokush, and Mardokush lift up the sun. And Mardokush and the sun burn down the warmbloods, and swallow down their bodies like fat, summer flies. And as long as Mardokush exists, the swamp lives. And while the swamp lives, coldbloods will live.

Description

The Sunspear is unique among the known ancient engines in that it is formed from the body of a once-living creature, in this case a crocodile enormous enough to beggar belief. Though its body is cracked, decayed, and bloated from millennia of being immersed in fetid swamps, the beast is still majestic; fully 150 ft. long, it dwarfs most dragons in size, and its scales are thick and hard as a castle wall. The body of the Sunspear is covered with carved runes and crude paintings depicting the ancient legacy of the lizardfolk, and those who take the time, and are given the opportunity to study its body can read the entire history of those whose blood runs thick and cold. A thick collar of tree-length, rainbow-hued feathers circles Sunspear's desiccated neck; plucked in elder days from the tail of a slain god's avatar, the feathers are aged and faded, but indestructible by mortal means.

The heart of this most loathsome of ancient engines is the Sunspear Crystal, a yellow and gold chunk of amber large as a wealthy man's house. The Crystal is deeply flawed, with myriad cracks and craters dotting its surface, but clear as new-made glass; its heart is made of purest sunlight captured from the heart of the first star, and its radiance casts all within a 1,000 ft. in a corona of yellow fire. The Sunspear Crystal is imbedded within the crocodile's gaping jaws, and is anchored by both the beast's spear-length teeth, and unbreakable robes made from the sinews of a hundred lizardmen kings.

Mechanics

Though the Sunspear is formed from the body of a crocodile, it is considered to be neither a living creature, nor an undead. Engineered by ancient sorceries more potent than anything understood by modern spellcasters, it is unique creation without the vulnerabilities of the living or the dead – like all other ancient engines, the Sunspear is immune to damage and magic of any form, and can only be harmed or destroyed in a very specific manner.

The Sunspear moves at a rate of 10 ft. per round, climb at a rate of 10 ft. per round, and can swim at a rate of 20 ft. per round. It can move up to double its normal walking rate to trample creatures of Medium size or smaller, inflicting 10d6 + 20 points of damage, with a DC 20 Reflex save allowed for half damage. The Sunspear is considered to have Strength 50 for the purposes of Strength-based checks, and is Colossal in size (20 ft. tall x 30 ft. wide x 150 ft. long, 6 squares x 30 squares, 130 tons).

Sunspear Beam (Supernatural): Once every three rounds, the Sunspear crystal can unleash a bolt of pure solar energy as a 300 ft. long, 10 ft. wide and tall line. The sunspear beam inflicts 15d6 points of damage to all within its line of effect, with creatures of the undead type, and creatures that suffer extra damage from light-based attacks taking double damage. A Reflex save against DC 25 is allowed for half damage. The sunspear beam ignores energy resistance of all types, but can be overcome by spell resistance; the Sunspear is considered to have a caster level of 20, and it is gains the benefits of the Spell Penetration, and Greater Spell Penetration feats for the purposes of defeating the spell resistance of undead creatures.

Tail Slam (Extraordinary): Once per round, the Sunspear can perform a tail slap against a single opponent of Medium size or larger. This attack is made with a +40 attack bonus, and inflicts 3d6 + 20 points of damage. A creature of Huge or smaller size struck by the Sunspear's tail is subject to an immediate trip attack that does not provoke an attack of opportunity. The Sunspear cannot be tripped after a failed trip attempt.

Legacy of Terror

The dead much fear the power of cleansing light, and the deathless dreams of their cold slumber are troubled by ancient memories of the Sunspear's fury. When the Sunspear awakens, roll 1d20 + 10. When the Sunspear comes within 100 ft. of an undead or group of undead, apply this number as a turning check against them; the Sunspear is considered to be a 25th level cleric for determining the maximum hit dice of undead it may turn. All undead with that many hit die or fewer are considered turned, and must flee or cower as normal for a successful turn check; there is no limit to the number of hit die of undead the Sunspear may turn, so there is no need to roll turning damage, but undead are never destroyed by the legacy of terror, no matter how few hit die they possess. The Sunspear can approach within 10 ft. of a turned undead without breaking the turning effect. An individual undead can only be affected by the Sunspear's legacy of terror once each day.

Destruction

In order for the Sunspear to be destroyed, it must be subjected to the embrace of absolute cold and dark that is the Sea of Drowned Stars, the still, obsidian water at the heart of the Shadow Plane. When this is done, the Sunspear's body will calcify into a solid statue of obsidian, and its crystal cannon will absorb the essence of night and pass from the memory of the mortal plane forever.

Beast of Mighty Burden

Let me tell you the secret that has led me to my goal: my strength lies solely in my tenacity.

Louis Pasteur

Though the ancient engines of war are staggering in their might, they can only unleash their power if they can be brought forth to the field of battle, and while the minds of men are sufficient to conceive and create these potent weapons, the mortal body is not strong enough to bear the burden of their unimaginable weight.

Beasts of mighty burden were first created ages ago, when the ancient engines were more common, and genocidal wars raged across every corner of the world. Tireless and fearless in equal measure, these monstrous beings were bred by every race, for their usefulness could not be denied. In the current age of relative peace, they are fewer in number, but still prized for their ability to transport immense weight from horizon to horizon without pause.

The beast of mighty burden is not a specific breed of animal, but instead a devolved version of any animal respected for its strength and stamina. The magic used to create a beast of mighty burden can also be used to devolve crude giants as well, though only morally bankrupt beings would conceive of doing so – the drow and orc are still feared, and justly reviled for their continued enthusiastic use of ogres, trolls and hill giants as beasts of mighty burden.

A beast of mighty burden appears as a larger, cruder version of the animal it was bred from, with immense, bulging muscles and skin thick as plate armor. A beast of mighty burden is only dimly sentient, but fearless and powerful in battle, plodding without hesitation into the hell of the battlefield with no thought of their own safety.

BEAST OF MIGHTY BURDEN TEMPLATE

The beast of mighty burden is a template that can be applied to any creature of the animal or giant type, so long as that creature is of Medium size or larger (referred to hereafter as the base creature).

A beast of mighty burden uses all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

Size and Type: Increase the creature's size by one size category, from Medium to Large, or from Large to Huge, for example. The creature's type remains unchanged, but it gains the regressed subtype.

Hit Die and Hit Points: Increase the base creature's HD by 4, and a beast of mighty burden always gains maximum hit points for its hit die (d8). Do not forget to increase the base creature's hit points to reflect its increased Constitution score.

Initiative: Reduce base creature's initiative by 1, to reflect its reduced Dexterity. Do not reduce base creature's initiative by –1 if increasing its size from Huge to Gargantuan or from Gargantuan to Colossal, as creature's of that size do not reduce their Dexterity.

Speed: If the base creature's walking speed is 30 ft. per round or less, increase its walking speed, and only its walking speed, by 10 ft. per round. Otherwise, the base creature's speed is unchanged.

Armor Class: Adjust the base creature's AC as appropriate for its increase in size (-1 from Medium to Large or Large to Huge, -2 from Huge to Gargantuan, and –4 from Gargantuan to Colossal). Adjust the creature's natural armor (if applicable) to match its new size as well, as per the chart below.

New Size	Natural Armor Bonus
Large	+2
Huge	+3
Gargantuan	+4
Colossal	+5

To reflect the coarsening of the base creature's flesh during regression, grant it an additional bonus to natural armor based on its size, as per the table below.

New Size	Regressed Natural Armor Bonus
Large	+4
Huge	+6
Gargantuan	+8
Colossal	+10

Base Attack/Grapple: Adjust the creature's size-based attack bonus as per the chart below (the chart does not reflect increased Strength).

New Size	Base Attack
Large	-1
Huge	-1
Gargantuan	-2
Colossal	-4

Adjust the creature's grapple modifier to reflect it's increased size, and increased Strength. Adjust grapple bonus +4 to reflect its increased size.

Attack and Full Attack: Adjust the creature's attack bonus to reflect its increased Strength, and decreased Dexterity (if it has a ranged attack), and also to reflect its increased size. In addition to any other attack forms it may possess, the beast of mighty burden gains a slam attack at its normal attack bonus. The damage inflicted depends upon the creature's size, as shown on the chart for damage (below). If the beast already possesses a slam attack, then it retains it; damage from existing slam attacks is equal to either its existing damage, or the damage listed on the damage chart, whichever is higher.

Damage: Adjust the creature's damage to reflect its increased Strength, and improve its base damage to reflect its increased size as shown on the chart below. If the creature's base damage is already equal to or greater than the damage shown for its new size on the chart below, then increase it to the next highest damage total. Do not increase attack forms other than those shown below.

Damage

New Size	Slam/Tentacle	Bite	Claw/Sting	Gore/Tail
Large	1d6	1d8	1d6	1d6
Huge	1d8	2d6	1d8	2d6
Gargantuan	2d6	2d8	2d6	2d8
Colossal	2d8	4d6	2d8	4d6

Space/Reach

New Size	Biped Height	Quadruped Length	Space (squares)	Reach
Large	8 ft.	16 ft.	10 ft. (2 x 2)	5 ft.
Huge	16 ft.	32 ft.	15 ft. (3 x 3)	10 ft.
Gargantuan	32 ft.	64 ft.	20 ft. (4 x 4)	15 ft.
Colossal	64+ ft.	96+ ft.	30 ft. (6 x 6+)	20+ ft.*

Space/Reach: Increase the base creature's space and reach to reflect its new size, as shown on the chart above. If the base creature is already larger than its new listed size, increase its dimensions to the next step down on the chart (but do not increase the creature's actual size).

Increase a creature's space and reach by 5 ft. (1 square) for every 15 ft. above 64 ft. in height or 96 ft. in length it is.

Special Attacks: In addition to any special attacks the base creature already possessed, it gains the following:

Trample: The beast of mighty burden gains the ability to trample those who dare set themselves in its path. As a full round action, the beast can move up to twice its normal speed and bowl over any target at least one size category smaller than itself. The beast inflicts bludgeoning damage equal to its slam attack, + one and a half times its Strength bonus.

Special Qualities: In addition to any special qualities the base creature already possessed, it gains the following:

Stupid Courage: Beasts of mighty burden are trained to be single minded, and absolutely fearless. A beast of burden is immune to mind-affecting fear affects.

Stubbornness: A beast of burden feels no pain, though it can be damaged as normal. The creature gains immunity to the effects of pain and nausea, and cannot be stunned.

Base Saves: Modify the base creature's saves to reflect its new hit die, and its modified ability scores.

Abilities: Modify the base creatures ability scores to reflect its increased size, as follows:

Size	Strength	Constitution	Dexterity
Large	+8	+4	-2
Huge	+8	+4	-2
Gargantuan	+8	+4	unchanged
Colossal	+8	+4	unchanged

In addition to the size-based modifiers, alter the beast's ability scores as follows: Str +4, Con +2, Int –8 (min 1).

Skills: In addition to adjustments to the base creature's skill's reflecting its increased size and altered ability scores, the beast of mighty burden gains a racial bonus to Concentration equal to its HD.

Feats: The beast of mighty burden gains the Endurance, Great Fortitude and Iron Will feats. If it already possesses the Endurance feat, it gains the Diehard feat instead.

Challenge Rating: Increase from the base creature by +2 for creatures of (now) Large or Huge size, or by +3 for creatures of Gargantuan or Colossal size.

Alignment: Always neutral. Beasts of mighty burden are surly, but dimwitted and bred for unquestioning docility.

Level Adjustment: -

Sample Beast of Mighty Burden

The War Elephant

"At night, the broad brow of the colossus, its trunk, tusks, tower, huge hindquarters, and four pillar-like legs stood out, astonishing and awesome against the starry sky."

Les Miserables

Gargantuan Animal (regressed)
Hit Dice: 15d8+120 (240 hp)
Initiative: +0
Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares)
Armor Class: 26 (-4 size, +20 natural), touch 6, flat-footed 26
Base Attack/Grapple: +11/+33
Attack: Gore +29 melee (4d6+21)
Full Attack: Slam +29 melee (2d8+16) and 2 stamps +24 melee (2d8+8); or gore +29 melee (4d6+21)
Space/Reach: 20 ft./15 ft.
Special Attacks: Trample (2d8+24), catastrophic charge
Special Qualities: Stupid courage, stubbornness, low-light vision, scent
Saves: Fort +19, Ref +9, Will +8

Abilities: Str 42, Dex 10, Con 27, Int 1, Wis 13, Cha 7
Skills: Concentration +23, Listen +15, Spot +12
Feats: Alertness, Diehard, Endurance, Great Fortitude, Iron Will, Skill Focus (Listen)
Environment: Any
Organization: Solitary, team (1-4) or phalanx (6 – 30)
Challenge Rating: 10
Alignment: Neutral
Advancement: -
Level Adjustment: -

Deep in the festering jungles of the eastern reaches, the orc war tribes breed enor-

War Elephant Palanquin

A war elephant palanquin is large enough to carry ten Medium-sized warriors, and provides cover against beings attacking from the ground (+4 armor class bonus). Against creatures attacking from the height of the palanquin, riders are considered to be using a low obstacle for cover. A 5 ft. section of palanquin has hardness 5, and 50 hit points. Palanquins are anchored to the war elephants back by two thick ropes wrapped around its back and over its belly; these ropes are hardness 5, and have 30 hit points. The palanquin remains on the elephant's back even if one rope is cut, but only so long as the elephant does not charge or run. If both ropes are cut, or if the elephant charges or runs while one rope is cut, the palanquin crashes to earth, and all within suffer 3d6 points of falling damage.

mous elephants to serve them in times of war and conquest. These beasts, massive as any stone keep, serve as mobile fortresses for orc warlords, who ride with their chosen warriors on massive palanquins made of woven bone and wicker, and covered with the skins of their defeated enemies.

A war elephant towers nearly 40 ft. above the ground, and its tusks, made of ivory blended magically with white marble and capped with razor sharp adamantine steel points, stretch almost 25 ft. in length. A war elephant's skin has the color and coarseness of bleached sand, and sulfur-stinking sweat rolls off it in waves when it charges into battle.

Combat

War elephants charge into battle, striking with the force of a tidal wave.

Catastrophic Charge (Ex): A war elephant that performs a gore attack after a charge inflicts double damage on a successful hit, but only against creatures that are no more than two size categories smaller than itself (typically Large minimum).

Trample (Ex): Reflex half DC 33. The save DC is Strength-based.

For more PDFs please visit www.roninarts.com.