

Living Constructs of the Realms

When the *Eberron Campaign Setting* was released, players were introduced to some interesting new character races. Of these races, the shifters and the changelings are perhaps the most easily modified for use in non-Eberron campaigns. Both races have racial backstories that can be used in any campaign with very little modification, if any at all. The new race that is perhaps Eberron's most iconic, the warforged, is not as readily ported to other campaign settings. The warforged racial origin is more deeply tied into Eberron's history, and their iconic nature also strongly ties them to the setting.

In this article, an alternative type of living construct is presented. It was inspired by Eberron's warforged, and also by the soulmechs of the Dragonstar setting. The livegolem is an option for either PCs or NPCs, and draws from existing Realmslore for its connection to the setting. Livegolems are presented in very small numbers; it would not be appropriate to introduce them in larger numbers, and few DMs would be interested in such an approach, anyway.

This article is edition-neutral. The existing rules for warforged, whether 3.x or 4.0, are suitable for use with livegolems. Due to their small numbers and backstory, however, many warforged feats and components would not be appropriate – only in the Eberron setting are living constructs numerous enough to justify the use of alternative construction techniques or magical items created specifically for constructs.

Livegolems

Two millennia ago, two mighty empires stood in the ice-shrouded reaches of the north, in the areas now known as Narfell and the Endless Wastes. As neighboring empires are often wont to do, the nations of Raumathar and Narfell began warring against each other in the Year of Clipped Wings (-623 DR). These wars stretched across the centuries, with varying levels of intensity, until the Year of the Stone Giant (-160 DR), when the Great Conflagration began. This final war, lasting a decade, saw the near-cataclysmic destruction of the two empires.

Both nations drew upon the lore and knowledge of earlier peoples to supplement their war effort. The Nar, using secrets of the ancient Ilythiiri, had already developed pacts with many Abyssal powers. They numbered demons among their ranks, and summoned many more fiends from the Abyss during the Great Conflagration. The Raumathari relied more on elemental magics. Their forces were supplemented by armies of constructs built from the lore of their former Imaskari masters.

For one terrible decade, Raumathari and Nar forces clashed with one another, resulting in an untold number of deaths and great devastation to both realms. In desperation, the Raumathari summoned an avatar of Kossuth the Firelord. The Lord of Flames rampaged amongst both armies, leaving naught but ashes and ruin in his wake. On that day, two

great empires were destroyed. The Narfell of today is naught but a shadow of what it once was, and only Rashemen remains of what was once the Raumathari empire.

While the Great Conflagration raged, a Raumathari wizard named Ulthran tried to develop a new type of construct. Golems were useful, but often slow and ponderous when compared to human opponents. Other unique war machines existed, but lacked any form of innate intelligence, requiring the direct effort of wizards to control them. Ulthran sought a type of construct that possessed human intelligence, agility, and speed, but still had the formidable protection of a golem. It took almost three years of research and careful spellcraft, but Ulthran eventually invented the livegolem.

The construction of each livegolem began with a humanoid shape, carved entirely of suth wood imported from the Shaar. Ulthran had learned of suth wood during his youthful travels, and knew the wood was renowned for its incredible durability. Though expensive and difficult to obtain in Raumathar, Ulthran wanted the best material for his warriors, and knew that such resilience would prove invaluable for his creations.

Deep within the livegolem's torso, near where the heart would be in a human, a fist-sized citrine was implanted. The quartz gemstone is frequently used in *magic jar* spells, and Ulthran prepared the citrines with a specially-crafted variant of that spell. Once the citrine hearts contained spirits, those spirits would be able to control their new and extremely durable bodies.

Ulthran and his assistants next treated steel armor with the blueshine process, ensuring the metal would be protected from acid, rust, and any other form of corrosion. The prepared armor was fused to the wooden frame, protecting all of the body, save for the joints. Though the steel plate was simple and undecorated, magical runes were later etched into armor, adding to and reinforcing the enchantments cast on the livegolem. The livegolem's head was encased in an unadorned helm; no facial features are evident beyond a hinged jaw and eyes fashioned of blue quartz.

Ulthran and his assistants cast a series of spells on each livegolem. The spells animated the wooden body and made it flexible, while retaining the incredible strength suth wood is known for. Additional spells preserved the wood, preventing decay and allowing for possible restoration through healing. The final step of physical preparation was the inscription of the runes to maintain the enchantments.

For the animating spirit, Ulthran avoided the elemental beings normally used in golems. Instead, he sought those who already possessed martial prowess, experience in combat, and a loyalty to Raumathar: human soldiers. Ulthran selected several skilled soldiers, and offered them a choice: if they fell on the battlefield, their spirits could go on to whatever afterlife awaited them – or they could rise again, once more fighting for Raumathar in a new and unusual body fashioned of magic and human craft.

In little time, Ulthran had several volunteers willing to become livegolems. With the terrible cost of life the Great Conflagration was claiming, it took only months for his

dozen livegolems to have animating spirits. With their armored wooden frames, each livegolem was more than a match for a dozen human soldiers. The livegolems performed extraordinarily well, often fighting on long after their human compatriots would have fallen.

Encouraged by his initial success, Ulthran and his apprentices had soon crafted a second set of livegolems. Before they could be animated, however, Ulthran was slain by a demon summoned by the Nar. None of his remaining apprentices commanded powerful enough magic to animate the livegolems, so the wood and steel soldiers remained inert.

Lodrik, the eldest of Ulthran's apprentices, hoped to continue his master's work. He recorded details about each of the battles in which the first group of livegolems fought, paying particular attention to their performance. When a livegolem fell in combat, Lodrik chronicled its damage and noted what methods were used to restore those that were made functional again. He even spoke with several of the livegolems, documenting their thoughts and feelings, and how their existence had changed.

When Kossuth's avatar was summoned in the Year of Recompense (-150 DR), only five of the original twelve livegolems were still active. Two were destroyed by the Firelord's rampage, and Lodrik was certain a third fell at the same time. Of the two remaining livegolems, Lodrik could find no trace. He assumed that they had fallen, but acknowledged in his notes that one or both could still be active somewhere.

With the Great Conflagration over, Lodrik saw little purpose to continuing his master's project. He hid the inert livegolems and the notes about their creation in a secret location, and then departed fallen Raumathar for lands further south. As with the two remaining animated livegolems, his final fate remains unknown.

The inert livegolems were recently discovered by an adventuring mage, Kaerval Tenspells of Waterdeep. With the bodies already fashioned and awaiting animation, and the notes for doing so, it took little effort for Kaerval to animate a handful of the ancient warriors. It is this handful of newly-animated livegolems that would be most suitable for use in a campaign, as either PCs or NPCs. Kaerval could be of any alignment desired by the DM, and his goals in animating the livegolems are likewise left for the DM to determine. A PC livegolem could be a friend or willing servant of Kaerval, or an unwilling minion thirsting for freedom from his tyrannical creator. Alternatively, one of the original livegolems could have survived. Later turning to spellcraft, he found his own method for creating more livegolems.

Either option gives a DM a nearly unique living construct, grounded in existing Realmslore and with an origin full of possible adventure hooks.

Tanjer Korralt, Hunter of the Unclean

The human warrior Thellias was one of those selected by Ulthran for the first group of livegolems. Thellias considered himself a simple soldier, one with a deep and abiding

love of his homeland. Eager to continue fighting the hated Nar, Thellias readily agreed to Ulthran's proposal.

After his death, Thellias was overjoyed to rise again as one of Ulthran's magical soldiers. He threw himself into combat time and time again, seeking out the fiercest fighting he could. Though sometimes appearing reckless, Thellias was relying heavily on the strengths of his new form to protect him and to allow him to draw attention from his still-living compatriots. Despite his eagerness to wade into combat, Thellias was never damaged beyond repair, and was rarely out of the fighting for more than a few days.

The end of the Great Conflagration was a crushing blow for Thellias. A soldier wanting to defend his homeland, he found himself damaged but still standing amongst the ruins of his fallen nation. Thellias had been given a second chance to die for his homeland – but his homeland had died around him.

Despairing at his fate, Thellias aimlessly wandered his destroyed nation for many years. The shamed warrior would have ended his own existence, if only his new body could have been easily destroyed. Depressed and apathetic, the livegolem hardly noticed the turning of the years.

Things changed for the livegolem when he encountered Rethiar Goldoak, a half-elven wizard from Aglarond. Rethiar had come north, seeking lore on Imaskari constructs. He'd already learned much from the remnants of Raumathari constructs, but finding a sentient and still-functional construct was more than he'd dared hope for. In the despondent livegolem before him, Rethiar saw a chance for knowledge beyond anything he could have imagined.

Rethiar asked for the livegolem's name, but Thellias was too lost in his own misery to offer it. Lacking anything else to call the construct, Rethiar pondered what to name him. After some time, he settled on Tanjer Korralt, the name of a warrior he'd known in his youth. The original Tanjer was fearsome in countenance, but had a lonely and melancholy nature. The livegolem's appearance strongly reminded Rethiar of his fallen friend, so he felt the name would well suit the livegolem. The newly-named Tanjer did not respond to the name at first; but over the following months, he became accustomed to the new moniker.

Rethiar took it upon himself to repair the damaged livegolem, and to return to the despondent construct a desire to do more than just exist. Over the course of several months, Tanjer shook off his dark feelings and began to see a potential future. He and Rethiar became friends, and Tanjer aided his new companion in his quest to learn about constructs.

A few years later, Tanjer found a new reason to live. He and Rethiar discovered the remains of some unfortunate villagers, brutally slain by a monstrous foe. Tracking down the culprit, they discovered it was a fiend let loose by the death of its summoner, free since the Great Conflagration. The companions destroyed the fell murderer, and Tanjer

once more realized the potential of his armored body. He also witnessed the power of Rethiar's spells, and knew that magic could give him strength beyond the physical.

Inspired by the encounter, Tanjer became Rethiar's apprentice. The two traveled together for nearly a decade, and during that time, Tanjer became a skilled wizard. During the course of their travels, several other fiends were destroyed or sent back to the Lower Planes, their summoners slain, and their lore destroyed. After Rethiar fell in battle, Tanjer laid his friend to rest and continued hunting their shared foes. In time, Tanjer also turned his attention to necromancers, considering their predations among the living as vile as those of the demonbinders.

In the centuries since taking up spellcraft, Tanjer has reached a level of skill beyond that of most archmages. He has also worked many magics on himself; one of those magics gives him the ability to turn himself into an apparently non-magical statue. Tanjer favors this ability; more than one necromancer has been destroyed when a previously unremarkable statue suddenly unleashed a barrage of destructive magic. The livegolem's stony disguise has also allowed him to witness a considerable amount of spellcraft; his knowledge of the necromantic arts is exceeded by only the most ancient lichs, and few demonbinders can match his knowledge of fiends. Tanjer refuses to use or transcribe much of this lore; he intends to let the knowledge be lost with his eventual demise.

Tanjer prefers to hunt Thayans, but that fell magocracy is not the only place where wizards deal with forces from beyond the natural world. He travels extensively, often moving for months before looking for his next foe. Tanjer limits himself to necromancers and those who summon fiends, though he will sometimes direct adventurers against other evil spellcasters. He has created many caches of magic, and frequently leaves spellbooks focusing on divination and protection in places where potential wizards can find them. Though not a Chosen, Tanjer has earned Mystra's favor, and is known to her most dedicated servants.