

# BRASS GOLEM

ROUGHSKIN KNELT CAREFULLY IN THE DUST at the foot of the old stone door. It worked its slender forefinger into the metal of the keyhole, wiggling it around, carefully probing the mechanism within. There was a tense silence from the others.

*Eventually Maximilian placed a hand on Roughskin's cool shoulder. The golem's head turned slowly, the carven metal face impassive, but seemingly with a hint of a satisfied smile. It raised its hand, a tiny spring gripped delicately between fingertips. The door ground slowly open.*

Unlike other golems, which in comparison are merely crudely-shaped lumps of earth and rock, brass golems are deft and graceful, being faithful reproductions of the humanoid form. Also unlike other golems, their complicated clockwork and crystal mechanisms may house a mortal soul. Nobody knows where the brass golems originate from or what their original purpose was. All that is known is that they are extremely rare, and that they are sometimes unearthed from deep within caverns and dungeons.

## EMPTY VESSELS

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Newly unearthed brass golems are almost always "empty", without a resident soul. For this reason they are highly sought-after by the rich and powerful who fear mortality and who seek to extend their lifetimes at any cost. With sufficient magical skill, one can, upon death, transfer one's soul into the mechanical body of a brass golem. Only the desperate or foolhardy desire this end, for the process is generally considered irreversible, and the longer one spends as a golem the more one forgets of one's previous life.

Sometimes, very rarely, a deity might intercede on a being's behalf at the moment of their death, preserving their existence by transporting their mortal soul into the nearest vacant brass golem shell. Less altruistic deities might also exact a high price for this boon, however, demanding the recipient's eternal devotion and servitude. For this reason, it is not uncommon to see brass golems clerics.

## INSCRUTABLE PURPOSE

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Even though a soul might inhabit a brass golem for centuries, they rarely know more about their own nature than anyone else. Since a golem has no life without a resident mind to animate it, there are no native brass golems to ask. The closest there is to such golems is those who

have spent long enough as one so as to forget their previous life. Some brass golems become obsessed with their unknown purpose or origins, relentlessly pursuing the secrets of their construction or forgotten past life.

Brass golems are found in all kinds of places, from dragon's hoards to ancient crypts and ruins, though usually in subterranean areas. Sometimes two or three are found together, posed frozen like mannequins in some scene, but no central repository or place of manufacture has ever been found. Golems without a resident soul have no life or motive essence, so sit as inert as suits of armour until filled with a soul or carted off by a creature as treasure.

## A VALUED PRIZE

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Possessing an inert brass golem is a sign of great wealth and power in some circles. Kings and warlords might have one – or even parts of one – on display in their throne room or reliquary. Diplomats and ambassadors who wish to make an impression will sometimes give gifts of armour made from broken brass golems. Arcane institutions, gnomish workshops, and dwarven forges are also common places to find brass golems or their components.

Creatures and monsters also like to decorate their lairs with brass golems as a display of power. Lower-intelligence monsters are usually not interested, preferring more obviously valuable items such as gold and jewels, but for those with the wit to perceive them for what they are (such as dragons and beholders) they hold much desirability.

## MECHANICAL NATURES

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The internal structure of a brass golem body is a complicated arrangement of cogs and crystal, a carefully constructed mechanism infused with innate magics. Most of the machinery not dedicated to operating limbs is for the purpose of housing a mortal soul, which it does perfectly, with all the faithfulness and fidelity of a natural body. There is no limit to the length of time which a soul might spend inside a brass golem shell, since the body does not age, but existing in a body longer than its natural lifespan can cause a mind to undergo unpredictable changes. Lacking flesh and the ability to participate in the pleasures thereof, a brass golem gradually loses the convictions and passions it once held in its past life.

## AFFINITY FOR AUTOMATA

Brass golems and gnomes tend to have a mutual appreciation and understanding of each other, perhaps due to the latter's proclivity for tinkering. One can often find older golems voluntarily serving as guards and assistants in gnomish workshops, where they take the opportunity to study more about their own mysterious construction.

## BRASS GOLEM NAMES

"Younger" brass golems, that is those who have only recently taken up their golem shells, usually keep whatever name they had in their previous life. A golem who has lived so long as to forget their entire previous existence will usually take whatever name takes their fancy or convenience. These older golems have no sense of gender, social classes, or titles, so often adopt single-word nicknames.

## BRASS GOLEM TRAITS

Your brass golem character has a number of traits due to their combined mechanical and magical nature.

**Ability Score Increase.** Your Dexterity score increases by 2.

**Age.** Your body does not age, but your soul continues to mentally progress at a rate normal for your previous form. As you age as a golem past the natural lifespan for your original race, your hold on your personal history begins to decay. You forget your past life day by day, in chronological order, until you are left only with whatever memories and personality you formed as a golem.

**Alignment.** Most brass golems are driven towards neutrality. Though the resident soul retains whatever alignment it had in life, the lack of true flesh slowly begins to deaden one to the cares of the outside world. The oldest brass golems are nearly always True Neutral.

**Size.** Brass golems are exactly 6 feet tall. Your size is Medium.

**Speed.** Your base walking speed is 30 feet.

**Languages.** Whatever languages you spoke in life.

**Fleshless Form.** You have no Constitution score, and automatically succeed on Constitution saving throws. For all purposes which require it, your Constitution modifier is zero. You do not need to eat or breathe. However, you still need mental sustenance, so must periodically enter a 6-hour period of dormancy to "sleep" and recuperate. During this time you also perform maintenance and small repairs.

**Metallic Resistance.** You are immune to poison and necrotic damage. However, you are vulnerable to acid and lightning damage. When you aren't wearing armour, your AC is equal to 13 + your Dexterity modifier.

**Innately Mechanical.** You cannot benefit from consuming potions or from healing spells. Instead, you spend time tinkering during a short or long rest to repair yourself. The total number of Hit Dice you have available to spend is increased by your proficiency modifier. If you have access to scrap metal, a success on a DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check will allow you to use it to repair yourself with a Hit Die without expending any from this total.

## HIGH BRASS

As a high brass golem, you have been constructed with durability in mind. Your forearms are thickened, as are your legs, and you can use both in combat to great effect by charging at foes, knocking them senseless. While you might be built for combat, you are no less graceful than any others of your kind.

**Ability Score Increase.** Your Strength score increases by 1.

**Slam Attack.** If you have a free hand you may take an attack action to strike an enemy with the full force of your mechanical fists, dealing 1d6 plus your Strength modifier in bludgeoning damage on a successful hit. You are considered proficient with your fists, and if you strike a Large or smaller enemy immediately after moving towards them in a straight line for at least 10 feet, they must succeed on a Constitution saving throw or be stunned for one round (can't take actions or reactions). The DC of the save is equal to 8 plus your proficiency bonus plus your strength modifier.

## ROSE BRASS

As a rose brass golem, you are no less durable than others of your kind, but you have been constructed with an additional rose-coloured filigree network crisscrossing your brass skin. This network stores and amplifies mechanical knowledge and prowess, allowing you to almost innately understand other metallic contraptions and constructs.

**Ability Score Increase.** Your Intelligence score increases by 1.

**Infallible Logic.** Whenever you make an Intelligence (Arcana) or Intelligence (History) check relating to the history, purpose, function, or operation of mechanisms or other complicated constructions made of metal, you are considered proficient in these skills and add double your proficiency bonus to the check instead of your normal proficiency bonus.