

Orb of Remote Action

(from "Lost Ships")

This rare and useful magical, spacefaring device consists of a metal sphere bristling with telescoping, flexible metal legs mounted on swivel joints so that each can turn freely.

The legs are control arms. Each is magically linked to an oval metal disc, which may be worn, swallowed, or otherwise affixed to any object, living or not. The manner of attachment does not affect the function of the device in any way, but each control arm can have one, and only one, specific disc linked to it when the item is created. If a disc is destroyed, its matching control arm is rendered useless.

An orb of remote action has 1d12 arms. Each can manipulate floating objects in wildspace, atmospheres or phlogiston by means of their linkage with the discs affixed to the objects. Pulling a rod out to its greatest extent (about 2 feet) moves a disc away from the control orb; pushing it in flush with the orb brings it within an actual foot of the control sphere.

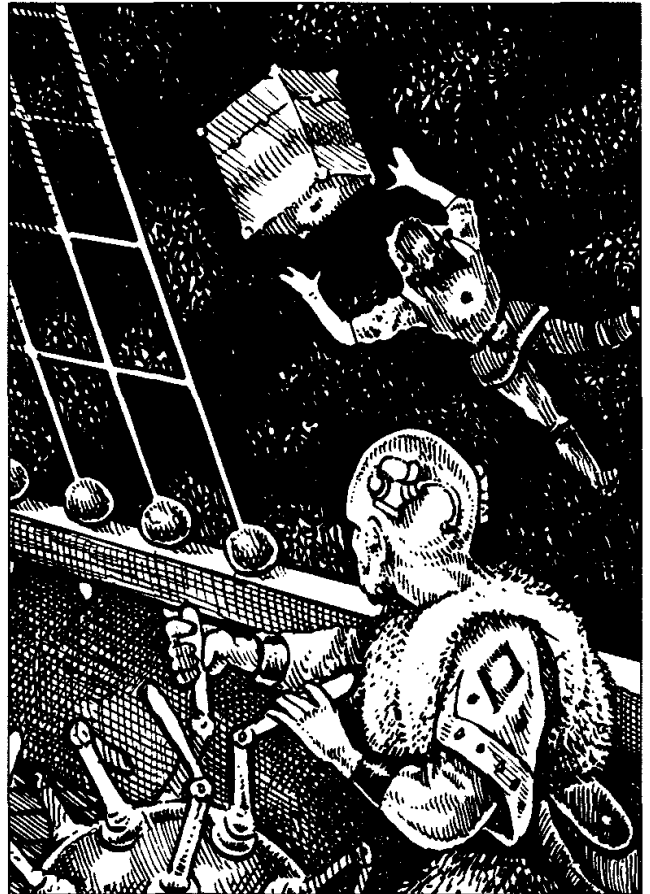
Bending a rod, or moving it in one direction or another, causes a corresponding movement of the distant disc.

Control rods can become entangled all too easily, and there is a limit to the orb's effective range. A disc that drifts or is carried beyond 2,000 feet away from an orb ceases to be controlled until it reenters the orb's range. *Dispel magic* cast on a disc causes it to drop out of the orb's control for 1d4+1 rounds.

The orb cannot push a disc in opposition to a concerted effort against it, nor can it cause dislinked objects to pass through ship bulkheads, or strike obstacles with enough force to cause damage.

The device is normally used to help free-floating crew members easily repair or manipulate sails and rigging in deep space, or to retrieve lost and drifting objects. A ship can even be painted, or contact-weapons (such as heated metal spheres) brought against flow barnacles or other monsters on or near a ship's hull.

The device is not affected by the presence of magic or spellcasting, but the discs and the objects they move are subject to all physical and magical attacks in the normal way. A disc can move any object, regardless of shape or size, up to a Movement Rate of 26", but whenever the object comes within 2 feet of any other solid object, it slows to a Movement Rate of 12" (akin to the slowing of a spelljammer). This appears to be a natural space phenomenon, and occurs despite the wishes of the orb's operator.



An orb's control links can pass through any known physical or magical barriers, except a crystal sphere. That does not mean an operator is able to know what is happening to manipulated objects (the user must be able to see the discs), nor does it mean that those objects can freely pass through such barriers.

The device can be used to create sparks or flames (by striking flint and steel, for example) at a distance in phlogiston, the only safe method known.

The control orb saves as metal, with a +4 bonus due its inherent magic. Each disc saves as metal, with a +1 bonus.

To activate it, an intelligent individual (that is, any being with an intelligence of 5 or more who can manipulate the control arms) touches the orb and releases it. The orb then levitates in the position in which it was released. If moved later, its movement affects all of the discs it controls.

An orb may operate for 1d20+5 turns, once every 100 turns (the operation range represents a mysterious variance in the power of the device). When exhausted, its control links simply fail, and the orb slowly sinks, coming to rest on any surface (if within a gravitational field).

The orbs are thought to have been fashioned by an ancient, now vanished, spacefaring race. They are few, and highly prized; not even the arcane can construct or repair them.

An orb of remote action can have a great effect on close-quarters melee combat. Take care that its use does not overbalance play, by limiting its functioning or reliability whenever a PC (or NPC) seems to be misusing its powers, or when its use renders opponents helpless under the rules.

XP Value: 3,000

GP Value: 15,000