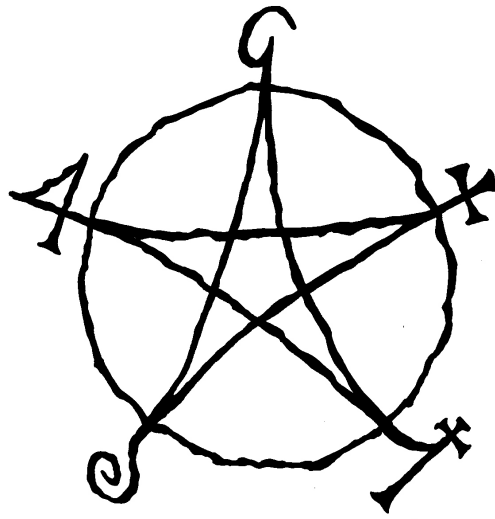


XENOGENESIS IN FANTASY SETTINGS

By DEREK HOLLAND & THE SKIRMISHER GAME DEVELOPMENT GROUP

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This article is a follow up to Spontaneous Generation in Fantasy Settings. Where spontaneous generation is life from lifeless material, xenogenesis is where one species gives rise to another. Unlike spontaneous generation, there are four types. There are will, where the creature causes its flesh to mold or spawn another creature, alchemy, where the process requires chemicals, and natural laws, where the laws of the universe cause the creation of new life from old and blood auras where one creature causes another to give birth to a third.

Xenogenesis is more limited than spontaneous generation because it requires existing life. But, as most settings have abundant life, this is a minor concern. It can, with time, make significant changes to a setting. And time is vital as this process does not, usually, make adult creatures.

Will is the rarest of the types of xenogenesis. It requires a powerful mind and magic running through the parent(s)' blood. Dragons are known to spawn minions or even pests from their flesh and blood. Treants can create butterflies to spy for them and plant creatures to defend their woodland homes.

Alchemy should not be surprising as spellcasters have been spending centuries, if not longer, looking for ways to alter and improve creatures. In some of the author's settings, ogres were the result of an alchemist trying to make more powerful humans and hydras were an accident by a wizard working with giant constrictors. The reader of course can use alternate origins.

Natural laws may or may not be common within a setting. In any case it is considered a natural event as it relies on the laws of magic. It can be as simple as habitat or as complex as a 1000 year event interrupted by a magic battle. In the campaigns mentioned above, trolls are a byproduct of the creation of ogres. Ogres that settle in fetted swamps give birth to trolls and trolls that give birth outside of swamps produce ogres or, in the case of trolls forced into deep water, aquatic trolls. Aquatic trolls are an end point and can only breed more aquatic trolls. Expose hydras to elemental forces and they may give birth to flame or frost salamanders or other reptilian elemental monsters.

The blood aura is where one creature causes another to give birth to another species. The technical term is cyclomorphosis for those who want to look up real world versions of this (though that includes other forms of epigenesis such as environmental cues). In fantasy settings blood auras can have a large impact on how races and monsters interact. If orcs can cause humans to give birth to half orcs by just being in the area, humans will wage war much more fiercely and will attempt to exterminate all they can. The range of a blood aura is from touch to several miles. In some settings, dragons cause warping of many different creatures near their lairs by blood auras.

In no case will xenogenesis cause one species to shapeshift into another. There are parents and spawn. Spawn are not offspring (those of the parents' species) and come in two types- those that can reproduce and those that are sterile.

When designing your own creatures that rise from xenogenesis, here are a few questions to consider:

∞ In the case for alchemy and will based xenogenesis, how expensive is it (if at all for will) and how long does it take?

∞ For alchemy based xenogenesis, can it only be used on placental creatures, only on eggs (or buds) or both?

∞ Does one treatment affect all subsequent spawn or just the next to be conceived or born? Can it be used on plants? Is there any other limitations in the types or spe-



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cies of creatures it can affect?

∞ With natural laws, what event or substance induces the changes to the unborn? Does changes in either cause different spawn or have no effect at all?

∞ With blood auras, what is the range? Does a save negate the effect? Is the blood aura natural or was it induced?

∞ Does the process produce fertile or sterile spawn?

∞ Does the process require a birth or hatching or is it from the flesh of the parent? Does it kill the parent?

∞ Can the process be reversed like the ogres and trolls example mentioned above?

∞ What impact will the offspring or spawn have on the parents and their society?

Here are a few examples in Labyrinth Lord stat blocks. They are meant to be used as is as well as springboards for your own ideas. They should not be difficult to convert to other retroclones as well as the games that spawned them. First is Will, then Alchemy, then Natural Laws, and finally Blood Auras. In the cases where both the parent and the offspring or spawn are described, they are listed by the parent and one description for both stat blocks.

WILL

Mind Spirit

No. Enc.	d4 (d4)
Alignment	variable
Movement	Fly 360' (120')
AC	0
HD	4
Attacks	Special
Damage	Special
Save	F4
Morale	12
Hoard Class	none



Humans that live in the ethereal plane have discovered that they can cause their children to be born different, though it takes a lot of stress to induce them to do so. Mind spirits are one kind of incorporeal entities resulting from these births. They have no capacity to make contact with anything, even each other. And it is that reason, that they can not be slain easily, that makes the decision easier for humans facing extinction. They can, however, take control of a living creature. Anything they touch must make a save versus spells or be controlled by the spirit. Treat this as a charm person spell to determine duration. Mind spirits can only communicate when in a host. If the host is slain with magic, the spirit dies as well. Their personalities are as different as standard humans and some are powerful allies of Good or Evil. Most want to live out their lives on their home plane but a few travel elsewhere and may assist or hinder the PCs.

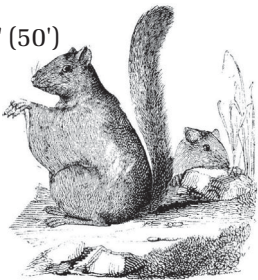
They do breed by budding but it takes 20 years before the bud matures and the lifespan of a mind spirit is 500 years. They aren't going to be flooding any plane any time soon.

Ursid

No. Enc.	1 (d4)
Alignment	variable (Chaotic to humans)
Movement	120' (40')
AC	6
HD	5
Attacks	3 (claws and bite)
Damage	d3/d3/d6
Save	F5
Morale	8
Hoard Class	VII

Skurdid

No. Enc.	d4 (4d4)
Alignment	Neutral
Movement	180' (60') Climb 150' (50')
AC	7
HD	1/2
Attacks	1 (bite)
Damage	d3
Save	F1
Morale	5
Hoard Class	None

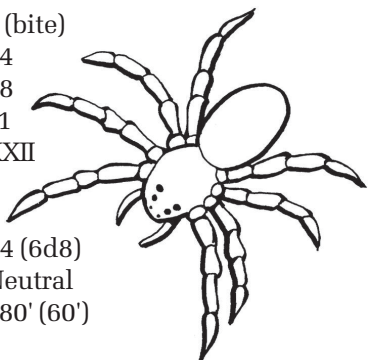


Ursids are intelligent bears who, a long time ago, came into conflict with humans. The result is most ursids treat humans as dangerous savages and attack or avoid them. A majority of the population has learned magic. Using LL, they would be magic users of level 4 to 8. Using the AEC, they would be druids of levels 4 to 8. All ursids can create skurdids from their flesh. They are bear/squirrel creatures about 3 pounds and can move through the trees like the wind. Skurdids exist to provide their parents with information. They spy the forest and come back to their ursid when they see something of interest. Because of their network of skurdids, which can be in the dozens, ursids can be very difficult to find or hide from.

Ursid society is complex with the leading males and females taking the best foraging grounds and producing the most young. As they grow old, they step aside for the next generations. Leadership is based on ability, not bloodlines but leaders try to insure their children are trained well enough to be in the pool of contestants to replace them. The contests are usually magic battles that very rarely lead to death. Ursid lands are ancient forests where even elves fear to tread. They will ally with green dragons and treants, depending on the personality of the local leading ursid.

Verjar

No. Enc.	0 (2d8)
Alignment	Neutral
Movement	120' (40')
AC	7
HD	8
Attacks	1 (bite)
Damage	d4
Save	F8
Morale	11
Hoard Class	XXII



Glacine

No. Enc.	d4 (6d8)
Alignment	Neutral
Movement	180' (60')
AC	5
HD	1
Attacks	1 (bite)
Damage	d3
Save	F1
Morale	10
Hoard Class	Special

Verjars are massive living glass creatures that look similar to spiders filled with laboratory equipment. At 10' tall and 15' long, they tower over most creatures. They are alchemists without equal and perform most of the work internally. Verjar are desired by most cities as they sell potions and other magical liquids, powders and other substances to almost anyone. They do not hoard their money, but rather use it to enhance the luxury of their homes and labs. They enjoy paintings and sculptures of almost random elements. Verjar live in small communities and work together on large projects but for the most part are solitary in their alchemy research.

They are wealthy because they barely pay anything for their reagents. Verjars can break small parts of themselves off and create glacines- walking sample vials that resemble glass spiders. The glacines are sent out to collect the needed material. They are intelligent enough to steal from just about anyone but only do so if there is no other source. Glacines are intelligent but considered pets, at best, by their parents. If a verjar dies, its glacines search for another to serve. At home they are filled with chemicals and used for defense.

In combat, both verjar and glacines can be very dangerous. Their bite can hold all kinds of toxins or potions, many of which are unique to that verjar community.

Vine Beast

No. Enc.	d6 (d6)
Alignment	Neutral
Movement	Climb 180' (60')
AC	5

HD	4
Attacks	1 (vine)
Damage	d6 plus constriction
Save	F3
Morale	12
Hoard Class	None

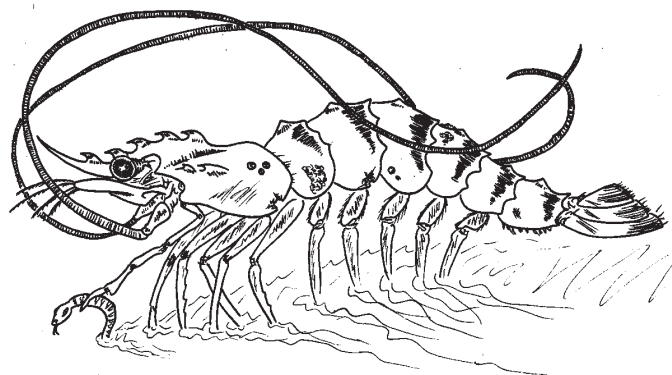
Though treants are capable of violence, some wish they could do without. They have created a few creatures from their own wood to fight the good fight. Vine beasts are one of the most common. They are branches that become flexible over a few weeks (4-6) and then are ripped off and allowed to travel off on their own. Vine beasts will hide in trees and attack those attempting to cut down their host or are obviously evil, like orcs. They strike from above and attempt to wrap themselves around their target and crush the life out of it. Anything hit on a 15 or better will be constricted for 2d4 points of damage per round until the vine or victim dies. The vine then attempts to climb back into the tree and attack from above again. If it is forced to attack from the ground, it can only constrict if it gets a 20 on its attack roll.

Alchemy

Big'un

No. Enc.	d4 (0)
Alignment	Neutral
Movement	Swim 60' (20')
AC	3
HD	3
Attacks	1 (bite)
Damage	d4+2
Save	F2
Morale	5
Hoard Class	None

Alchemical pollution is a serious problem in some parts of the world. When it pollutes freshwater, it can have an extreme impact on the wildlife in it and drinking from it. Big'uns are 4' long freshwater shrimp created to survive in these conditions. They are very strong animals and



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are know to break nets and drag anglers into the water, a side effect that alchemists are still working on. Big'un reproduction is significant and they can survive and breed outside the influence of the polluting alchemical byproducts. As such they are slowly changing the water ways around cities and expanding their territory.

Kal Hound

No. Enc.	d4 (d4)
Alignment	Chaotic
Movement	150' (50')
	All fours 210' (70')
AC	5
HD	3
Attacks	1 (bite)
Damage	2d4
Save	F3
Morale	10
Hoard Class	None

A very long time ago wizards found that orcs are not that easy to alter with magic and alchemy. Time and again there was failures to make them more powerful or to weaken and then wipe them off the planet. Half orcs are another matter. The infusion of human genetic material (or its equivalence) opened up whole avenues of research in monster creation. Kal hounds are once of very many that were designed to find and destroy elves. They are produced by the mating of two half orcs and the mother dies in childbirth. The hound, so named because of its amazing ability to smell, is a biped that can run on all fours. It can smell elves, their technology and creations (i.e. the creatures elves make) from a mile away. Its bite is slightly venomous to elves and its bite does 3d4 points of damage to them. And it will only stop attacking when ordered to do so, usually assisted by a whip.

Fortunately kal hounds are sterile and expensive to feed. They were initially created by orcish shaman looking for the uses of half orcs but now dark lords and wizards are the main source of kal hounds.

Swill Orc

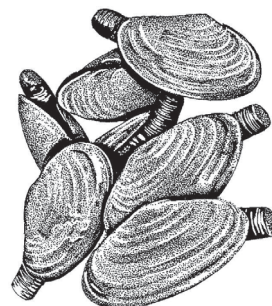
No. Enc.	d8 (3d10)
Alignment	Chaotic
Movement	120' (40')
AC	6
HD	2
Attacks	1 (weapon)
Damage	By weapon +1
Save	F2
Morale	11
Hoard Class	VII

Another creation of tinkering with half orcs and alchemy, swill orcs are slime covered humanoids. Oddly the

slime has the odor of rotting stew, thus the name. They are sterile, stupid and make good shock troops. The slime is toxic and they cover their weapons in it. Anyone struck and failing a save versus poison takes an additional 2d6 points of damage. Swill orcs are easy to produce as a female half orc gives birth to 4-8 of them at a time. She needs an antitoxin as not be poisoned by her spawn. The only reason there are not more of them is their amazing stupidity. They will walk off a cliff if there is something attracting them to do so. This annoys their creators, usually orc shamans looking to increase their tribe's power in a short amount of time.

Tumble Mussel

No. Enc.	Swarm
Alignment	Neutral
Movement	3' (1')
AC	3
HD	1/4
Attacks	Special
Damage	Special
Save	0 level
Morale	12
Hoard Class	None

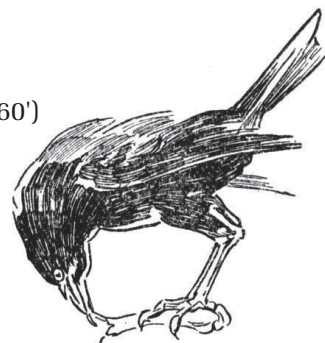


A wizard created these animals from date mussels to destroy stone structures over time. They can survive out of water and burrow into the hardest stone and even soft metals. A typical colony of hundreds of thousands can turn a castle's walls into Swiss cheese in a matter of months. As the mussels are very small when introduced to the stone, the initial bore holes are not visible except to careful examination. The only way to destroy a tumble clam infestation is with spells like cloudkill or toxic gasses alchemists can brew.

NATURAL LAWS

Ash Picker

No. Enc.	d12 (6d4)
Alignment	Neutral
Movement	Fly 180' (60')
AC	4
HD	1/2
Attacks	1 (peck)
Damage	d3
Save	0 level
Morale	4
Hoard Class	VI



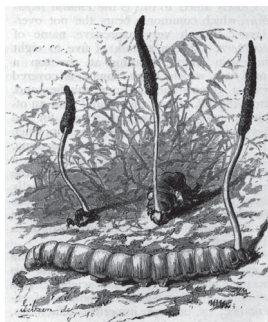
The smoke from forest fires usually suffocates fliers and kills those in trees if the fire doesn't. There is a certain species of crow that absorbs the smoke and produces very odd, and powerful, offspring. Ash pickers are grey and visibly larger than their parents. They consume

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charred corpses, including the bones. If they cannot find suitable food, they make it. Anything hit by a ash picker must save versus spells or take 3d6 points of fire damage. Ash pickers breed true but are usually slain by those who do not want to see another fire any time soon. Green dragons are their most significant predators.

Blister Rot

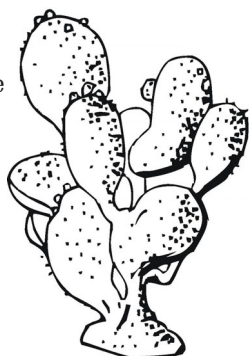
No. Enc.	1 (0)
Alignment	Neutral
Movement	0'
AC	9
HD	1/4
Attacks	Special
Damage	Special
Save	as host
Morale	12
Hoard Class	None



Fungal spores are found everywhere so it isn't suprising that magic, alchemy and other sources of change cause mutation on a regular basis. In the case of blister rot, it takes spores of fungi found very deep underground exposed to sunlight or a light based spell of level 6 or better to germinate. There is a 10% chance that any underground location that gets no sunlight will have blister rot spores. Obviously this can change if there are any nearby sources such as moldering corpses that have died of the rot. After it germinates, the fungus consumes organic material the spores came in contact with. This process builds so the first day a host takes 1 point of damage, the second day 2 points, the third 4 points and so on. It is easily spread by touch and some underground people use it as a weapon. A save versus poison negates contracting blister rot from any source. Cure disease spells, fire, alcohol and boiling water are some of the methods that will kill blister rot.

Flamethorn

No. Enc.	d10 (0)
Alignment	Neutral
Movement	60' (20')
AC	7
HD	2
Attacks	1 (cloud of spines)
Damage	d6 + d6 fire
Save	F1
Morale	12
Hoard Class	V

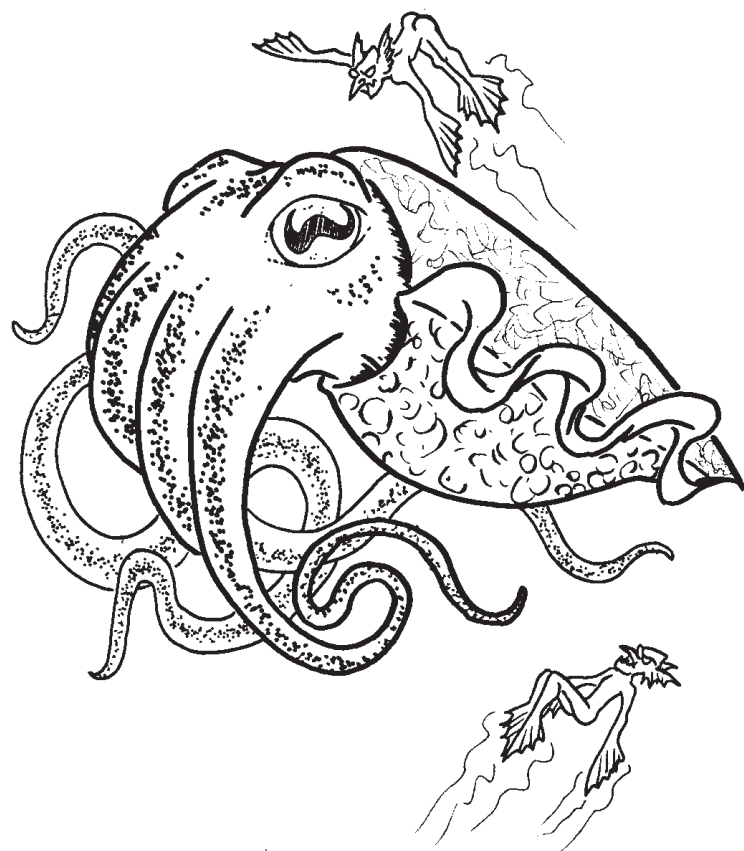


Every 20 to 50 years a magical lightning storm passes over the Sculpted Desert and every cactus struck by lightning has its seeds ener-

gized. Those that germinate produce a flamethorn. They look like their parents but have glowing spines and can slowly move about on their roots. Flamethorns are dangerous to anything that approaches them as they instinctively release a cloud of spines in defense. Anything within 20' of the plant takes damage, save versus breath weapons for half on the fire damage only. Flamethorns wander the desert searching for water. If they live long enough, they will drain rivers dry waiting for the next storm to empower their own offspring.

River Whip

No. Enc.	1 (d4)
Alignment	Neutral
Movement	Swim 90' (30')
AC	6
HD	8
Attacks	4 (tentacles)
Damage	d4/d4/d4/d4
Save	F4
Morale	7
Hoard Class	VII, VIII (all in lair)



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Quablin

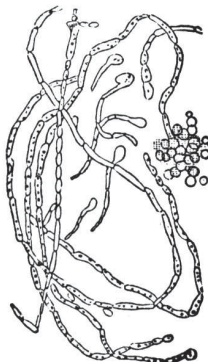
No. Enc.	3d6 (d4)
Alignment	Neutral
Movement	60' (20') Swim 90' (30')
AC	7
HD	1-1
Attacks	1 (weapon)
Damage	by wepon
Save	T1
Morale	9
Hoard Class	VI



River whips are 16' long freshwater cuttlefish. They can change color and have four tentacles used to capture prey. Most of the time they prey on fish and the occasional swimmer and animal that comes to drink at the water's edge. In times of starvation, they create sterile spawn- quablins. They lay eggs that hatch into 4 quablins each. These amphibious humanoids looks a little like goblins but have fins on their head, arms and legs. They exist only to feed their parents. Anything remotely animal in nature is killed and dragged back to the water. The first signs of a quablin invasion is the disappearance of fish stocks and then wild game, livestock, pets and children. After all the easy prey has been taken, then the quablins act in groups to take adult human(oids) and dangerous predators and wild game like boars and bison. Quablins are very effective hunters and use traps, ambushes and strategy that would make a general proud. After everything edible within a few miles of shore is gone, the quablins are eaten by their parents and the whips travel to another part of the river or lake looking for food.

Second Skin

No. Enc.	1 (0)
Alignment	Neutral
Movement	0'
AC	7
HD	1/2
Attacks	None
Damage	None
Save	as host
Morale	12
Hoard Class	None



As with blister rot, this creature is created when magic interacts with the fungi found on other living things. In this case, healing magic causes the fungi to form something beneficial. The second skin is noticeable as it gives the host yellow and grey markings. It provides a -2 to armor class and increases healing by 3 points per day. To create a second skin, it takes 10 cure spells in 10 rounds and it lasts for 1 week per 6 points of constitution

of the host. Second skin spores are not very common and the process is normally used on champions of the caster's church. Very occasionally will this occur otherwise.

Soil Croc

No. Enc.	1 (d6)
Alignment	Neutral
Movement	Burrow 60' (20')
AC	2
HD	3
Attacks	1 (bite)
Damage	2d4
Save	F2
Morale	5
Hoard Class	XX

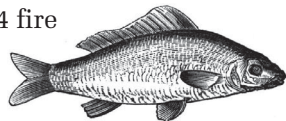
An alchemist in attempting to make a new guard animal made a huge mistake. Some of her creations escaped and bred with the wild form of crocodile. Now the capacity to produce soil crocs is found over a large area. If the eggs of the altered creatures are suffocated then a soil croc will hatch. It has a smooth hide, reduced eyes and large feet for digging. And it is immune to suffocation and gas attacks. If dragged onto the surface, a soil croc is blinded by sunlight and takes a -4 to hit.

Soil crocs live their entire lives underground and prey on things that burrow and walk. They gain automatic suprise if attacking someone or thing on the surface from a burrow as they do not make any sort of hole before attacking. They will grab on an 18+ and drag the victim down into the burrow to make the kill somewhere in the tunnel. The body is then dragged to a chamber where it rots for a couple days before being eaten. After moving the body, the croc will return to the hole it made and, if possible, fill it.



Slack

No. Enc.	d4 (0)
Alignment	Neutral
Movement	Swim 360' (120')
AC	6
HD	3
Attacks	1 (slam)
Damage	d4 + 3d4 fire
Save	F2
Morale	12
Hoard Class	None

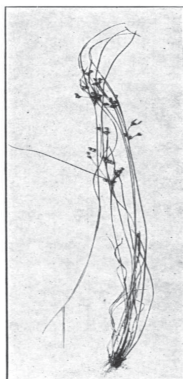


Mud Lake is a huge body of water that has several elemental portals in its depths. Most are to water, but earth and fire are also represented. When a game fish (defaulting to walleye) lays its eggs near a portal of fire, the eggs hatch into slacks. These 100 pound fish are an an-

gler's nightmare. They grow very fast, consume smaller game fish in large numbers and burn in the presence of air. As soon as they are hooked, they turn and follow the line right to the rod and rod holder. The fish flies out of the water and slams into the person at the other end of the line. When it is exposed to air, the fish ignites and burns for 3d6 rounds before being consumed entirely. Anyone or thing in contact with a burning slack takes 3d4 points of fire damage per round.

Sting Rush

No. Enc.	0 (d4 patches)
Alignment	Neutral
Movement	0'
AC	6
HD	3
Attacks	contact
Damage	d12
Save	F2
Morale	12
Hoard Class	V



When a sea dragon dies within a marsh, its blood can affect the plants, such as sedges and grasses, around it. Some mutate into plant monsters (using existing stats like the orc, hydra, bugbear, troll or whatever else the GM desires) and some pass the changes to their seedlings. Sting rush is one of the latter. It feeds on blood as well as light and soil and anything brushing against it takes d12 points of damage per round. It is easy to think about avoiding them, but sting weed looks like the parent and grows along side it. Normal rush, grass and sedges can all become sting weed.

BLOOD AURAS

Creeper

No. Enc.	1 (0)
Alignment	Neutral
Movement	180' (60') Climb 150' (50')
AC	6
HD	3
Attacks	1 (weapon)
Damage	By weapon
Save	T3
Morale	5
Hoard Class	None

Not Right

No. Enc.	2d8 (d4)
Alignment	Chaotic
Movement	120' (40')
AC	Armor
HD	4

Attacks	1 (weapon)
Damage	By weapon
Save	M4
Morale	8
Hoard Class	VII

Creepers are quick, lithe humanoids with oversized hands and feet. They survive in the shadows of cities and towns by eating vermin, small pets, and stolen food. Individual creepers are very territorial and most cities have a score at most. They would be considered pests if not for their blood auras. Where people do know of their effects on humans, creepers are hunted ruthlessly. A human born within 10 yards of a creeper grows up into a not right. They have small eyes, flat noses and a minor ability to cast spells. Not rights have only destructive magic and use it for petty revenge or thrills. Most cast as 4th level magic users but a few have enough patience to learn more. Most families either slay or lock away their not rights. The only known time a not right was allowed into society was when his father, a powerful wizard, used an enchantment to keep the not right docile. Creepers do not even know they have the blood aura and its origins are unknown even to sages.

Great Scarab

No. Enc.	Swarm
Alignment	Neutral
Movement	60' (20') Fly 90' (30')
AC	6
HD	4
Attacks	contact
Damage	d2
Save	F0
Morale	3
Hoard Class	None



Dirt Gorgier

No. Enc.	3d20 (0)
Alignment	Neutral
Movement	150' (50')
AC	4
HD	6
Attacks	1 (gore)
Damage	3d4
Save	F3
Morale	8
Hoard Class	None

This sad pair of creatures are the result of a druid attempting to cut corners and beat the system. He was at war with a group of giant grasshoppers in a large plain. Instead of altering the cattle found there directly, he thought he could control the situation by changing some

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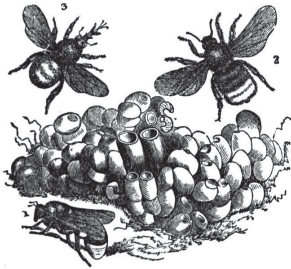
insects that would do the job for him. After the war was won, the insects would be exterminated and then the cattle would revert to normal over a few generations. Sadly the druid died in the war and no one else had the raw power and knowledge needed to drive the scarabs into extinction.

Great scarabs are 9" long dung eaters that swarm only in the spring after they eclose (hatch) and in the fall when they breed. Any cattle or related animal that is born within 10 miles of a swarm becomes a dirt gorger.

Dirt gorgers have wide mouths and barrel shaped bodies. They consume soil, where grasshopper eggs lie, in great quantities. Their waste is toxic to insects for a few hours and this have made huge changes in the ecology of the plain. Flies and disease carriers are rare but so are flowering plants as their pollinators died off. Grasshoppers and other grass eaters are all but gone and this has allowed the plants to grow almost unchecked. Cattle, normal and gorger, just cannot eat enough to keep up with the growth. Wildfires are more intense and herds lose 10% or more of their numbers to the flames every year. The scarabs do have a "built in" fail safe but that 5th level spell vanished with the druid's death. Only by research and experimentation will anyone be able to return the plain to something more natural.

Hive Lord

No. Enc.	1 (1)
Alignment	Neutral
Movement	30' (10')
	Fly 180' (60')
AC	3
HD	6
Attacks	1 (bite)
Damage	d6
Save	F3
Morale	10
Hoard Class	None



War Bee

No. Enc.	3d6 (3d6)
Alignment	Neutral
Movement	30' (10')
	Fly 240' (80')
AC	5
HD	3
Attacks	1 or 1 (grab or bite)
Damage	Special or d6 + poison
Save	T5
Morale	12
Hoard Class	None

Another druid had a similar idea to the one that created the great scarab but went about it in a much more intelligent manner. Hive lords are male giant bees meant to

bolster the druids forces by infiltrating the colonies of giant bees and converting half the workers into war bees. The lord and war bees obey the druid and everyone in his circle. Hive lords assist in the defense of the colony they inhabit by using their oversized mandibles. War bees sting, which does not kill them, but more often try to grab a target, lift it to 50 to 100 feet and then drop it. In any case war bees only live for 15 days and hive lords are moved between colonies as not to deplete the workers to the point of colony extinction. The druids encourage the bees to increase their numbers as to not only provide more forces but also to produce honey they can use to bribe political leaders in nearby communities.

Spider Goblin

No. Enc.	d10 (10d6)
Alignment	Chaotic
Movement	90' (30')
	Climb 150' (50')
AC	Armor
HD	1
Attacks	1 (weapon)
Damage	By weapon -1
Save	F1
Morale	10
Hoard Class	IV



Goblin Thing

No. Enc.	1 (0)
Alignment	Chaotic
Movement	60' (20')
AC	4
HD	12
Attacks	5 (tentacles)
Damage	d8/d8/d8/d8/d8
Save	F8
Morale	12
Hoard Class	None

Spider goblins were created specifically to destroy dwarves. They are not as prolific as their normal kin but there are enough of them to finish the job. It isn't combat where the goblins are meant to kill dwarves, it is their blood aura. Any male dwarf that comes within 10' of a spider goblin must save versus poison. A failure means any child that dwarf fathers from then on will transform into a goblin thing on his or her 5th birthday. A goblin thing is a mass of flesh 8' tall with a diameter of 12', has several goblin faces adorning it and uses five 10' long tentacles to rend dwarven flesh. In fact a goblin thing will only attack dwarves. If confronted by another race, it flees or ignores them, probably to its doom. The wizard that created spider goblins died a few years ago and now his creations are making a major impact upon the power balance in the deeps.



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