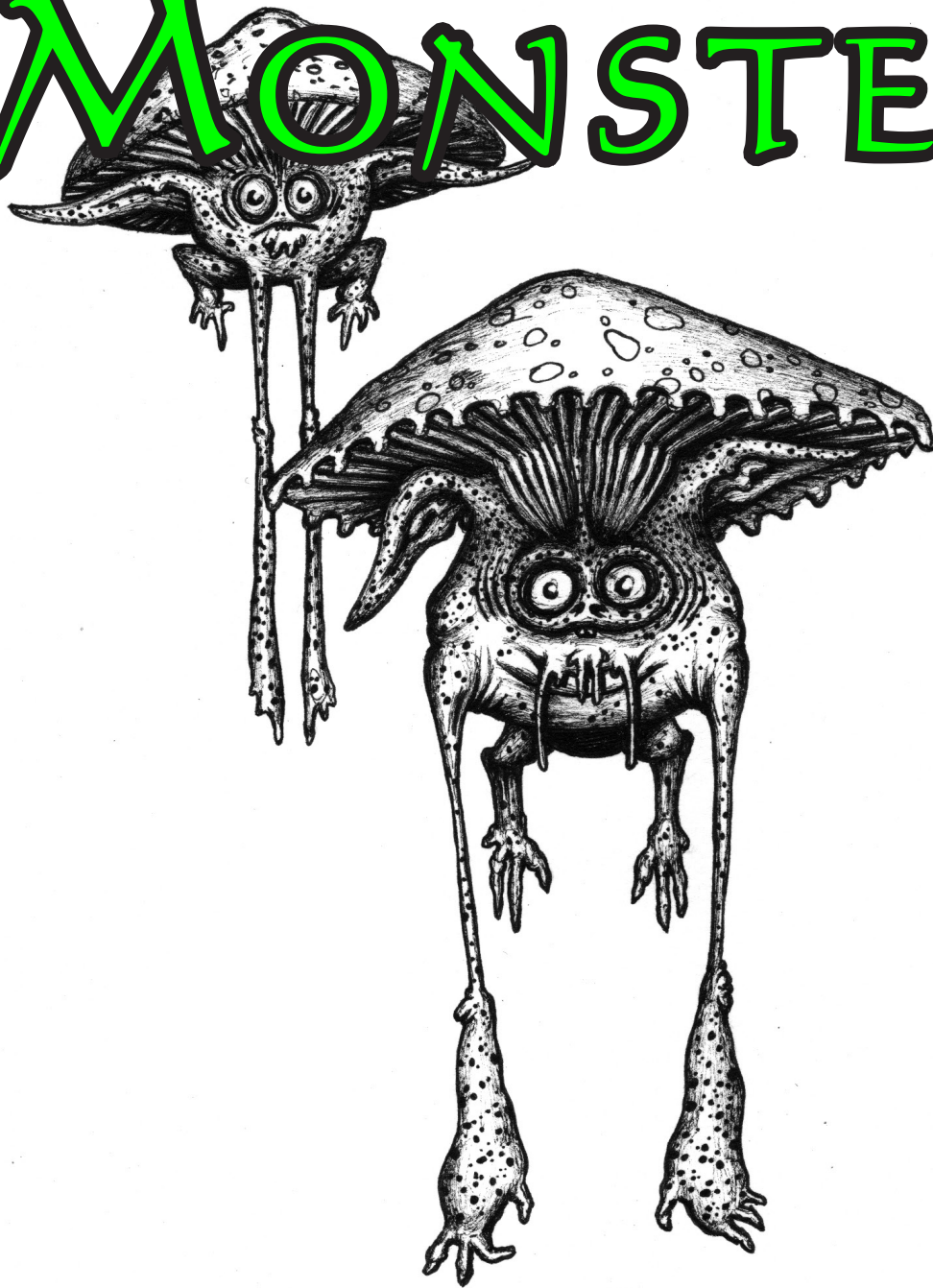


SPONTANEOUS GENERATION MONSTERS



By DEREK HOLLAND & THE SKIRMISHER GAME DEVELOPMENT GROUP,
WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY ANDY HOPP

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Spontaneous generation, the idea that life can arise from non-living matter, is one of several obsolete biological concepts that can be used in fantasy games to provide a Game Master more options in monster and setting design. This concept can include living creatures that, by modern definition, are not biological, such as those made of glass or metal.

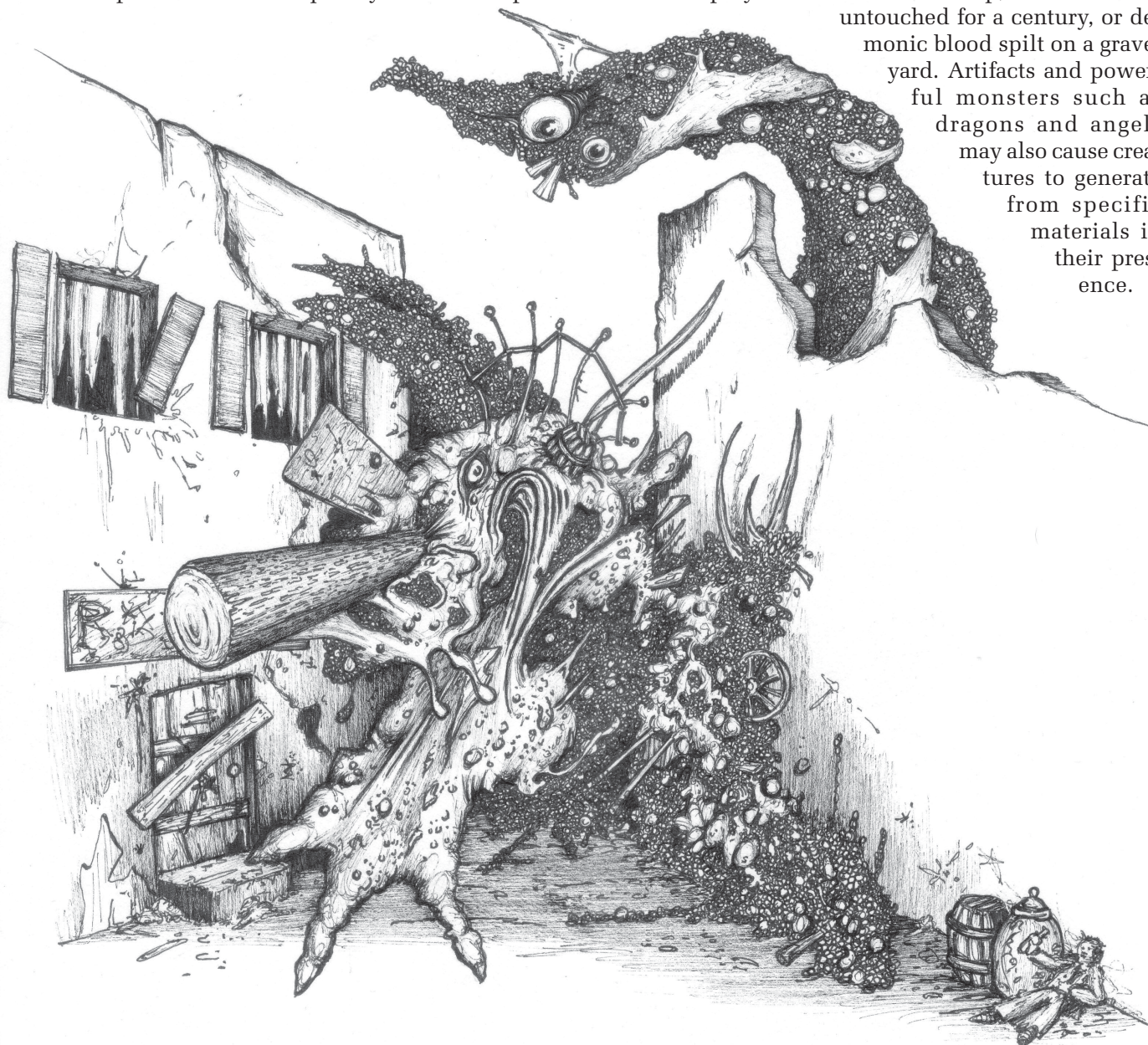
In general, spontaneous generation allows the GM to have creatures appear just about anywhere without the need for an ecology. That is not to say that a GM should place generated monsters willy-nilly all over the map, or else the players may legitimately question the existence of these hordes of monsters. Spontaneous generation, so does not produce creatures quickly for the most part.

Furthermore, the existence of a number of monsters may inhibit the generation of others of their kind.

There are at least three forms of spontaneous generation.

Happenstance due to magical laws is the first and the most similar to the historical definition of spontaneous generation. Creatures form from non-living matter under very specific circumstances. Of the examples that appear in this article, the Blizzard Troll, a monster that appears only in snow storms and dies when the storm passes, is the best example. Other circumstances that might create creatures are moonlight penetrating the canopy of an ancient forest and reaching a fairy ring, saltwater sprayed onto a mountain top, mold and dust

untouched for a century, or demonic blood spilt on a graveyard. Artifacts and powerful monsters such as dragons and angels may also cause creatures to generate from specific materials in their presence.



Basic System: Spontaneous Generation Monsters

Alchemy is the use of natural laws to create creatures through spontaneous generation by mortals. Ant queens, an example below, are golem-like monsters created specifically to spontaneously generate yet more monsters, in this case giant ants. Note that in this case, the ant queen is a construct and the giant ants are creatures. The difference between them are the needs for food, water, and sleep.

The GM may or may not require the use of direct spellcraft in alchemy and thus common people may also be able to spontaneously generate creatures. A farmer who can generate something stronger than a horse or cow to pull his plow and lift water out of the well has a significant advantage over those who must use natural livestock or none at all. People who fish might ask the local wizard to create their stocks via alchemy and a stone or metal bar dropped into the water might produce thousands of fish from the water and mud or sand. But this process is very expensive and takes a lot of time no matter who does it. For the wizard making the fish stocks, it might cost a village much more than they own. Only after the catch has been sold do they make their money and pay back the wizard. And if the catch was poor because of the fishing effort, the fishermen might be working for the wizard for a very long time thereafter.

Wizards may grow creatures in their labs to replicate rare material components. This just increases the costs for alchemy or spellcasting but means the wizard does not have to collect or buy the material components.

Those who create creatures, both the educated and the common people, are playing with fire. Failure usually results in a lump of mud or junk but can occasionally result in a monster. And, although this is very rare, some creatures are byproducts of alchemical experiments. The chimney bat, a creature made from the soot and gasses from ovens used in alchemy, is an example of this.

Divine intervention is the third sort of spontaneous generation. Such creatures are created when circumstances fit the requirements dictated by a god. The god does not create such creatures directly, but rather alters the natural laws to allow the formation of creatures useful to the god or its worshippers. Watchlings, another example found below, are found only in cities that worship a specific god. Curses in the form of creatures are also sadly common, and bucket scum, stalks, scraplings, and stone trolls are the result of angered gods and demons.

In all cases, spontaneous generation is going to have an impact on a setting. If blizzard trolls exist, then either communities will not be built where they exist or troll-resistant buildings will be the standard. If anyone can make a labor beast, then everyone benefits — the farmer has a higher yield, the children have more to eat, the lord has more people to fill his armies and the necromancer has more bodies to experiment with. If orcs spontaneously appear from dungeons, then adventuring is going to be considered a more vital occupation and peo-

ple will be sent to clean out the local mines and dungeons on a regular basis. Unless extremely rare, any spontaneous monster is going to require serious forethought from the GM.

When designing new spontaneously-generated creatures, here are some questions the GM should ask himself:

∞ Does the creature die when the circumstances for its creation end?

∞ Does the creature revert to the material that it came from when it does die or retain its new composition?

∞ Is the creature flesh and blood? If not, what material is it made from?

∞ How much mass is needed to create one of the creatures?

∞ Can spontaneous generation create intelligent creatures?

∞ For alchemy-based creatures, what is the method and expense of creation?

∞ What is the lifespan of the resulting creatures?

∞ Can the generated creatures reproduce?

∞ Will a failure result in uncontrolled monsters?

∞ Is this the province of wizards or can anyone do it with the right knowledge?

∞ For divine creations, who sets up the laws for the creatures to spontaneously generate?

∞ Can all the gods or is it limited to a specific set?

∞ Can the creation process be affected by mortals and, if so, what is the result?

∞ Can the creation process be affected by other gods and, if so, what is the result?

∞ Is the involvement of the god's worshippers required for the process?

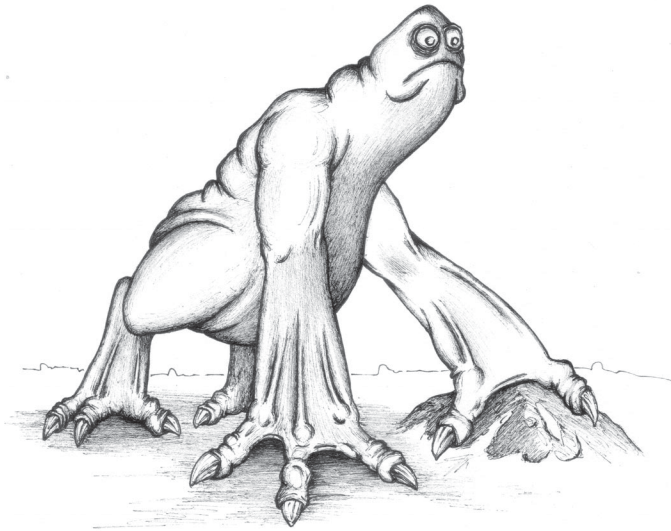
Following are some examples, organized by type of spontaneous generation, in "Basic system" stat blocks compatible with *Labyrinth Lord*, *Mutant Future*, and other retroclone games inspired by the original role-playing games of the 1970s. They can also be easily converted to other systems, especially OGL-based ones. They can thus either be used as-is or as springboards for your own creations.

HAPPENSTANCE

Blizzard Troll

Number Encountered:	3d4
Alignment:	Chaotic
Movement:	150' (50') Fly 360' (120')
AC:	4
HD:	6+6
Attacks:	3 (claws and bite)
Damage:	d6+3/d6+3/3d4 + d6 cold
Save:	F5
Morale:	12
Hoard Class:	none

Basic System: Spontaneous Generation Monsters



When the worst snow storms hit, blizzard trolls form from the snow itself. They even have the ability to turn back into snow and use that form to fly. They are very limited in where they can go, though, and they cannot leave the storm or they will die. This means they cannot enter closed buildings. To get around this, the trolls simply knock down walls and allow the storm to enter so they can get to the people inside. Blizzard trolls only have one thing in mind — eating. They will consume wildlife, livestock, and people. Places where blizzards are common are empty of wild game and people have sturdy barns or no livestock at all.

When the storm ends, the trolls die and the flesh they consumed vanishes. Anyone eaten can not be raised from the dead unless the troll was slain before the storm ended and the remains cut out of it. Unlike true trolls, these creatures do not regenerate.

Bloody Blade

Number Encountered:	1
Alignment:	Chaotic
Movement:	Fly 30' (10')
AC:	4
HD:	1
Attacks:	1 (self)
Damage:	variable
Save:	F1
Morale:	12
Hoard Class:	none

When a weapon tastes too much blood, it may animate as a bloodling. It gains the ability to fly and a homicidal personality that drives it to kill all the members of the race of its former wielder. It is not stupid and may be able to hide its activities from its wielder for some time. It may also attempt to pin its murders on him or her. Bloodlings in flight act like they are being wielded by an invisible person and this may lead witnesses to believe

that there is an invisible person committing the murders. Although they fly slowly, bloodlings are difficult to hit, thus their low armor class. They are no stronger than before the transformation and may be fairly easy to break.

Storytellers who know of bloodlings believe them to be a form of undead, a divine curse, or the result of an unknown spell. None of the suppositions are correct and only a rare few wizards and sages know the truth: that they are a result of the flow of magic through the veins of all creatures. Some GMs may want to consider them undead for the purposes of turning. In this case, they would be turned as infernals due to all the life forces of all the creatures that went into their creation.

Bridge Troll

Bridge Troll, Lesser

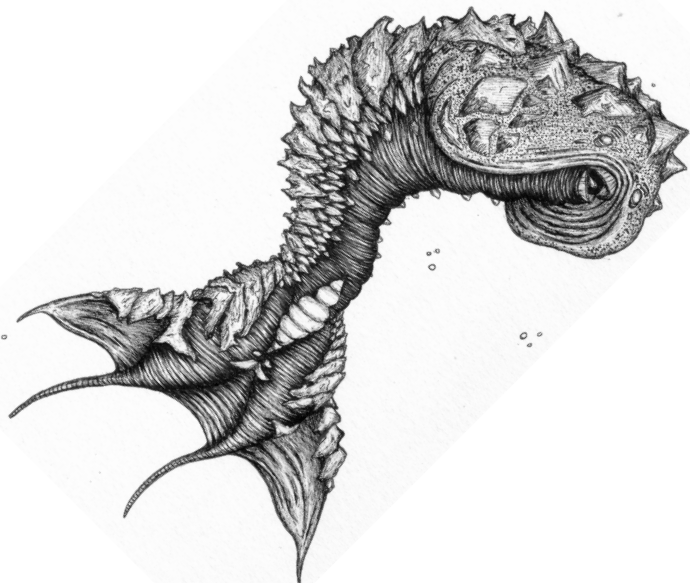
Number Encountered:	3d12
Alignment:	Chaotic
Movement:	30' (10')
AC:	8
HD:	1/2
Attacks:	1 (bite)
Damage:	d4
Save:	L0
Morale:	12
Hoard Class:	none

Bridge Troll, Greater

Number Encountered:	d4
Alignment:	Chaotic
Movement:	120' (40')
AC:	5
HD:	7
Attacks:	3 (claws and bite)
Damage:	d6+2/d6+2/2d8
Save:	L6
Morale:	10
Hoard Class:	VIII

Where bridges are built, trolls soon follow. They come right out of the frames of the bridges and cause headaches or terror. Lesser bridge trolls are 18" tall. They startle mounts, bite shins, and break objects they get their little hands on. Greater bridge trolls are 12' tall. They lair under bridges and keep objects they find interesting from their meals. Neither regenerate like true trolls and it does not matter much, as when a bridge troll dies, it is soon replaced. The question is which version. Only one kind is generated at a time. When lessers exist on a specific bridge, there will be no greater bridge trolls, and vice versa. Communities that patrol their bridges usually allow the lessers to live so as not to rouse a greater. Those that do not want to deal with bridge trolls use ferries or marked shallow fording (e.g., move stones within streams to provide crossing points).

Basic System: Spontaneous Generation Monsters



Kar

Kars are creatures created by the interaction of water, wind, and sun. Summer and winter kars are but two of many different kinds. Kar is the name given by wizards, and common people may have many different names for each kind.

Kar, Summer

Number Encountered: swarm
Alignment: Neutral
Movement:: Fly 150' (50')
AC: 6
HD: 12
Attacks: contact
Damage: 4d6
Save: T6
Morale: 12
Hoard Class: none

Summer kars are tropical creatures that look like 3' long elongated birds with four wings. They are usually harmless, as they feed on small fish near the surface of the water. The only things to make summer kars dangerous are pollution in the water that generates them and the loss of their food supply. If the former happens they are malformed and Chaotic. In either case they come ashore in huge flocks and attack people and creatures on land. Summer kar appear on the summer solstice and live for three months. Kar explode out of the waves as soon as the sun hit them and then separate into small flocks of a dozen at most, looking for places to feed.

Kar, Winter

Number Encountered: 3d10
Alignment: Neutral
Movement:: swim 90' (30')
AC: 5

HD: 6
Attacks: 1 (bite)
Damage: 2d6
Save: F3
Morale: 10
Hoard Class: none

Winter kar look vaguely like dolphins made of ice. They are aggressive predators that can break small boats. They stay near the surface their entire lives because they renew themselves by contact with the air. Each time a winter kar surfaces, it heals 10 hit points. It can only do this once per round. Some kar populations stay and die during the spring warming and others migrate to colder waters. Winter kar are considered good eating and some peoples use kar hunts for adulthood rites.

Salt Spike

Number Encountered: swarm
Alignment: Neutral
Movement:: 0'
AC: 6
HD: 4
Attacks: contact
Damage: d6/weakness
Save: F1
Morale: 12
Hoard Class: none

Even preserved food can be a source of spontaneous generation. Anything salted may generate spikes within a matter of weeks if exposed to powerful necromantic magic (level 6 or better cast within 100'). Salt spikes are tiny worms covered in stiff bristles of salt. Anyone eating uncooked food containing spikes must save versus poison or be weakened (strength reduced by 3) for d4 days. Eating more spikes does not cause more weakness (i.e., increase the reduction of strength) but does increase the duration. If the spikes are poured out on someone, the victim takes a total of d6 points of damage as the worms burrow into his body over a period of d4 rounds. After that, he must make the save or suffer weakness.

Sludge Rat

Number Encountered: 2d6
Alignment: Neutral
Movement:: 90' (30')
AC: 7
HD: 2
Attacks: 1 or 1 (bite or tail)
Damage: d4 or d6
Save: L1
Morale: 8
Hoard Class: VI

While all sewers have rats, it takes very nasty pits to

Basic System: Spontaneous Generation Monsters

create these monsters. Sewer rats are 4' long with a muscular tail that is an additional 4'. They are bald and colored the same as the waste that produced them. Certain kinds of pollution cause mutations in sewer rats (random magic user spells of levels one and two), although all have the ability to turn into a goo and pass through holes 1/32" or larger in diameter. In combat they use their tails to trip their targets (save versus paralysis) and bite anyone prone. Those with spells cast them randomly and may even harm each other.

DIVINE WILL

Bucket Scum

Number Encountered: d8 (10d10)
Alignment: Chaotic
Movement:: 60' (20')
Swim 120' (40')
AC: 7
HD: 1
Attacks: 1 or 1 (weapon or bite)
Damage: weapon -2 or d2
Save: 0 level
Morale: 12
Hoard Class: none

One of the curse monsters, bucket scum are the result of an angered water god. They form in polluted waters and then breed like rabbits. A scum is 2' tall and looks like an imp made of water. They are invisible in water and get into houses via buckets filled with dirty water, hence their name. Scum can not survive on land for more than a few hours and some take to troughs, bothering the animals that drink, as well as hiding from humans that would kill them. Sweetwater potions will kill them (no save) as will naturally clean water. Scum are very difficult to wipe out otherwise, as it may take centuries for polluted waters to finally clean themselves.

Fen Hunter

Number Encountered: 1 (d6)
Alignment: Lawful
Movement:: 150' (50')
Swim 180' (60')
AC: 5
HD: 5
Attacks: 3 (claws and bite)
Damage: d4/d4/d6
Save: F4
Morale: 8
Hoard Class: VII

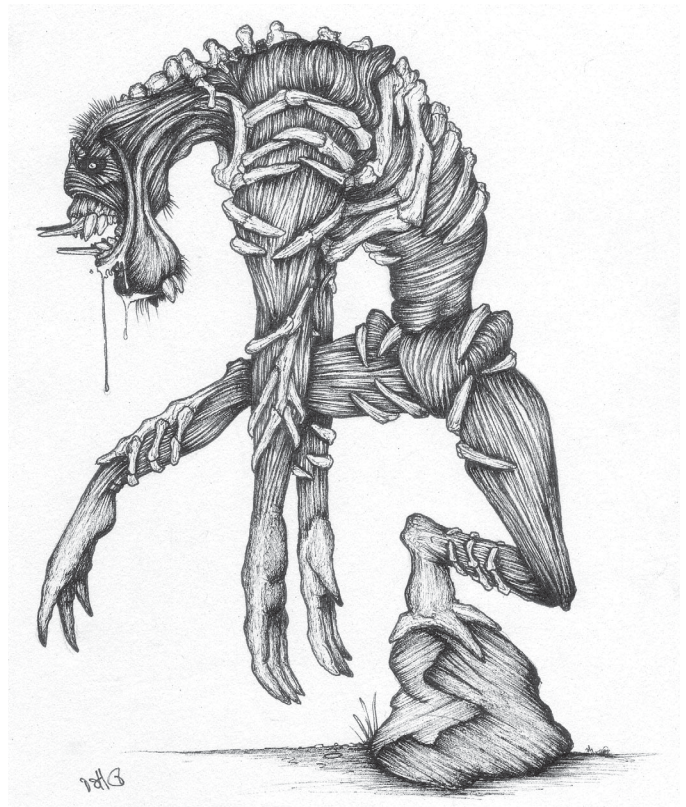
Although some swamps are sources of evil, not all are. Fen hunters are helpful creatures that lead humans and their allies out of danger and save them from monsters. They are big cats with fish scales, barbels, and tails. They

are created from muck and can breed as fish. A god of wanderers wanted his followers safe when traversing marshes and swamps and causes fen hunters to rise every once in a while.

Scrapling

Number Encountered: 2d4 (4d6)
Alignment: Chaotic
Movement:: 60' (20')
AC: 7
HD: 1/2
Attacks: 1 or 1 (weapon or bite)
Damage: weapon or d3
Save: 0 level
Morale: 10
Hoard Class: VI

A god of animals that was disgusted by their treatment caused the first scraplings to rise. They are skinless humanoids 3' tall and come from the blood, guts, and offal found in slaughterhouses and similar places. The first generation scrapling is rough looking, as if it was made from spare parts. Second and subsequent generations are much more refined, although not identical. After a few of them spontaneously generate, the scraplings go into hiding and breed. After a few months, the elders come out and start destroying things while the younger scraplings continue to breed. They make gremlins look pleasant in their actions, although they do not harm plants



Basic System: Spontaneous Generation Monsters

and animals. Scraplings try to destroy most of the tools found in the slaughterhouse before moving on to nearby buildings and take the rest as weapons. They are easy to destroy and burning the material they form from prevents their occurrence. But when a population has started, it is very difficult to root them out. They are good at finding places to hide near the community they were created in. Some cities treat them as rats and do not attempt to kill off the entire population, as it would cost too much in manpower. Wherever they are found, scraplings are a pain in the rear to civilization.

Stalk

Number Encountered:	2d8 (5d10)
Alignment:	Chaotic
Movement:	150' (50')
AC:	9
HD:	1/4
Attacks:	1 (weapon)
Damage:	weapon -3
Save:	0 level
Morale:	12
Hoard Class:	none

A demon is the source of stalks. It is very old and wanted to keep humanity from becoming a power in the world. It attacked in the one place that humans rely on most — fields of grain. Stalks are imp-like creatures made from grass 8" tall. They are very weak but so abundant that even rodents destroy less food every year. After a field is harvested, stalks take two to three weeks to mature themselves. They emerge from the dead grain and then attempt to destroy every last edible part of all the plants around them. In worlds where stalks are found, starvation is very common and people simply cannot do much more than defend their sources of food.

Stone Troll

Number Encountered:	1 (1)
Alignment:	Chaotic
Movement:	150' (50')
AC:	-2
HD:	10
Attacks:	3 (claws and bite)
Damage:	3d4/3d4/6d4
Save:	F8
Morale:	12
Hoard Class:	none

Where scraplings are the result of an angered god of animals, stone trolls are the result of the earth mother rejecting miners and other things burrowing into her body. She has within her some veins of ore, metal, and gems that spontaneously generate stone trolls. Each is found in a small womb-like pocket and attacks anything that disturbs it. They are a major predator of other monsters, as



well as miners and explorers of the deep. After they are freed from their veins, stone trolls set out and kill everything they come across underground. They turn to dust when exposed to sunlight and never venture above ground, even at night. They can only be harmed by +3 or greater magical weapons. They can not breed but that is not much of an issue, as there are millions of them in the deeps, waiting to be freed by the unwary.

Watchling

Number Encountered:	2d8 per 10,000 inhabitants
Alignment:	Lawful
Movement:	150' (50')
AC:	5
HD:	1+1
Attacks:	2 (claws)
Damage:	d3/d3 + paralysis
Save:	F1
Morale:	12
Hoard Class:	none

Watchlings are golden, glowing felines the size of bobcats. They are created from the paving stones of cities that worship specific god of law and cities. The cats provide safety to the citizens and capture criminals found within the city. Watchlings' claws cause paralysis (save at -4) that lasts for d4 days. Anyone found paralyzed is considered guilty of a crime by the watch, and the cats draw the attention of the watch as quickly as possible

Basic System: Spontaneous Generation Monsters

after making a catch. They have no voice other than the typical cat screech and this limits their interaction with the populace. Watchlings are found all over the city and no one is allowed to keep them out of a building. Doing so is a crime that typically results in community service, time in prison, or banishment. Harming a watchling is a serious offense that may result in execution.

ALCHEMY

Some of these examples may be considered constructs by some GMs and spontaneously-created creatures by others. Remember that a living creation needs sleep, food, and water, whereas a construct does not.

Ant Queen

No. Enc.	0 (1)
Alignment:	Neutral
Movement::	30' (10')
AC:	3
HD:	25
Attacks:	none
Damage:	none
Save:	L12
Morale:	12
Hoard Class:	none

To get around the expense of creating working creatures, some wizards have discovered that they can make constructs that spawn other creatures. The ant queen looks like a worker ant 50' long made of stone. Its abdomen is filled with many reagents and the whole creature costs 100,000 gp to construct. It spawns 25 giant ants per week and they each live for six months. The creator of the queen has automatic control over the ants and can create rings that allow others to do so as well. The rings cost 50 gp each. The giant ants are usually used for construction and sword fodder, although inventive controllers can no doubt find others.

Bad Beer

No. Enc.	1 (0)
Alignment:	Neutral
Movement::	90' (30')
AC:	8
HD:	4+
Attacks:	1 (slam)
Damage:	special
Save:	L2+
Morale:	12
Hoard Class:	none

In worlds where alchemy exists, there are those who attempt to improve beer, spirits, and wine. Failed attempts usually result in poison or a minor magical effect during the creation or consumption of the drink. Sadly, there



are a rare few times that result in something much worse. Bad beer is an ooze that destroys all animal and humanoid life it encounters. Instead of eating the killed creatures, the ooze simply engulfs, drowns, and then leaves the corpse behind. Bad beer's size is determined by the size of the tun it was created in. The smallest are about four times the volume of an adult human, while the largest can be 50 times as big. Each human volume provides the ooze with a hit die. Bad beer can not heal but is also immune to physical attacks; fire, acid and spells do full damage to it.

Butler

Number Encountered:	1
Alignment:	Lawful
Movement::	180' (60')
AC:	5 or armor minus 4
HD:	10
Attacks:	1 (weapon)
Damage:	weapon
Save:	F10
Morale:	12
Hoard Class:	weapon and armor

Butlers were initially created to clean and otherwise oversee households. When their intelligence and tenacity were discovered, they became butlers and oversaw the staff of their homes. Currently, they are used in almost any task where people are working together as a group.

Basic System: Spontaneous Generation Monsters

They make great overseers, as they get their people to work to their potential but no more. In fact, butlers will refuse to overwork their charges. Since they have this empathy, butlers make poor tacticians and are not used on the battlefield (that and the fact that each costs 75,000 gp to make each). Butlers look like clay statues of humanoids but are more durable due to the reagents that make them up. They can be used as bodyguards and will kill if their charges are assaulted but this use does not allow them their own potential as military leaders. They live for 50 years before deanimating.

Chimney Bat

Number Encountered: d6 (4d6)
Alignment: Neutral
Movement: Fly 180' (60')
AC: 6
HD: 1/2
Attacks: 1 (bite)
Damage: special
Save: 0 level
Morale: 6
Hoard Class: none

The results of poor chimney cleaning, chimney bats generate from alchemical mixtures in the soot. Each population of bats are unique in form and have minor magical abilities relating to what went into their creation as well as that of their parents (if second and subsequent generations). They are only called bats because of their general shape. None are mammals or even from any known order of animal.

One common sort of chimney bat, created from potions of flying and other reagents, has a single, huge tripupal eye, a maw filled with boney spikes instead of teeth, and wings that are fan-shaped and extend out from the sides of their bodies like hand fans. They are faster than most bats (240' (80')) but have no special attacks with their bite. Like true bats, they can reproduce and some caves where they congregate can hold dozens of different types within populations of thousands.

As much as some magic users try, chimney bats can not be used to recreate the alchemical mixture that spawned them. They can, however, be used as raw materials to make other potions, elixers, oils, and such. The wizards harvest them from caves and try to not to wipe out this renewing resource.

Lug

Number Encountered: d6
Alignment: Neutral
Movement: 90' (30')
AC: 6
HD: 6
Attacks: 1 (fist)

Damage: 3d4
Save: F3
Morale: 12
Hoard Class: none

Lugs are common creations in advanced societies. They are 12-foot-tall humanoids used to haul goods, pull plows, and do work that needs no finesse. They are created from good soil and 500 gp of reagents. This means lords can make several for their farmers. A lug is not intelligent and each needs a keeper, otherwise it will obey the last orders given to it by anyone. Lugs last 50 years under normal strain but this can be as low as 20 if the lug keepers do not care for them.

Some cities have lug fighting and those creatures have different stats, as their creators customize them with alchemy and magic. This can mean multiple attacks, better damage and armor class, or an improvement on speed. Lug fighting is a very expensive form of entertainment, as the enhanced lugs require special soil (like that from a dragon's lair or taken from the moon) and reagents. This can increase the cost of a lug to as much as 500,000 gp.





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