

THE BOOK OF MICE

by Arnold Kemp
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Introduction

It's common knowledge that the theory of spontaneous generation has long been debunked in favor of the theory of evolution. We no longer believe that river mud spontaneously forms mice, or that rotten meat literally gives birth to maggots. It's a shame, really, because that interpretation of reality would fit well with fantasy.

A lot of modern fantasy seems to require powerful creator gods, mad wizards, or momentous deeds to justify the spontaneous genesis of a creature. So while it's not hard to find a monster that will spring fully-formed from a blood-soaked battleground or laboratory accident, it's much rarer to see an critter crawl out of a more humble clay.

I blame science. Once the natural world began to be explained, we lost the modest mysteries of naturalistic ignorance. As shelves began to bend under the weight of encyclopedias, there was less and less place for the explanation of, "the hay just turns into mice, an that's whence 'ey come from when there was none afore."

The aim of this book is to pile together the hay and extend a hand to the struggling mouse, who rarely gets a chance to enter the world motherless anymore. Caves create bears. Rain creates earthworms. Countless sundry mysteries take place in the world every day, just beyond sight and only slightly beyond understanding. The creatures in this book are the product of entirely natural processes, both geologic and environmental.

More or less, anyway.

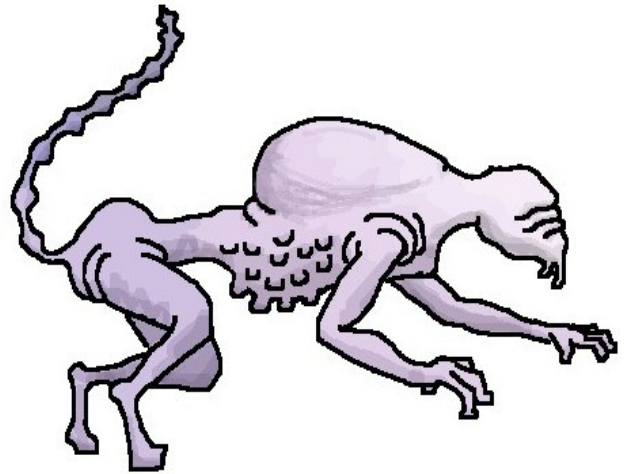
Suggested Rules:

Tiny Grapplers. Many monsters in this book grapple humans by climbing on their bodies and faces. When one of these small grapplers is killed by a lethal blow, any damage in excess is carried over to the human, representing the danger inherent in trying to bludgeon a critter while it is latched on to your ally's face.

More Than You Can Chew

They're somewhat rare, but their distinctive weirdness has given this creature a tenacious hold in the popular consciousness. It has a dozen names. "Wicked Jelly-John", "John Jelly", "Boneless John", "Jelly Rat", and "Parasynaptic Sinoflectrum".

It's common knowledge that they are formed by floods and heavy rains, and you have a better chance of finding one after a rain. Little is known of them, but they are believed to also reproduce when two jelly-johns fuse together into an ooplasmic mass, which then divides into an egg cluster.



Wicked jelly-johns loosely resemble small, hairless rats. They have no eyes or ears, and sense their environment with echolocatory sinuses and ventral auricles. They have knobby tails, lilac skin, and a prominent hunchback. This dorsal nodule contains a purple bezoar. If swallowed, this stone will allow the imbiber to "hear" nearby surface thoughts for up to an hour. This is incredibly disorienting, and first timers must save or go insane for the duration of the bezoar's effect.

In combat, a jelly-john will attempt to jump on the face of an opponent. While blinding them with scratches and bites, the jelly-john will also attempt to jump down their throat. They sometimes hide in food or among rations in what appears to be an instinctual attempt to get near a creature's mouth.

Once in the stomach, the jelly-john takes control of the creature's body, and goes on a rampage. During this frenzy, it seeks to cause as much mayhem as possible. While rampaging, it goes out of its way to kill cats and eat cheese. This rampaging doesn't seem to be a part of any ordinary life cycle, since the jelly-john and its puppet will just stomp through the countryside, attacking travelers and falling asleep in carrot fields. It's pretty stupid.

Animals are no exception to the jelly-john's abilities, and sometimes a jelly-john is behind a "rabid bear".

In one instance, a group of adventurers were called into kill a donkey that had gone berserk. The next day, the farmer's bull went berserk and needed similar treatment. Only after the party had killed the raging farmer did they hide nearby and observe the jelly-john exiting the recently-deceased farmer.

Rumors that mind flayers use the little creatures as familiars are unverified.

WICKED JELLY-JOHN

HD 1

AC 6 [13]

Atk +1 to face grab

Move 12

Save 15

Morale 9

Special bellyfull

Face Grab: While a creature's face is grabbed, the creature is blinded (-4 to hit). On subsequent turns, the wicked jelly-john will automatically deal 1 point of damage and attempt to crawl down the victim's throat (+1 to hit stomach, ignoring armor).

Bellyfull: In the stomach, the host must make a save each turn or fall under the control of the jelly-john, who then goes on a rampage with the unfortunate person's body, attacking friends, killing cats, and eating everything it can (especially cheese). The simplest way to remove the creature is to attack the host's belly (which damages both of them). It's also possible to induce vomiting, or wrestle the host to the ground and jump on their stomach until the jelly-john is ejected.

A Weight That Cannot Be Lifted

It's common knowledge that lightning is caused by Iasu's angels smiting the sundry demons that lair in the upper atmosphere. (However, dissenting wizards argue that it is caused by lightning dryads migrating between their cthonic gardens and their stratospheric ones, temporarily exchanging manes with lightning dryads of the opposite charge).

When lightning strikes sand, it creates a fulgurite elemental, which is a type of earth elemental. Most of the time, the elemental remains buried in the sand, but if given the chance, it will walk on the surface of the earth until it reaches its destination. They are also called thunder elementals. (Wizards had long puzzled why they had never discovered a thunder elemental, and this seemed the best fit. Scholars, of course, dispute the arcane classification of the elements, preferring fanciful elements such as "chlorine". To them, the fulgurite elemental is known as a "periambulatory electroencrustulation".)

Fulgarite elementals lack a defined humanoid shape. They are barely bipedal, only have rough approximations of limbs, and certainly lack anything resembling a head. And while other earth elementals can burrow and run, fulgurite elementals can only slowly drag themselves across the ground. Their shambling is often described as pained or dejected, but who can say what a rock feels? Or if it feels anything at all?

They seem to have a single goal: their own destruction. They invariably throw themselves off the first cliff they find (sometimes repeatedly) until they are destroyed. Others shamle doggedly into the ocean.

Although they may stop and “rest” for months or years, they will attack anything that delays them. They become indiscriminately violent if trapped somewhere.

FULGURITE ELEMENTAL

HD 10

AC 3 [16]

Atk +8 brutish paw (1d8+2 damage)
and +4 malformed limb (1d4 damage)

Move 3

Save 6

Morale 12

Special sandstone

Sandstone: Bludgeoning weapons do double damage. Fire and lightning only heal it.

Fulgurite elementals house and protect tiny (2') creatures called amberinos. These diminutive humanoids seem to be made from a dull amber, and have heads that are sort of a cross between a hammerhead shark's and a clam. They yip when startled (this may bring the elemental) and crackle when communicating.

Even shattered, their bodies are valuable, and can be worth up 100 gold pieces to the right buyer. Although they roam when foraging, they retreat to the fulgurite elemental when threatened. A single fulgurite elemental houses 2-12 amberinos.

AMBERINO

HD 1

AC 7 [12]

Atk +1 bite (1d4 damage)

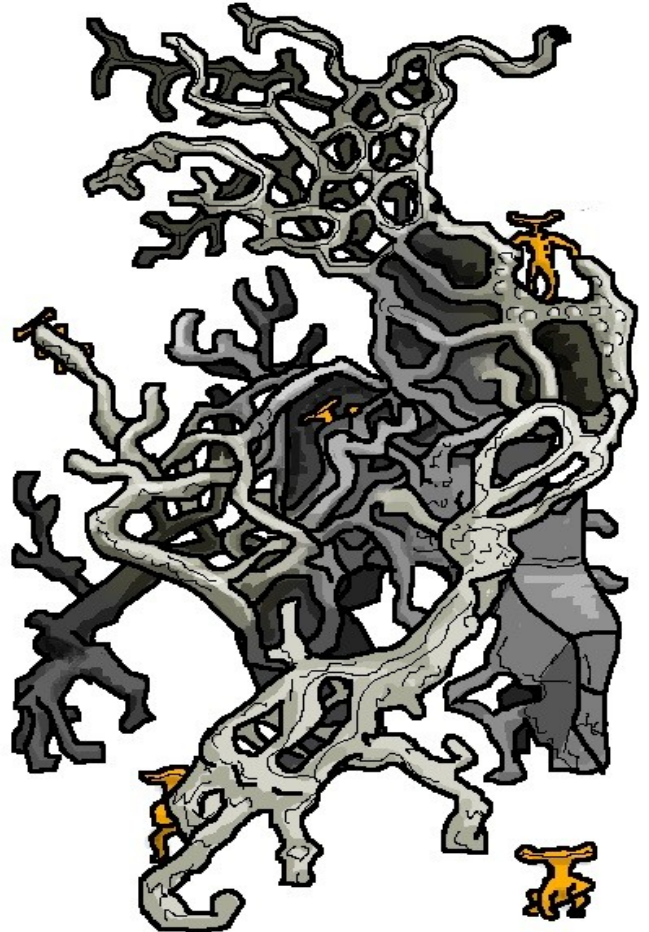
Move 12

Save 17

Morale 8

Special electrical

Electrical: Anyone touching an amberino with a conductive item (such as a metal sword) or a bare hand takes 1d6 damage. Amberinos can suppress this at will.



Shroom With a View

It is common knowledge that when a solitary boulder is left along in a field (perhaps placed there by fairies), it will cause mushrooms to grow. Some argue that the opposite is true, and that whenever a large number of mushrooms grow in one place, they cause a boulder to be raised up from whatever stony cyst it was once buried in. (This also would explain how errant boulders find their ways onto fields.)

These boulders are called fairy stones, and tiny jungles of mushrooms grow around them. However, there is one type of mushroom that can only be here.

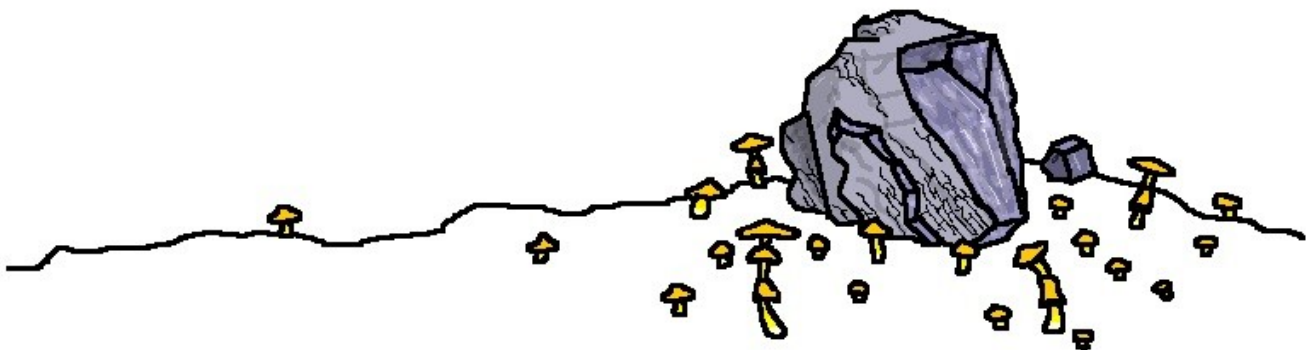
Fairy Mushrooms

These perennial mushrooms are huge (up to 3'), and grow a new cap every year, stacked above the previous cap like another story on a building. Age can therefore be determined by counting the caps. They are orange-yellow, and notable for their immaculate symmetry and delicate odor. Claims that they can speak are unverified.

The mushrooms have excellent senses, and when they see or hear an animal approaching, they quickly withdraw underground. Indeed, you will not find them aboveground unless they are sporulating, which only lasts a couple weeks each year (fairy season). They make a hearty meal and have a nutty taste. They also sell for decent money. Rangers sometimes resort to setting snares.

If not boiled (which, honestly, kills the flavor), there is a a 10% chance (cumulative per mushroom eaten) to have a strange effect. Roll a d8:

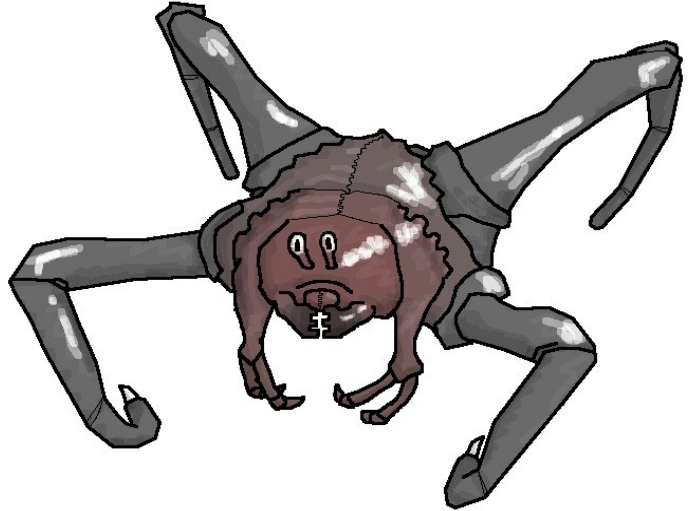
- 1 - Vision of the most interesting thing happening within 10 miles (as *screying*).
- 2 - False version of #1, but still mildly plausible.
- 3 - No need to sleep for 1d6 days. Minor hallucinations of black ponds and crickets.
- 4 - Require 20 hours of sleep per day for 1d6 days. Strange dreams full of horses.
- 5 - All squirrels behave as if *charmed*, at least towards you. Permanent.
- 6 - All frog and toads attack you on sight. Permanent.
- 7 - 1d6 days of deep drunkenness. -1 Wisdom for the first time this happens.
- 8 - Permanent proficiency in a musical instrument. +1 Charisma the first time.



Cliff Jumpers

It's common knowledge that flying clobstroks hatch from exposed cliffsides when sunlight thickens and forms the stone into eggs. Clobstroks are also sometimes called "canyon terrors" or "flying crabs".

Clobstroks loosely resemble crabs, but they have the head (but not the eyes) of an ant. Their body is about 1' wide and their leg span is perhaps 4'. Their body is extremely flattened dorsoventrally (like a plate) and very light. They have a pair of bifurcated pedipalps and four limbs; the two forelimbs are hooked.



These animals build colonies in high cliffs. Their method of riddling a cliffside with pores is fairly distinctive, and many describe a clobstrok colony as resembling a sponge or swiss cheese. Huge colonies may even resemble a coral reef. They are highly territorial, and will attack anything that wanders near their colonies (even dragons, although they will not make this mistake twice). If outnumbered, they will perch on the cliff's edge and shriek at the trespassers below. This serves as both intimidation and a call to other clobstroks. Once they outnumber their opponents, they attack.

On the ground, they move by hopping, and can easily leap over a man's head. However, their preferred method of travel (and attack) is by gliding. Invariably, they attack creatures by leaping on their heads and necks and latching on. This instinct is so strong, that any armor beyond a helmet and gorget is superfluous.

FLYING CLOBSTROK

HD 1

AC 5 [14]

Atk +2 Claw (1d6 damage + face grab if odd)

Move 15, glide 24

Save 15

Morale 10

Special death from above

Face Grab: While a creature's face is grabbed, the creature is blinded (-4 to hit). On subsequent turns, the clobstrok will automatically deal 1d6 points of damage.

Death From Above: Clobstroks prefer to initiate combat by gliding into someone's face. When they glide-charge, their claw attack is +3 to hit and does 1d6+1 damage.

Screaming Neon Eels

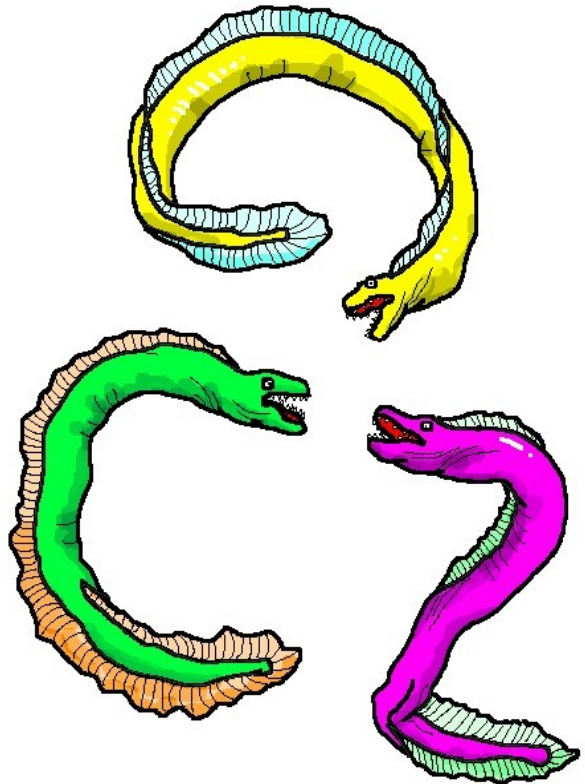
In the warm waters of the Zembian sea, there are many brightly colored eels and fish. But there is one eel that is more remarkable than all of the others.

The jiragula eel (accent on the "GU") is also known as the "screaming eel". Even among the vibrant reefs of Zembia, the jiragula stands out as especially vivid. It has the remarkable habit of sticking its head out of the water and screaming at people. No one knows why it does this.

I mean, it doesn't even use its lungs for anything else *except* screaming. A mystery for that ages, I suppose.

It's common knowledge that jiragulas are created from oceanic whirlpools. This explains their spiral style of swimming.

They have an incredible venom, but they do something even more remarkable during full moons: become invincible. Thus empowered, they fly across the land, breaking into houses, eating pets, and screaming at everyone they meet. It is a godlike power, and the philosophers struggle to explain why a stupid eel possesses it.



JIRAGULA

HD 1

AC 8 [11]

Atk +1 bite (1d6 damage + screaming poison)

Move swim 12

Save 15

Morale 11

Special petty god

Screaming Poison: Save or scream uncontrollably for 1d6 x 5 minutes.

Petty God: During full moons, jiragula eels become immune to damage and can fly at their swim speed. They use this to scream at people and knock things off tables.

Note: Possible ways to deal with an invincible eel include: putting it in a sack, locking it in a trunk, trapping it in an attic, putting a barrel on top of it, or just running away. Also remember that non-damaging spells have their full effect.

Miserable Little Slobs

When Saint Anntessa was asked if there was any creature more wretched than the gretchling, she famously replied, "Gods, I hope not." This was her only recorded blasphemy.

It's common knowledge that gretchlings are generated when large amounts of garbage are improperly buried. They steal reflective objects and then disappear into dark places.

Gretchlings are short (4') grayish-blue humanoids with expressive ears. They are knock-kneed, skinny, and sort of lumpy. Each suffers from a different spinal curvature (and this is the best way to tell them apart). Gretchlings possess a gawping idiocy, and their "hoards" are slovenly piles of dangerous garbage. Their only redeeming advantage is their ability to go many months without food, which is fortunate, since most of them are emaciated and starving.



It is joked that they have only three emotions: flinching, cowering, cringing. Meeting an enemy's eye causes them to seize up in fear and soil themselves. Since they feel the gaze of others like the sting of a whip, they strive to extinguish light sources.

GRETCHLING

HD 1

AC 8 [11] in light, 6 [13] in darkness

Atk +1 to hit in light, +3 to hit in darkness (1d6 damage, or as weapon)

Move 9

Save 19

Morale 7 in light, 9 in darkness

Special paragon of cowardice

Paragon of Cowardice: All enemies have a "gaze attack" against gretchlings. Unless they avert their eyes (-2 to hit) or have a mirror-like object to look through (unlikely), they are subject to their opponent's "gaze attacks". If they catch an enemies eye, they will either (1) drop their weapon, (2) flee, or (3) be paralyzed with fear for 1d6 rounds (equal chance of each). Scaring them has the same effect.

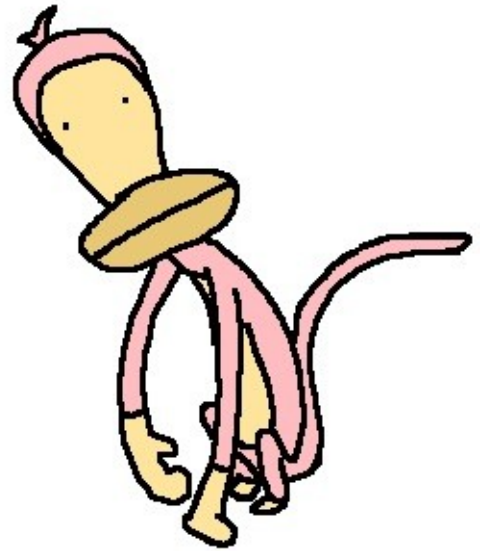
Gretches are an advanced form of gretchling. They have 2 HD and lack the "paragon of cowardice" ability. Despite their cretinism, they can extinguish a torch or lantern within 50' by slobbering out an arcane incantation. They associate with grues.

A Pet That Protects Us

The frozen tundra is a dangerous place. But among the freezing blizzards, ravenous vor-mammut, and undead caribou, you may find some small pink monkeys.

The locals call them “ishi-mishi-manafa”, which is sort of a standardized piece of baby talk.

It's common knowledge that ishi-mishi-manafas are spontaneously formed by hot springs. The surrounding environments are too cold for them to have migrated from anywhere else, since the small pink monkeys don't survive blizzards without the shelter of hot springs.



Ishi-mishi-manfas are supernaturally cute. Just looking at one is cheering. Playing with one; even more-so. Surprisingly few are immune. Even those who shrug off a nymph's caress can be tempted by a playful monkey.

They are so cute, in fact, that you can often sell one of the cat-sized monkeys in a major city for up to 100 gold pieces. But there's a catch: every hot-spring with monkeys has a protector—a victim of the monkeys' charisma—who guards the steamy oasis and its simian inhabitants. Poachers might be stuffing monkeys into sacks when the remorhaz rises up beneath them, furious in defense of its beloved monkeys.

To determine a troop's protector, roll on your wandering monster/NPC table.

ISHI-MISHI-MANAFAs

HD 1

AC 7 [12]

Atk +1 bite (1d4 damage)

Atk +1 throw rock, 30' range (1d4 damage)

Move 12, climb 12

Save 18

Morale 9

Special charm

Charm: When a troop of ishi-mishi-manafas lacks a protector, they will usually try to acquire the strongest looking visitor to their hotsprings. In a dazzling display of subtly choreographed cuteness, the monkeys will perform their cutest antics. Treat this as a charm spell. If less than 10 monkeys participate, the witness gets a +2 bonus to their save. Charmed individuals will want to stay at the hotsprings for 1d3 days, during which the monkeys repeat their charm daily. After three failed saves, the enraptured visitor becomes the permanent protector. Protectors might tolerate visitors to the springs, but they will never tolerate a rival for the monkeys' affections.

The Edgeless Sharp

No one likes to speak of the bone needle men, but it is common knowledge among scholars that they form from aquifers and other deep pools. The needle-men are always found knee-deep in quiet waters, with darkness around and earth overhead.

Standing thus, they rattle their heads. It is a ghastly sound, impossible to describe except to say that it conjures up memories of shattered glass, stale air, razor wounds, broken teeth, the taste of metal, and slipping on one's own blood.

The sound passes through stone and steel and skull. All creatures within a mile can hear it. The quieter the surroundings are, the louder the rattle becomes. In normal silence, the rattle seems to originate beside your ear. In supernatural silence, the rattle seems to be inside your own skull.

Wizards say that bone needle men are a form of undead that are simply immune to turning, and deny that spontaneous generation is involved. Scholars disagree, since there is no other form of undead that is spontaneously generated by any natural process. This would make a bone needle man an exception among undead.

But the wizards point to the bone needle man's appearance as proof of its status among the unliving. True, a bone needle man could be mistaken for a skeleton, but only in very poor light. However, scholars also point out that the needle-man's bones are filled with hot blood and marrow—something no other undead possess. So, they are already an exception in at least one way.

But if the bone needle men are undead, it raises the troubling question of what they were in life, since they resemble no other known creature. The skull without eye sockets. . . the subtly alien curvatures that become increasingly blasphemous the longer they are studied. . . and gods, that horrible face!

If they are the husks of something that lives beneath the Hadean abyss, no one is eager to meet the living ones. Dare we hope they are all extinct?

A bone needle man's head is sealed. It is filled with a pale and potent vapor. Wizards will pay a handsome sum for an unbroken skull. While the gas has a number of strange properties, one is immediately useful to adventurers: if the skull is gently pierced and the gas inhaled, one will speak in a different timbre. This voice is unearthly, and carries with it the power of the needle-man's rattle. Few can resist it, and it can be used to force a morale check or as the *command* spell.



The skull holds a second treasure. It contains 1d6+6 bone needles, long, thick, and slightly curved. Unlike the vapor (which may be put to many uses) the needles are powerfully necromantic (making an intact skull illegal to transport in some places). If stabbed into a living creature (improvised weapon -2 to hit, 1 damage) it creates a wound that will never heal or cease oozing blood. Only a *remove curse* can heal it.

Sharland alchemists discovered this next piece of the puzzle. If one of these bone needles is placed in a tub of milk and covered with lime, in several days, it will have grown into something not unlike a deformed, semi-crystalline fetus skeleton. These skeletons are inert (though eerie). Wizards claim this is another manifestation of the needle-mens' strangeness. Scholars claim that this is a juvenile form of psuedo-undead. A stillborn un-life.

Though we speak of "the edgeless sharp" is is not something is at all understood. It is a place, a concept, a sensation, a god, a memory of something forever lost, or perhaps none of these things. No one is quite sure. Whatever it is, you can "see" it when a bone needle man lays its hand upon you.

BONE NEEDLE MAN

HD 2

AC 5 [14]

Atk +2 claw (2d6 damage + the edgeless sharp)

Move 12

Save 15

Morale 12

Special rattle

The Edgeless Sharp: The 2d6 damage is not dealt normally. If both dice show the same number, the claw attack damages normally (1-6). Othewise, the foe is struck by edgeless sharp. This deals the damage shown (3-11), but this damage has two caveats.

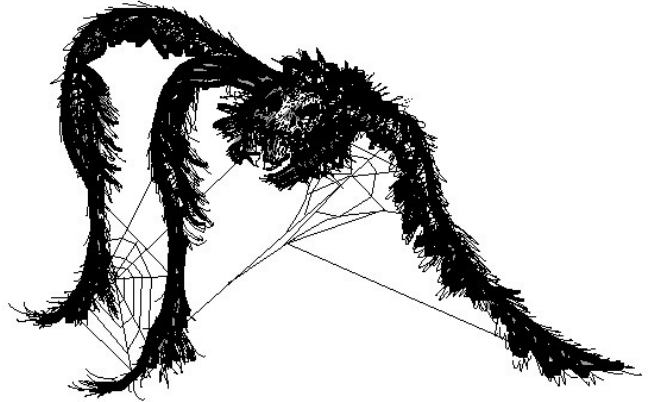
First, the edgeless sharp cannot bring anyone below 1 hp. The edgeless sharp wounds, but it does not kill. One turn later, the wounds close themselves up (heal 1d6 health), leaving behind only blasphemous scars and a dull burning.

Rattle: When undisturbed, a bone needle man will stand in a pool of water and rattle its head. Sleep is impossible for all living creatures within 1 mile, although tolerance is possible with weeks of anguished exposure. Combining magical silence with the effect of the rattle requires a save to avoid permanent insanity. Even after leaving the area, the sound doesn't fade entirely. It never really does.

Creatures that have heard the rattle will have vivid nightmares for about a week afterwards (once they finally find sleep), which reoccur throughout the rest of their natural lives, unless the bone needle man is destroyed. Probably.

Entanglement

It's common knowledge that glommerwhists form when a great deal of hair is allowed to accumulate in one place. This is why all barbers keep a razor close at hand. The nature of their generation is reflected in their spawning pits, which are small cesspools choked with hair and regurgitated mucus.



Glommerwhists are tripods, but their third leg is usually dragged behind them, as sort of a stabilizing tail. Scholars believe that they are mammals (with some insect traits) that lactate mucus. These foul little beasts are in turn parasitized by spiders. A specimen will usually have a dozen pale spiders crawling through its hair, as thick as ticks on a deer. They are occasionally “tamed” by derro or goblins, with whom they share a mutually abusive relationship.

Although glommerwhists are agile leapers and climbers, they mostly hunt by building webs across passageways and snaring small animals that blunder into it. Unlike spiders, their “web” is not sticky and is actually part of their body (or at least their hair-sheath). A large glommerwhist nest can hold dozens of individuals.

Glommerwhists prefer to hunt small prey (unless they're hungry). If they hear large creature (such as a human) approaching, they will retract their net and hide. Only when stealthy creatures approach does the glommerwhist attempt to snare and then commit itself to the attack. When a creature walks into its web, it gets a free opportunity to entangle its prey.

GLOMMERWHIST

HD 1

AC 7 [12]

Atk +1 (1d4 damage and entangle, hits automatically on subsequent attacks)

Move 12, swim 6

Save 17

Morale 7

Special incompressible, urticating hairs

Incompressible: Glommerwhists take no damage from bludgeoning weapons.

Urticating Hairs: If you kill a glommerwhist, it releases a cloud of tiny, irritating hairs. All creatures with exposed eyeballs in 5' must save or get -2 to hit until they rinse their eyes with water. If this stacks up to -3, the character is blind.

Tunneling

It's common knowledge that tunnel snakes form spontaneously in tunnels that have been excavated by iron tools. These strange creatures are also called "volkers", "dem nas baddem volers", "probocthonius", and (moronically) "dire voles".

They resemble a large, furred snake, with the head of an scaly anteater and the compound eyes of fly. Their retinas reflect lantern light, making their spherical eyes look like stained glass windows at times.

If undamaged (50% chance if killed violently), the tunnel snake's eyes can be made into goggles. These goggles have the mildly remarkable ability to protect against bright light without compromising one's ability to see in dim light. (They have no downside and give +1 to save against bright light and other things that affect your eyes.) These goggles are called "volker goggles" and are something of a cultural symbol among delvers and dungeoneers.

Although meek, they sometimes become troublesome when they claim (and defend) sections of tunnels or mines. They are very dangerous when cornered, since that is when they use their deadly breath attack. (Although this should be common knowledge, it isn't.) They make sad little trumpet sounds when killed.



TUNNEL SNAKE

HD 1+1

AC 7 [12]

Atk +1 Spit Acid, 20' range (1d6 damage, plus 1 damage next turn unless rinsed off)

Atk +1 Poison Breath, 5' cone (save or die)

Move 9, burrow 3 (loose dirt only)

Save 15

Morale 8

Special lack of confidence

Lack of Confidence: A tunnel snake prefers to spit acid from a distance, and burrow away when wounded. If a tunnel snake is wounded and cannot escape by burrowing, then and only then will it use it's poisonous breath attack.

Spin

It's common knowledge that flying fletchettia flowers grow spontaneously in areas where reclaimed farmland has been reclaimed by forest. Angry at the yoke of domestication, the land produces dangerous flowers that fly by spinning their petals.

Fletchettia flowers react to being eaten or trampled. If a flower is crushed or broken, it gives off an alarm pheromone, rousing the whole field. (A dexterous individual might be able to traverse a field safely.) The flowers then fly some 40' in the air, then drop like weighted darts onto their prey. They are not dumb missiles; they can "see" heat signatures and adjust their flight paths accordingly. The guided flowers don't fall straight down, but shields are doubly useful against them.

The stats below are for a small fletchettia swarm (2 HD). Perhaps a backyard. A large meadow could hold a much greater number. They sometimes live symbiotic ally with their pollinators, such as bees or giant bees.

FLYING FLETCHETTIA SWARM

HD 2

AC 7 [12]

Atk +2/+2 face stabs (1d3 damage each face stab)

Move fly 12

Save 16

Morale 12

Special dropper, swarm

Dropper: The first turn, the flowers fly above melee range but don't attack. Next turn, the flowers drop, hoping to impale an eyeball. This pattern then repeats.

Swarm: Take only 1 damage from most melee weapons. Fire (including torches) and area-of-effect spells do full damage (no save). Torches do 1d3 damage. Swarms attack all creatures within their mass. This swarm can attack an area 15' across.



Exploding Pets

It's common knowledge that popkins are created by landslides, which compresses the power of the falling rock into a small area, explaining the popkins' unique ability.

Popkins, also known as "ossums" west of the Elterspine, are lagomorphs with squashy faces and mustachios, but otherwise resemble large rabbits, with whom they share an ecological niche. They grow beards when they age. A popkin that dies a violent death explodes violently. (Second-rate poets are fond of reflecting on this circularity.) However, popkins don't develop this ability until their second year. With age, a popkin's coat will darken and their explosive potential will increase. All popkins can be vicious, but you must especially beware a black popkin.

Most predators learn very quickly not to prey on popkins. Self-sacrificing popkins sometimes even trigger their own explosions, to save their offspring or their burrow (2-20 popkins). That's their great advantage.

However, it sometimes happens that perhaps a popkin has a bad dream, or is startled by a cricket, and explodes itself. If this happens at home, the chain reaction of exploding popkins can destroy the whole burrow and turn trees into splinters. They also suffer predation from predators that use projectiles, as well as smaller, poisonous animals. These are their weaknesses.

While Nothic men buy hyenas to show how badass they are, dangerous women will carry a popkin in her handbag. After the Invasion of Kaskala showed how effective popkins could be when launched from a catapult, popkin farms sprung up. These farms use poisons to kill the popkins they breed. A highly volatile "popkin gem" can be harvested from their bellies. Live popkins are no longer used in catapults, once again proving that modern warfare is both safe and humane.

POPKIN

HD 1

AC 7 [12]

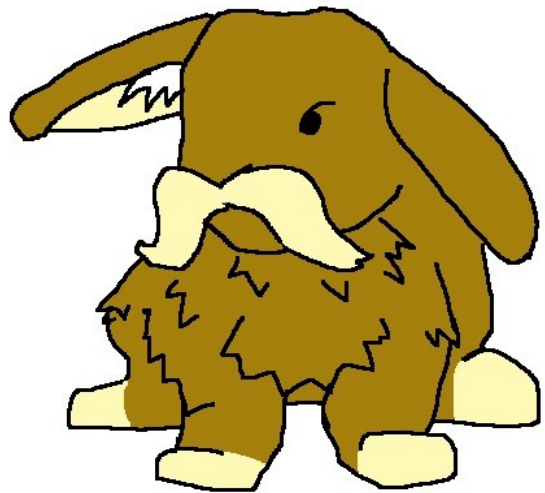
Atk +1 bite (1d3 damage)

Move 15

Save 17

Morale 10

Special farewell



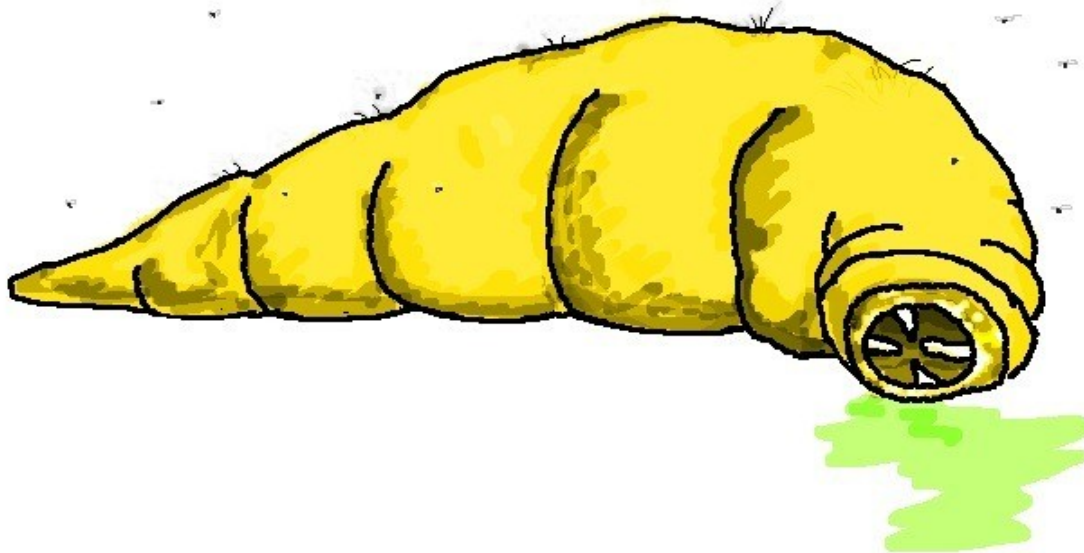
Farewell: When killed violently, a popkin will explode, dealing 1d6+1 damage to all creatures within 10'. Save for half. Popkins can also will themselves to explode.

Popkin patriarchs have 2 HD, bite for 1d6 damage, and explode for 2d6+2 damage.

The Worm That Could Not Fly

It's common knowledge that inexplicably giant maggots sometimes grow out of especially large piles of meat. These are called persuadable maggots, and their generation is a simple thing.

Here is the recipe: At least 400 lbs of fresh meat. More meat is better, since it produces bigger maggots. For every 100 lbs of meat, add 1 pound of vinegar, 10 lbs of milk, 3 eggs, and the blood of 1 goose. Add a mule's tongue (the tongue is very important) and as much saliva from as many people as possible. You must also allow 100 different species of insects to crawl upon the carrion.



Persuadable maggots are often used by villages to dispose of garbage. Although they can be dangerous if they escape, they are horrible climbers, and struggle to get out of even a shallow garbage pit. Just don't let it overgrow it's enclosure. Persuadable maggots grow continuously, but they never molt into their adult form as long as simple precautions are taken.

Never use meat from one persuadable maggot to cultivate another.

PERSUADABLE MAGGOT

HD 3

AC 9 [10]

Atk +3 bite (1d6+1 damage)

Move 6

Save 15

Morale 10

Wet Season

They learn the secret consensus by observing how far deferentially the planet bows towards the sun and how petulantly the mood tugs at their souls. The secret is always a hot day in June.

They undergo their final moult that day, and spend the morning learning to fly. By lunch they will be skimming over the water in pairs, copulating in mad pirouettes. They will be moaning and laughing, murmuring soft poetry that they forget as soon as they invent it. Their mouths are only for kissing and sucking, and so they lack stomachs. Their legs terminate in cerci and so they cannot land.

At sunset the women will lay their eggs in the shallows. Among the gathering dusk, they will nestle down together in the finer parts of the pond, perhaps in a group but more likely as private couples. They will never live to see the stars come out, although the more optimistic among them will try.

By morning they will be so many husks blowing through the cattails. Their corpses will wrap around your fingers like smooth papyrus, and crumble with a breath.

Before their day in the sky, they lived in the algae-choked water of some tranquil pond. In this prepubescent state, they were about 12" tall and resembled a cross between a subadult human and an insect. You can sometimes catch a glimpse of them braiding each other's hair atop some slimy rock, or perhaps telling each other jokes while they lounge beside the water, indolently deboning minnows with their chelicerae. These are mayfly nymphs, and they are very shy.

The day before their adult molt, the breathless young nymphs will be chattering to each other, promising to find each other on the hectic, crowded tomorrow, when many of them will be eaten by hawks. Groups of friends will promise to fly with each other to see what lies beyond the treeline. Sweethearts will promise to wait for each other if one moults before the other, and most of them keep this promise.



MAYFLY SPRITE

HD 1

AC 5 [14]

Atk +1 reminder of mortality (1d4 damage + age 1 year)

Move fly 18

Save 17

Morale 8

Special spellcasting

Spellcasting: A mayfly sprite knows three spells, each castable once per day. These spells are *cause disease*, *cure disease*, and *offensive disguise*.

Offensive Disguise

1st-Level Magic-User spell, 50' range, 4 hour duration

A target who fails their save is cloaked in an illusion of the caster's choice. Clothing, race, gender, and even tone of voice can be modulated. The chosen illusion is usually something repulsive, such as a sarcastic orc or a pox-riddled version of the target.

Bird Song of the Bird Eater

It is common knowledge that very old stumps sometimes turn into songful bagmen after a rain. This explains their preponderance after a downpour, as well as why rotten stumps sometimes go suddenly missing in dark woods.

Songful bagmen are strange creatures. They are something of a cross between an animal and an ooze. Their bodies are perfectly cylindrical, although they are flexible. They are about 2' tall and perhaps 18" in diameter. Although they are capable of oozing around, they prefer to move by hopping, like a man in a sleeping bag.

A single eye looks out from the front of their body. This eye seems distinctly human despite being tripartite. They have a single, flaccid orifice on the top of their bodies that functions as both a mouth and an anus (similar to certain sea creatures). When they are not singing, they often spend a great deal of time coughing the bones and detritus from their previous meals. A single bite of their immensely poisonous flesh is usually fatal.

Bagmen eat birds. To do this, they sit on a stone (or stump) and sing. Their song sounds like a mixture of gasps and whistles mixed in with clear notes that sound as if they were sung by a human vocalist. The effect on birds is immediate and dramatic. Nearby birds will enter the bagman's mouth, sometimes flying straight into it.

If molested while singing, a bagman will vomit its stomach contents on the offender before returning to its task. If threatened, it will hop into the forest. If starving (it tends to drive away all the birds it doesn't eat) it will attempt to sneak up on sleeping animals and eat their heads. It doesn't eat carrion.

Bagmen are cursed with the power of prophecy. If a bagman is fed a chip of bone (upon which a question has been written) and then immediately thrown into a fire, the dying creature will usually (75% chance) answer the question in a cryptic way, although it can be tough to understand what it's screams (roll under Wisdom to understand). Although bagmen don't speak (and aren't even believed to be intelligent), these dying sobs sound very human, and are unsettling for many listeners, especially when they are personally addressed.

SONGFUL BAGMAN

HD 1

AC 9 [10]

Atk +1 barf (1d6 damage, only once per day)

Move 6

Save 17

Morale 8

Special eat head

Eat Head: A bagman can engulf the head of a sleeper automatically. It can be stealthy when hungry, and surprises on a 5-in-6 chance.

