

WISDOM FROM THE WASTELANDS

Issue #25:
Metamorphosis I



By Derek Holland and the Skirmisher Game Development Group

In poetry, the transformation from caterpillar to butterfly describes how something ugly becomes uniquely beautiful. But in nature metamorphosis is common as living things change forms over their life cycles. And this change is not just traditional fairy tale beauty: maggots become flies, tadpoles become frogs, and chest bursters become alien warriors. The eight creature sets below show how very dissimilar creatures can be the same species, just young or mature forms. Each entry uses either the *animate seeds* plant mutation; a new version for animals called *larval form* (described below); or the idea of *forced metamorphosis*. The last is a version of the mutation modifier *environmental dependence*, one that permanently changes one creature into another when the original is exposed to certain stimuli (see *Wisdom from the Wastelands Issue #20: Mutation Modifiers*). Some of the creature entries also use several new mutations; these are included at the end of the article.

Dashing Seed

No. Enc.: 0 (10d10)
Alignment: Neutral
Movement: 330' (110')
Armor Class: 2
Hit Dice: 1 hit point
Attacks: None
Damage: None
Save: L0
Morale: 12
Hoard Class: None

Mutations: *alter atomic composition, free movement, full senses, special.*



Beach Needle

No. Enc.: 0 (4d8)
Alignment: Neutral
Movement: 0'

Armor Class: 6
Hit Dice: 4
Attacks: 1 (thrown thorn)
Damage: d6
Save: L2
Morale: 12
Hoard Class: VII

Mutations: *alter atomic composition, animate seeds, bud sport, projectile thorns.*

Beach needles are 8-12' long mutant spruce that grow horizontally in sandy terrain. This usually means dunes and beaches, but the plants can also convert normal soil into sand out to 15' from their trunks. Every 3-5 years a grove of beach needles produces 10d10 dashing seeds (total, not per adult tree). These 1/2" diameter green spheres use their four rootlets

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This publication is dedicated to providing useful information, game content, and ideas to players of modern, science fiction, and post-apocalyptic table-top and role-playing games in general and to fans of Goblinoid Games' *Mutant Future* RPG in particular. The material contained herein are compatible with it and any others that use the "Basic" system introduced in the most popular role-playing games of the early 1970s and are easily adaptable to many other games (especially successor systems, to include those covered by the Open Game License).



location, the seed buries itself and a new trunk sprouts. The seedlings prefer to root in sand, but if none can be found, they can convert soil like the adults, but create a 5' diameter circle.

Most farmers and soil dwellers hate invading beach needles: a few can ruin a field of crops, the dashing seedlings are hard to notice, and the adults that do successfully grow in the fields are very territorial, attacking anything that casts a shadow over them. Once the needles are killed, the sand slowly reverts to soil, but this can take years or even decades. Some creatures — fast, agile, and persistent — hunt the dashing seeds, which are edible and taste like pine nuts. In some farm communities, the seed-casting season is a lively festival. One contest has the young racing after the high-speed seeds like children chasing greased piglets. This provides welcome entertainment (both parental pride and gambling) and exercise, while helping rid local areas of serious threats to the food supply.

Bear, Grub

No. Enc.: 0 (3d6)
 Alignment: Neutral
 Movement: 10' (3')
 Burrow 10' (3')
 Armor Class: 8
 Hit Dice: 1-3
 Attacks: 1 (bite)
 Damage: d3

Save: L1
 Morale: 4
 Hoard Class: None

Mutations: *aberrant form.*

Bear, Termite

No. Enc.: 0 (d4)
 Alignment: Neutral
 Movement: 120' (40')
 Armor Class: 5
 Hit Dice: 5
 Attacks: 3 (claws and bite)
 Damage: d3/d3/d6
 Save: L3
 Morale: 6
 Hoard Class: VI

Mutations: *aberrant form, larval form.*

Slightly larger than black bears, termite bears are found in temperate and subarctic forests. It may be the most common herbivore in the Russian and Canadian taiga, having evolved to feed on the spruce and fir trees covering these areas. It appears very similar to its ursine forebears, but this species has insect mouth parts, worm-like larvae, and serrated claws and mandibles that do double damage to plants. The grubs are 2-6' long mole-like carnivores that eat worms, rodents, and other burrowing animals. Both the bears and grubs are hunted by northern peoples as important sources of protein, as well as mandibles for trophies.

Orbital Flora

No. Enc.: 0 (1)
 Alignment: Neutral
 Movement: Um, very fast
 Armor Class: 5
 Hit Dice: 50
 Attacks: 4
 Damage: 4d6/4d6/4d6/4d6
 Save: L21
 Morale: 12
 Hoard Class: XXII (special)

Mutations: *abnormal size, energy ray, regenerative capacity, special.*

Cannon Tree

No. Enc.: 0 (1)
 Alignment: Neutral
 Movement: 0'
 Armor Class: 2
 Hit Dice: 24
 Attacks: 1 (blast)
 Damage: 30d12
 Save: L12
 Morale: 12
 Hoard Class: None

Mutations: *abnormal size, animate seed, bud sport, special.*

Although appearing to be a small forest of 500-1,000 trunks, the groves are really individual cannon trees with one root mass. These plants slowly produce organic explosive, and use it every few decades to speed seedlings into orbit. This is a dramatic event — and for those within 500' of the massive explosion, a traumatic one. Even the trees take a few years to recover. Fortunately, the adult trees are otherwise harmless.

Orbital flora are huge seedlings, visible even from the ground. Each cluster of 4-8 leaves grows to between 5,000 and 10,000' long, with a network of fine roots several miles in diameter. The flora use space dust, orbiting mining asteroids, and satellites as sources of minerals and ice water. When fully grown, the seedlings fall from orbit, breaking up into individual leaves that each become one cannon tree. The leaves slam back into the planet's surface, with impacts scattering over a very wide area (hundreds of square miles). From a distance, this amazing sight looks like a meteor shower. Up close, the impact zone close is like an artillery strike: most of the leaves burn up during reentry, but the remaining material carries tremendous kinetic energy. The plants prefer temperate forests, but their usual reproductive method and innate toughness allows them to live anywhere on land. However, if the light and soil are poor, it takes the plant longer to build up the needed explosives. Some people do attempt to harvest this material, usually ending up in tiny pieces — but that does not stop others from trying. Those using metal tools to dig up the explosive roots cause a major explosion and take 6d6 points of damage, save versus energy attacks for half.

Yellow Man

No. Enc.: 3d6 (3d6)
 Alignment: Chaotic
 Movement: 60' (20')
 Armor Class: 8



Hit Dice: 10
 Attacks: 1 (bite)
 Damage: 3d4
 Save: L8
 Morale: 12
 Hoard Class: None

Mutations: *aberrant form (natural weapon), bizarre appearance, increased strength, slow movement.*

Cave Slug

No. Enc.: d4 (d4)
 Alignment: Neutral
 Movement: 60' (20')
 Swim 60' (20')
 Armor Class: 6
 Hit Dice: 6
 Attacks: 2 (antennae)
 Damage: Class 3 poison/Class 3 poison
 Save: L3
 Morale: 6
 Hoard Class: XX

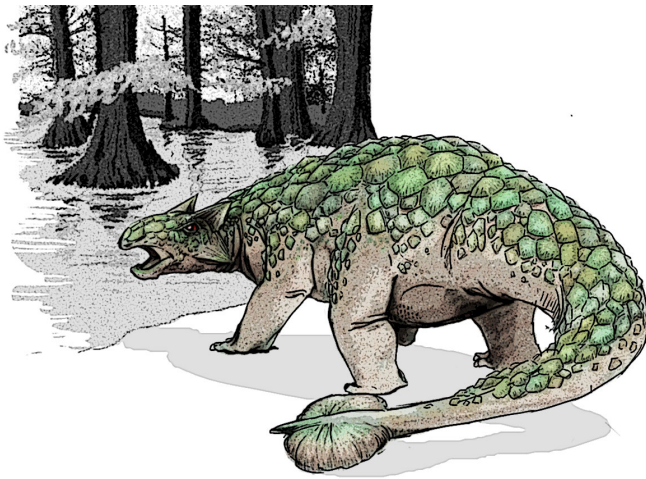
Mutations: *aberrant form, epidermal susceptibility (sunlight/UV light), gigantism, larval form, toxic weapon.*

Cave slugs are 10' long, pallid gastropods found in humid places underground. They scavenge dead plants and animals, but also eat anything they kill with their antenna poison. The non-sapient larvae appear almost human, but the chemical structure of their muscles gives them slimy, bright yellow skin and great strength. Yellow men are powerful, voracious predators that attack anything possibly edible and not much larger than themselves, grinding chunks of flesh from their prey using teeth similar to a slug's rastula. Initially 2' tall, yellow men can eat enough to reach their full-sized, 12' tall form in only a few weeks. After this, they eat less and travel to find new sewers or underwater rivers to colonize, and will transform into cave slugs within a year. Unlike the adult form, yellow men can survive sunlight and UV rays, and are occasionally found swarming above ground.

Scaled Ape

No. Enc.: 2d4 (3d6)
 Alignment: Chaotic
 Movement: 150' (50')
 Climb 90' (30')
 Armor Class: 4
 Hit Dice: 6
 Attacks: 2 (claws)
 Damage: d4+3/d4+3
 Save: L3
 Morale: 10
 Hoard Class: None

Mutations: *aberrant form, natural armor.*



Clubtail

No. Enc.: d4 (2d6)
 Alignment: Neutral
 Movement: 90' (30')
 Climb 30' (10')

Armor Class: 2
 Hit Dice: 14
 Attacks: 1 or 1 or 1 (weapon or tail or fist)
 Damage: Weapon or 3d8 or d8
 Save: L14
 Morale: 10
 Hoard Class: XX

Mutations: *aberrant form (xenomorphism), larval form.*

Except for their huge arms and hands, these 18-24' long, sapient ankylosaurs might have waddled straight out of the Cretaceous. They may appear fearsome — given their size; heavy, spiked, bony armor; and a massive, mace-tipped tail — but clubtails are rather peaceful omnivores that eat mostly vegetation. They make their way in muscle-reliant industries like lumber harvesting, and trade with smaller folk for artifacts and rare food, such as fruit, honey, and fish that they cannot get on their own.

But trading can be difficult, as clubtails live in small communities away from other peoples, in tropical dry forests and plains. They are not xenophobic, but afraid of their offspring. The young are named “scaled apes,” because they look like chimpanzees with lizard skin. Possibly cute, these non-sapient beasts are really violent carnivores and attack everything, including their elders. Some clubtail communities use sound to manage the apes, but most corral and control their terrible children with primitive technology. Outsiders might suggest high walls, but the apes can climb, something the adults retain, so guards would still be necessary.

Stone Eater

No. Enc.: 2d6 (3d8)
 Alignment: Neutral
 Movement: 120' (40')
 Armor Class: 5

Hit Dice: 2
 Attacks: 3 (claws and sting)
 Damage: d3/d3/d4
 Save: L1
 Morale: 6
 Hoard Class: Gems

Mutations: *gigantism, toxic weapon, special.*

Crystal Scorpion

No. Enc.: 1 (1)
 Alignment: Neutral
 Movement: 180' (60')
 Armor Class: -1
 Hit Dice: 8
 Attacks: 3 (claws and sting)
 Damage: 2d6/2d6/d6
 Save: L4
 Morale: 8
 Hoard Class: Gems

Mutations: *gigantism, larval form, toxic weapon, special.*

Terrifying and beautiful, these huge arthropods have exoskeletons covered with gems and other crystals. This acts as armor better than almost anything the Ancients’ technology could provide. Ranging from 8'-12' long, crystal scorpions are a serious physical threat to other desert dwellers, preying on anything smaller than themselves. They have an acidic toxin that does 2d6 damage to flesh and wood, 3d6 damage to metal, and 5d6 damage to stone. This effective weapon is really intended to break apart stones so the creatures can get the minerals within, which are eaten and accrete to the exoskeleton after the next molt.

Crystal scorpions eat their shed exoskeletons to keep the minerals. Some cunning denizens have tried to craft armor from dead scorpion carapace. Sadly, it becomes rigid and useless for armor once the animal dies. But the gems within the exoskeleton retain their value, worth between 100-500 gp for a larval shell and 5,000+ gp for a large adult. The larval stone eaters are not much different from the adult crystal scorpions, just smaller (1'-4' long) with a weaker exoskeleton, because they have not had years’ worth of crystals embedded in their shells. However, their toxin is just as potent as an adult’s.

Arboreal Slug

No. Enc.: 0 (4d10)
 Alignment: Neutral
 Movement: 30' (10')
 Armor Class: 8
 Hit Dice: 2
 Attacks: 1 (acidic slime)
 Damage: d4
 Save: L1
 Morale: 6
 Hoard Class: None

Mutations: *dermal acidic slime, special.*

Racing Spider

No. Enc.: 0 (2d6)
Alignment: Neutral
Movement: 360' (120')
Armor Class: 4
Hit Dice: 6
Attacks: 1 (bite)
Damage: 3d4
Save: L4
Morale: 8
Hoard Class: None

Mutations: *gigantism, larval form, quickness, toxic weapon.*

The racing spider is an uncommon, but feared, predator of the temperate forests. These 5' long mutant wolf spiders hunt in packs, moving equally fast through the trees or on the ground. Rather than stalk or ambush prey, the spiders rely on speed to run down anything that looks edible, overpower it with numbers, and inject it with a class 7 poison. Because of their brown and green coloration, at a distance, the spiders look like charging grass stems.

The spiders lay their eggs at the base of maples or birch. The resulting dull brown offspring grow to look like huge millipedes, 3'-6' long with 10 legs per foot of length. They are called slugs because of their slow speed, not their physical appearance. Like tent caterpillars, the slugs cover their food tree with silk to keep out predators, but they almost always kill the tree. The silk is covered with an acid the slugs renew daily. This compound does 1d4 points of damage on contact or 10d4 points of damage per day to the tree and anything else wrapped up. The silk tent is not a chrysalis, merely a protective barrier; when it is time for the slugs to become spiders, they transform within their exoskeletons.

Ewl, Larval

No. Enc.: d4 (d4)
Alignment: Neutral
Movement: 90' (30')
Climb 30' (10')
Armor Class: 7
Hit Dice: 5
Attacks: 1 (bite)
Damage: d3
Save: L1
Morale: 5
Hoard Class: VI

Mutations: *aberrant form (natural weapon, xenomorphism), bizarre appearance, natural armor.*

Ewl, Adult

No. Enc.: 1 (1)
Alignment: Chaotic
Movement: 150' (50')
Climb 60' (20')
Armor Class: 5
Hit Dice: 12

Attacks: 1 (bite)
Damage: d6
Save: L3
Morale: 8
Hoard Class: VII

Mutations: *aberrant form (natural weapon, xenomorphism), bizarre appearance, natural armor, special.*

An example of *forced metamorphosis*, ewls were humans exposed to pollen from the sandslug vine while infants. Throughout childhood the pollen's effects are not noticeable, and the ewls appear and act human. But at age ten, the creatures transform, losing all previous mutations, while gaining chitinous plates, fangs, climbing claws, and long purple fur. During the adolescent years, the creatures grow to between 6'-7' tall and their fur slowly changes to a reddish color. At about eighteen years old, ewls undergo a frightening mental change, becoming vicious and losing much of their human intelligence. Most ewls are killed when they show signs of purple fur but a few communities use them as guards until their fur turns red. Fortunately, the pollen does not affect mature humans, requiring a developing body to create ewls, but adults use the plants as boogymen to keep their children from playing in dangerous areas. There are also occasional rumors of overlord societies purposely exposing slave infants to the pollen, creating janissary-like warriors controlled by artifacts or mutations.

NEW MUTATIONS

Alter Atomic Composition

The mutant can change one material to another, both randomly selected at the time of character creation. Only d4 x WIL pounds can be affected per day. If the result is undesirable, then this mutation is considered a drawback. Roll twice on this chart:

d10	Random Materials
1	Soft Metal
2	Hard Metal
3	Rubber
4	Plastic
5	Stone
6	Wood
7	Ceramic (including glass)
8	Flesh (mindless)
9	Mutant Lord's pick
10	Player's pick

Bud Sport

This is the plant version of *aberrant form*.

Larval Form

The mutant's offspring have a different complement of mutations than the mutants. It may even be radically different from the adult. other string or rope. The webbing decays in 3 months.

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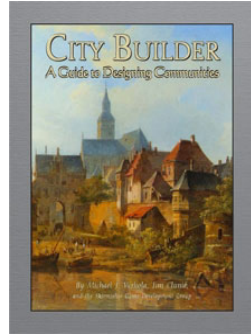
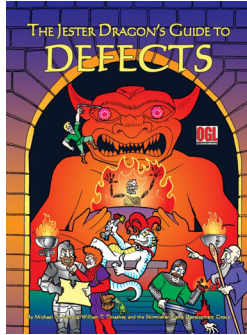
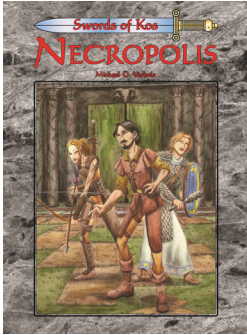
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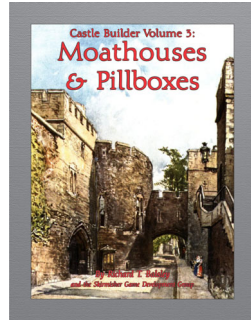
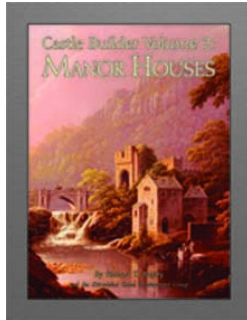
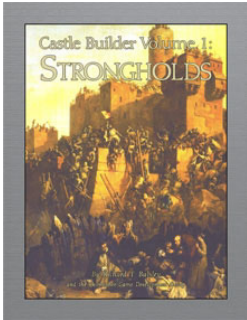
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