## INTRODUCTION

*Traditional fantasy role-playing games stand at a crossroads. In one direction lies development – different designs, new paradigms, and modern influences that fundamentally change the gaming experience – stimulating a role-playing community fatigued by decades of gathered assumptions and play. In the other direction lies preservation, where the old ways and standards are continued and the classic procedures, influences, and traditions of the games, and the hobby as a whole, are celebrated and exposed to new generations of gamers.*

*The first approach tends to fragment the hobby – and the community – and create confusion over the meaning of commonly shared, but differently used, terms. Not all change is progress. The other path leads to stagnation and orthodoxy. That's wonderful if traditional games are to be kept as museum pieces, but it tends to wring the magic and delight out of a game intended for actual play.*

*I am far more sympathetic to the traditionalists. I've been playing these games for twenty-five years now. I enjoy playing the game, and it's not for nostalgic reasons. The best gaming I have ever done has been in just the past couple of years, using the exact same systems I used when I was a pre-teen. I believe these games are not old, but rather timeless, and are in no way deficient when*

*directly compared to current games. And to prove this point, I do not just game with people like me; I have dice that are older than many of the players in my current group. Most of them never played these classic games before I came along. But every single one of them knows about the standards of the game, about the little tricks, and most importantly, about the monsters.*

*The monsters, a critical piece to any game that strives for the fantastic, have lost all sense of wonder. The common foes have bled into every other role-playing game, into video games, into "literature." A referee can come up with interesting settings, and players will react appropriately. A referee can come up with all sorts of plots, mundane and sublime, and players will react appropriately. A referee can devise fiendishly clever traps and players will exercise due caution. But no matter how obliquely a monster is described, you can be sure the second that description ends, players will act with almost-robotic predictability in their approach to fighting the monster. Of course they do!*

*Classic games challenge the player as much as the character, but when you're faced with a familiar monster, where's the challenge? Where is the fear, or the courage to overcome it? Where is the adventure?*

This lack of wonder has to end for the sake of the game. The true sense of danger must be restored. The cause of promoting traditional games as vibrant and timeless is hurt when a new player already knows all about an encountered monster even though his character has never seen one before. The cause is hurt when a referee has to scour three official monster books and still wants to look up things in periodicals and websites and third-party releases for ideas because he's desperate for something different with which to challenge players … and the cause is hurt when the players are so experienced that they recognize the creature immediately anyway.

This publication is my attempt to help referees everywhere reintroduce that sense of wonder by making it easy to introduce new and unique creatures into their game, on a consistent and constant basis, without taxing the referee's creative urges or putting unreasonable demands on his time. This is also for all the players who wish for fresh experiences from the game they so dearly love. This is for the game…

Or maybe you just want some cool new critters for your game and you wish I'd shut the hell up with all this ideology and commentary. Maybe your sense of wonder hasn't dulled after three decades. Don't worry, this book is for you, too.

This document is 100% compatible with any and all classic, class-based-with-six-ability-score fantasy role-playing games published before 1989 by those with knowledge of Tactics, Strategy, and Resourcefulness. It's also 100% compatible with modern recreations of those same games.

While the content in this book is not in any way "open," I want to make it perfectly clear that any creatures you create using this book are yours. Publish them on the Internet, publish them in your own commercial work, or just keep a notebook filled with your creations. Whatever you want. The method is mine, the results are all yours.

I do hope you will use this in your game, and I hope even more to hear about your play experiences using creatures generated with this book. Send me an e-mail at lotfp@lotfp.com, or leave a note on the Goodman Games forums. Simple praise or constructive criticism is also more than welcome.

May your notebook become filled with the sheets of dead characters played by those who thought they had seen it all.

EGG forever.

James Edward Raggi IV

## BUILDING THE MONSTER

A wizard's tower filled with the abominations of countless unknown experiments. The long-deserted shrine of a dread, forgotten god. Unexplored, hostile wilderness. The deepest recesses of the great underworld, between the strongholds where dark elves and mind-blasting squid-men dwell. In all these places, and more, lurk strange and terrifying creatures, the likes which have never been seen before. When in alien environments such as these, the tests to adventurers' bravery should be equally alien. Never mundane.

Creating suitable monstrosities for these locations is as simple as using the tables on the following pages and using a little bit of mindpower to meld them together into pieces of living imagination. After basic familiarity with the tables is gained, creating one of these creatures can be done in mere minutes – certainly in no more time than it takes to flip through a volume of game monsters, select a suitable example, and copy down its statistics into your adventure notes.

Each creature begins with the same base values, and as the details are filled in about the creature, these values will change. Referees should note that if they have a flash of inspiration, whether on their own or inspired by these tables, they are encouraged (urged!) to ignore the tables and die rolls in favor of their inspiration, using them only to fill in whatever details are needed. If a referee already has an idea for a creature and just needs some help in a few areas, they are free to use only the tables they wish.

Here is the basic information each creature starts with:

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|---|---|
| **Alignment** | At best, these creatures are merely animals. Perverted inversions of what was meant to be natural, yes, but perhaps they are just very hungry, very hostile animals and would be considered neutral in the grand wars of good and evil, law and chaos. If they are not natural, they are surely the worst of evil, living only to rend and tear without the intelligence to be formally aligned with any faction. Very chaotic in their actions, and very evil in their intent. |
| **AC** | Different versions of the game use AC differently. Some have a basic value of 10, or 9, and lowers as armor improves. Some have a basic level of 11 and increase as armor improves. Some use different values. No matter which version of the game is being used, every new creature's AC begins at the value possessed by an average, unarmored human. Whenever a creature is said to gain a bonus or penalty to AC, that respectively improves or lowers its AC, of course. |
| **Damage** | The base damage of each of the creature's attacks is 1d6. If there is a call during creature creation to increase a die *type*, then a d4 would become d6, d10 would become d12, 3d6 would become 3d8, etc. Decreasing a die type would make a d8 become a d6 and so on. Increasing the *number* of dice would result in 1d6 becoming 2d6, 2d4 becoming 3d4, with decreasing number of dice simply being the opposite. |
| **Experience** | Each game has its own way of calculating the experience value of defeated opponents. Use those guidelines, as it is out of the scope of this book to specifically note such details for each possible game. |
| **HD** | This is the most important detail for any new monster, and it is the one that is impossible to assign according to any set rule. It is up to the referee to decide how the creature is to be used. |

As one rough guideline, if the player characters are all first, second, or third level (on average), then the creature should be 1d4–2 + (average character level) HD. If the characters are between fourth and seventh level, then the creature should be 1d6+(half of the average character level) HD. If the characters are eight level or higher, then the creature should be 1d10+(half of the average character level). Perhaps the "dungeon level" where the creature is encountered could instead be used as a guide, with creatures on the first through third dungeon levels having 1d3–1 + (dungeon level) HD and, above that, 1d4+(dungeon level) HD. Note that these are very rough guidelines, and with the random nature of these creatures it would be impossible to give any sort of solid guidelines to determine what hit dice would be appropriate for any monster opposing any particular character level party.

Not that it is necessary to *balance* one of these creatures to the party. As long as the creature is not blocking any required goal or necessary path, a creature that the adventurers *must* run from can be a very good lesson for the foolhardy party. Adventurers are in hostile territory every second that they explore the unknown – and if they trust that a referee will never throw anything too tough in their way, the players will never respect their environment the way they should. Referees should nonetheless avoid an "instant-kill" situation, because that is just as unfair as making every creature a pushover.