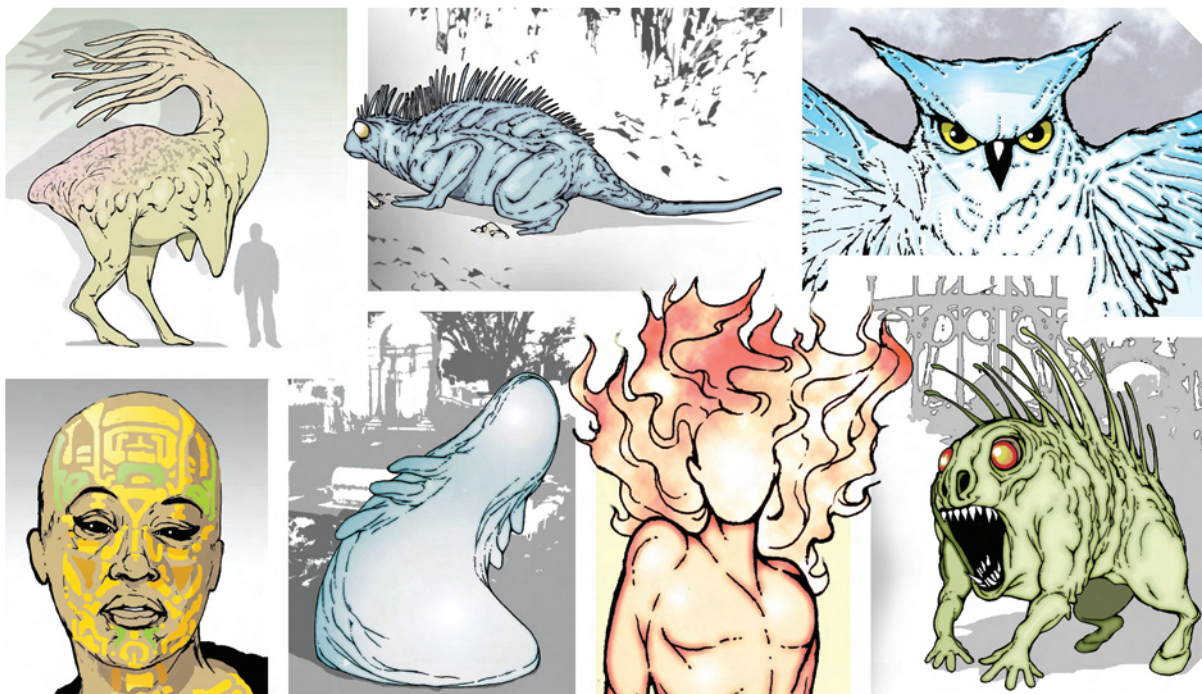


GURPS[®]

Fourth Edition

CREATURES OF THE NIGHT

VOL. 1



Written by **SCOTT MAYKRANTZ** and **JASON LEVINE**

Edited by **NIKOLA VRTIS**

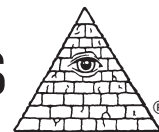
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Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the **GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition**. Page references that begin with B refer to that book, not this one.

INTRODUCTION

The creatures encountered in an adventure set the tone for the game. They should be appropriate to the genre, but still a surprise for players. *GURPS Creatures of the Night Vol. 1* provides the GM with an assortment of monsters, animals, and unnatural beings that are both versatile and specific, designed to create unforgettable conflicts and unexpected alliances with the characters.

These creatures use the abbreviated template for animals explained on p. B456, though a few feature full racial templates as described on p. B261.

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GREIDER (GRAVE WORM)

A greider is a semi-transparent worm that lives underground. It is at least 20 feet long; some are over 50 feet long. Greiders burrow through the earth toward graveyards, sensing the smell of rotten corpses, decomposing bodies, and coffins. They burrow slowly, taking weeks to cover just a few miles. Once a greider arrives under a graveyard, it begins to consume the corpses.

It worms its way into a grave, enveloping everything it finds – caskets, bones, clothing, jewelry, etc. The contents of the graves fill the greider's body. Anyone who sees it can peer through its thick, gummy skin and see bones, clothes, rotten faces, and body parts in every state of decomposition.

A giant, brainless slug that burrows under graveyards and swallows caskets and corpses.

While feeding, the greider stays underground, deep enough to be completely undetected by anyone on the surface. Once every grave has been sucked dry, it burrows away slowly and hibernates for months. Then it awakens and seeks out another graveyard.



Mind-Numbing Slugs

Greiders are big, soft targets, so anyone who wants to kill one could potentially do so easily. But the greider has a defense – a telepathic signal that numbs the minds of animals and people around it. If a greider encounters *any* living, moving creature bigger than a housecat, it will reflexively send out the numbing signal. It is not intelligent and doesn't discriminate between victims; it just senses danger and defends itself.

The range of the effect is determined by the size of the greider. A normal, 20-foot greider has a range of 20 yards. Every additional foot adds one yard to the range, to a maximum of 50 yards for a 50-foot greider. Anyone within the area of effect must make an immediate Will roll, with a new roll every minute. Failure lowers the victim's IQ by one for every point by which the Will roll was failed, to a maximum of -10! The IQ level stays reduced until the victim moves out of range or succeeds at a later resistance roll.

About 10% of all greiders are a special breed, with 2d pairs of dull white pseudopods running down the length of their body. These limbs are soft and useless, but they *greatly* increase the intensity of the effect; reduce the Will roll to resist by -1 for every two full pairs. In addition, the effects of a failed roll last for minutes equal to the number of pseudopods, while a successful roll only staves off the mind-numbing for one minute. Victims who leave the area of effect still recover immediately.

If a person fails the roll too many times, he may suffer lingering effects even after the greider is gone, dead, or the mind-numbing attacks otherwise end. If the effect lasts for over half an hour, the GM can pick an appropriate disadvantage (such as Indecisive or Confused) and a reasonable period of time (up to a few days) and give it to the victim.

Encounters with Greiders

Normally, greiders stay in underground tunnels beneath (or near) a graveyard for their entire life. They can also be found while shoveling out a new grave at a graveyard – the digging can lead to an accidental attack on a grave worm as a pick or shovel pierces its vulnerable soft hide.

There are a few events that can make them surface. One is a spell or magic ritual specifically designed to summon the creature. Another is a mausoleum (or other above-ground grave). If the mausoleum is in a graveyard, the greider might crawl up through the floor and devour everything inside. Once it feeds, it will burrow back down into the ground.

Greiders also go aboveground once a year to reproduce. A grave worm that's ready to divide surfaces slowly as the sun goes down, trying to sense other animals. If it feels safe, it rests in the glow of the stars and moon, gently splitting in two. By dawn, two half-size greiders sit in the place of the original. They immediately burrow into the earth and slowly travel in different directions.

Resurrection

Some people who have heard of greiders know that they can be used to bring someone back from the dead. In its most simple form, a Resurrection spell is easier to cast (or is more effective) when placed on a dead body that has been recently removed from inside a greider. Normally, a Resurrection spell

Margin-Based (Optional Rule)

Instead of causing a set effect, an Affliction with the Attribute Penalty enhancement, or an enhancement that adds or removes a leveled trait, can make that enhancement *Margin-Based*. This triples the cost of the enhancement, but the effect is multiplied by the subject's margin of failure (maximum $\times 10$). Thus, the greider pays +30% for its Attribute Penalty (-1 to IQ) enhancement, but a victim who fails his resistance roll by 4 is at -4 to his IQ instead of -1!

costs 300 energy, can only be attempted once, brings the subject to life at 0 FP and 0 HP, and takes two hours to cast. The GM must decide which requirements are altered and by how much. For example, the energy cost might be reduced to 100 and the spell can be attempted twice. Or, maybe the cost is just 1 point of energy, but the spell takes three hours and it must be cast while the corpse is inside the greider.

This property of greiders also works with the Zombie spell (and its variants) as well, halving the energy cost (round up) if the corpse remains inside the greider during the spell casting. In addition, any spellcaster who knows the Resurrection spell can choose to use it as if it were the Zombie spell (for half cost) on such corpses, by only bringing them halfway back to life!

Adventure Ideas

One of the easiest grave worm adventures is the simple, accidental encounter in an underground tunnel. The characters find a well-fed greider with dead bodies packed inside of it, attempt to escape from it before the mind-numbing effect is too debilitating, and continue through the tunnels to find the underside of the graveyard where the greider has been feeding. This can lead to encounters with undead monsters, cursed tombs, and all kinds of other fun things.

Another adventure involves the resurrection of someone, maybe even a dead PC. The characters find out that a grave worm has swallowed someone's fresh corpse, and they need to locate the worm and to bring that person back to life.

Or, the characters might encounter an evil sorcerer who has captured a greider, and numbs the minds of his enemies by exposing them to the creatures. He can then use spells to enslave the victims. Those who resist are fed to the grave worm.

ST 12-40; **DX** 4; **IQ** 4; **HT** 12.

HP 4-10; **Will** 10; **Per** 10; **Speed** 4.00; **Dodge** 7; **Move** 2.

SM +3 to +6; 500-7,500 lbs.

Traits: Affliction 1 (Will; Area Effect, 20-50 yards; Attribute Penalty, Margin-Based, -1 to IQ; Based on Will; Cosmic, Irresistible Attack; Emanation; Nuisance Effects, Maximum duration one minute or until victim leaves area, Resistance gives immunity for one minute)*; Detect (Corpses); Doesn't Breathe; Easy to Kill 4; Invertebrate; Tunneling 1; Wild Animal.

* Greiders with pseudopods have a higher level of Affliction

GUARDIAN OWL

This creature is born when a wizard turns himself into an ordinary-looking owl to ensure that someone he cares about will never die. The transformation is voluntary and permanent. Though he maintains his intelligence and awareness of his own identity, he loses everything else – no spells, no ability to speak, and no ability to change back. (He does not become a were-owl.)

As long as the guardian owl is alive, the person he protects cannot die. He does not have to protect this person directly; there is no need to attack someone who tries to harm his ward, for example. The guardian owl only needs to be alive and within half a mile of the protected person. The protected person does not have to know the guardian owl is protecting him or her; in fact, he or she might not even know the guardian owl exists. The owl's ward can be injured, crippled, or knocked unconscious, but his or her survival is ensured, and the wounds (even crippling ones) will heal quickly.

The protected person ages normally. The owl, however, does not age. When the protected person dies from old age, the guardian owl dies.

A human in animal form who secretly protects someone.

Extended Senses

If the guardian owl makes its home in one place (because the person it protects does not travel), it builds up a psychic rapport with the local animals. If it stays for over a year, that rapport extends to the landscape as well.

An owl in touch with nearby animals can send out a simple command to any single animal or swarm of insects in sight. (The target returns to its normal life as soon as the action is completed.) The owl can also draw on the memories of any animal within 100 yards, though this requires constant concentration. Either ability necessitates an IQ roll; no normal animal will resist, and sapient or possessed creatures are immune.



The owl's connection with the landscape allows it to sense intruders and any other unusual activity for half a mile around it on a Perception roll. He gets impressions, not detailed information – he realizes that something is going on somewhere nearby, but will have to investigate to find out more.

The Transformation and the Temporary Return

The wizard who becomes a guardian owl does so voluntarily. He wants to protect someone so badly that he is willing to give up his normal life – and his ability to cast spells – to make sure that person stays alive. The GM should come up with an interesting back story for this: The wizard could be protecting his child, a woman he loves, or someone who once saved his life.

The transformation takes a full day. It is a spell (“Become Guardian”). The GM could require a large energy cost to cast the spell, but that isn't necessary. If anyone wants to learn the spell, the energy required should be less important than the decision to cast it.

To make a guardian owl more useful in an adventure, GMs can allow it to change back into its wizard form just once. This lasts for no more than 12 hours: If the change happens at night, the wizard returns to his owl form w

hen the sun rises. If the change happens during the day, he reverts at sunset. In his wizard form, he is weak (his ST is no more than 7), but he regains his ability to cast the spells he knew before the transformation.

During this brief period, the protected ward can die. The wizard knows this, yet it is a risk he may feel is worth taking.

An Owl's Protection

A guardian owl's ward gains Regeneration (Regular; Granted by Guardian Owl, -40%) [15], Regrowth (Granted by Guardian Owl, -40%) [24], and Unkillable 2 (Granted by Guardian Owl, -40%) [60]. In addition, he should take the owl as an Ally or Patron (a typical guardian owl is a 200-point NPC) with the Special Abilities modifier. Unless he commonly leaves his home via transportation that is faster than the guardian owl can fly, the frequency of appearance should be “constantly.”

Other Types of Guardians

Guardians can take forms other than an owl, such as a snake, a wolf, or an eagle. The guardian could be an unusual type of animal, like a fish, a worm, or a butterfly. Or, it could be something really different: an object (a ring, a throne, a crystal ball), a tree, or a structure (a mausoleum, a gate). These alternative types are up to the GM and should be appropriate for the campaign; it is easy to imagine a guardian eagle, but a guardian throne is more of a challenge to incorporate into the campaign.

GMs can also allow different types of characters to become a guardian owl. For example, it could be someone who has no spellcasting power – maybe someone who is cursed, or an ordinary person who is the subject of the guardian owl spell.

Finally, the guardian might protect something other than a living person, such as a place, an object, or even an idea.

The *place* could be a field, the mouth to a cave, or a forest road. A place can't die, so the owl's protection comes in the form of preventing it from being destroyed or transformed. The field, for example, could not be developed into a suburban neighborhood. No matter how hard the developers try, something always goes wrong.

Protection of an *object* is the same, but the owl will have trouble staying with it if it is small and portable. If it protects a ring, for instance, someone might grab it and carry it away. If the owl can't follow the ring, the protection ends. This form of protection can create strange situations if the guardian is an object and it protects an object (“As long as this guardian tree lives and the ring remains nearby, it cannot be destroyed. But once that ring moves far from the tree . . .”)

Protecting an *idea* can lead to fun and interesting situations. Instead of a wizard taking the form of a guardian to protect a prince, the wizard could protect the idea of royalty – as long as the guardian stays in the castle, there will always be a king.

Adventure Idea

The player characters meet a woman in a village who has survived the plague and an attack by a wild dog. She lived through the ruin of her home as well. (The fire burned her most of her body. Although her skin was permanently scarred, she survived.)

If the characters talk to her (and a few locals), they learn the legend of the guardian owl. They hear a tale of the day she saved an old wizard from drowning when she was a teenager. Some think that the wizard has somehow become her guardian.

If they ask the right questions about how she cheated death, they discover that she always survived in a subtle but miraculous way. (It's her secret exactly how she survived, but a few villagers have part of the information.)

The villagers are scared of her and want her dead . . . or driven out. But they fear the charm of the wizard. It is up to the player characters to resolve the tension in the village. If successful, they will earn the gratitude of a formerly powerful wizard.

ST 3; DX 13; IQ 15; HT 11.

Will 15; Per 15; Speed 6.00; Dodge 9; Move 2 (Ground).

SM -4; 3 lbs.

Traits: Claws (Sharp); Detect (Activity; Limited to 1/2 mile; Long-Range 1; Vague)*; Enhanced Move 0.5 (Air Move 18); Fanaticism (Protecting ward); Feature (Life force linked to ward); Flight (Winged; Air Move 12); Mind Control (Based on IQ; Limited to 1/2 mile; Long-Range 1; Only on normal animals; Suggestion)*; Mind Probe (Based on IQ; Long-Range 1; Only on normal animals; Ranged)*; No Fine Manipulators; Teeth (Sharp Beak).

Skills: Thaumatology-15, plus other relevant skills from its previous human form, but no spells.

* Guardian owls with a traveling ward might not have this ability (see *Extended Senses*, p. 5).

HARRIAD

A harriad is a six-inch-tall demon composed of light and smokeless flame. It has the shape of a beautiful woman.

Each harriad appears out of nowhere and presents itself to a solitary, ambitious person. It strikes a bargain: It will create opportunities for the person to become rich and powerful, but there is a price. As the victim's wealth and influence increase, his appearance decreases.

Because the harriad appears only to someone who desperately wants power and wealth (someone who has Greed, Megalomania, Selfish, or an appropriate form of Obsession), most find it hard to resist the deal. The character must make a self-control roll (a Will roll in the case of Megalomania) to turn down the offer.

Once the deal is made, opportunities for advancement come quick. The character will have trouble *not* rising in status, moving up the corporate ladder, advancing to the next rank, learning the secrets of the inner circle, etc. The money comes easily, almost as a fringe benefit of the increased authority and social standing.

The physical deterioration begins with obvious cosmetic changes. The changes become more extreme, extending to minor health problems and permanent physical transformations. The character's body becomes bloated or disturbingly thin. Blemishes on his face become fat, red sores. His hair falls out of his head in uneven clumps – and grows in all the wrong places on other parts of his body. His teeth become brownish-yellow. Other disfigurements also occur.

The character can try to alter his appearance with medical treatment, magic, or simply covering up. Every tactic works – at first. But within days, each tactic loses its effectiveness.

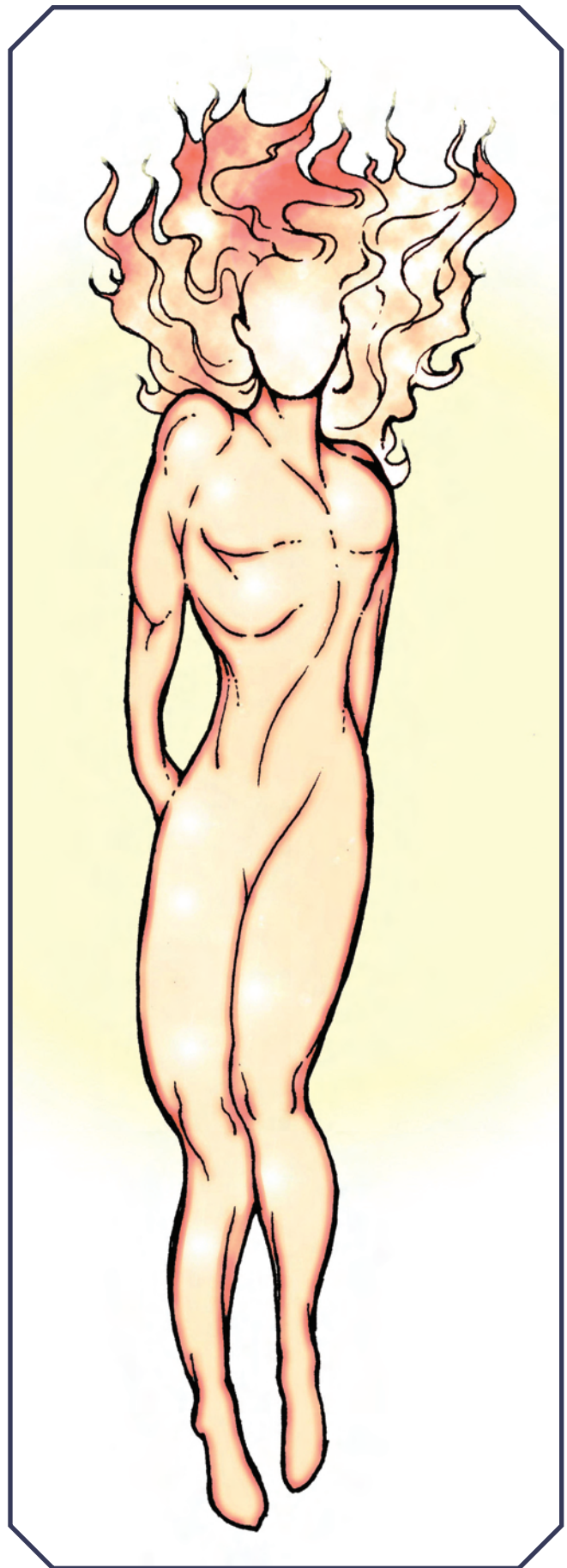
While this is happening, the harriad is pleased. It feeds off of the psychic energy from the character. Something about the contradiction of the attraction of power and physical repulsion satisfies it like a drug.

Once the transformation has begun, the harriad is visible to other people. It will remain in the same place, so the character can easily put it somewhere safe and secret. Anyone who comes close enough will see that the flickering flame is alive and clearly magical.

A small demon that makes someone rich and powerful, at the expense of personal appearance.

Power and Degeneration

Every 1d weeks, increase the character's Status by one level. If he actively works to advance faster, reduce this to 1d-2 weeks. As Status increases, the character's Wealth level rises to an appropriate level (see table, p. B517). This will continue until the victim is at Status 6 (and Multimillionaire 2), the upper limit of the harriad's ability.



Every increase in Status causes a corresponding loss of appearance, reflected in the following pattern of disadvantages and lost advantages.

If the victim has a positive Appearance level, immediately lower it to Average (as a single “step.”) Then remove the Voice advantage. After that, lower Appearance, one level at a time, until it reaches Hideous. Then add Bad Smell. Next, if the victim was Overweight or Fat, add Very Fat; otherwise, add Skinny. Then roll 1d and add either Disturbing Voice (1-3) or Hunchback (4-6). Then lower Appearance, one level at a time, until it reaches Monstrous.

If the character doesn't have the advantage in question or already has the disadvantage given on the list, skip to the next step. (For example, an Unattractive victim who lacks the Voice advantage would lower his Appearance to Ugly as the first step.) GMs should customize the special effects or adjust the traits on the list to reflect the path to wealth and power. When the character is Monstrous, the Harriad is satisfied and prepares to leave.

How to Kill a Harriad

Harriads are essentially living flames, and can be snuffed out as easily as a campfire. A single crushing blow or explosion that does at least 1 point of damage will destroy it. The same effect can be achieved with a burst of air.

It cannot be killed with water or by smothering its flame. Its magical fire does not need oxygen or any kind of fuel.

Vanishing

The character can sense the harriad's intention to leave a few days before it happens. If he doesn't prevent it from escaping, it vanishes in a puff of smoke, and the subject's wealth and power are no longer protected. Resourceful and smart characters may be able to maintain their wealth and status. Should a PC victim have paid points to establish any of the wealth as “his,” that amount should remain. It decreases if the character makes the wrong choices (or has bad luck), losing what he gained.

Regardless, once the harriad vanishes, the character's appearance remains at its current level permanently. If the harriad is killed – or a trapped harriad is stolen – the same result takes place.

A quick-thinking character can easily capture the demon before it vanishes. The harriad is so drunk on the energy from the transformation, it can be lured into a bottle and caught. A trapped harriad becomes very unhappy, demanding to be released, but it is unable to escape. The character's appearance, wealth, and power are maintained at the current level. He can increase his wealth and power through his own talents, but he cannot lose it, even if he is reckless and stupid, as long as the harriad remains in his control.

Breaking the Curse

There are two ways for a character to end the deal with a harriad and regain his normal appearance. The first is to defeat the harriad in a specific way. If the GM devises a special method (such as a game of riddles, a quest, or a special ritual), the character should be allowed to discover this method and attempt to use it.

The second method is to voluntarily give away all of the acquired wealth and power. This should require the same self-control rolls involved in the original temptation. The character must become homeless and penniless, renouncing any influence or power that he may have had. He regains his normal Appearance, plus one level, and effectively gains a level of Social Regard (Respected) for as long as he lives a modest life.

Origins

This creature comes from Arab folklore. Its original name is harrii'ad – the harrii demon. It appears in folk tales as the secret force behind the rise to power of corrupt, opportunistic men. There are other Arab demons from these “devil's contract” tales: the ebaddi'ad (offers perfect health in exchange for sacrifices), and the jhani'ad (offers love in exchange for money). They look alike except for their coloration. The harrii'ad is red, the ebaddi'ad is yellow, and the jhani'ad is white.

The original “deal-demon” tales are set in the eighth and ninth centuries. Some of them have been updated for the modern era by contemporary storytellers.

Adventure Idea

This adventure takes place in the Middle East, in the modern day. The player characters meet someone who has just made a deal with a harriad. They become his key associates as he begins his rise to the top. As they see him transform, they help him hide his appearance, seek medical treatment, and look for a cure, along with other jobs that need to be taken care of. Before long, price becomes no object, as he becomes a major executive of an oil company, and a confidant of Arab leaders.

The adventure reaches its climax when the harriad is stolen by a rival. The PCs' patron is having trouble staying on top, and they need to find the harriad soon before his empire crumbles.

ST 2; **DX** 14; **IQ** 14; **HT** 16.

Will 20; Per 14; Speed 7.50; Dodge 10; Move 7.

SM -6; 0 lbs.

Traits: Addiction (Appearance loss); DR 40 (Limited, Fire); Doesn't Breathe; Doesn't Eat or Drink; Doesn't Sleep; Fragile (Unnatural); Immunity to Metabolic Hazards; Injury Tolerance (Diffuse); Regeneration (Extreme); Unaging; Vulnerability x4 (Crushing; Wind).

Skills: Money!-16*.

* A wildcard skill (p. B175), which replaces Administration, Fast-Talk, Finance, Merchant, and other appropriate skills used to obtain wealth and broker deals.

The harriad's ability to turn ugliness into wealth and power is a plot device, and thus is not represented above.

LYTHERIONS

Lytherions look like normal people who are completely covered in tattoos. They come in all shapes, races, and ages. Their only obvious unnatural traits are the pattern and color of the tattoos (always intricate, beautiful, and colorful), and their dark eyes. A closer inspection reveals that they have black tongues and no fingerprints.

Tattooed people who attract supernatural forces.

Tattoos and Transformation

A lytherion is created when an ordinary person submits to a complex and dangerous ritual in which mystical symbols are tattooed on his body with powerful toxins. The lytherions never perform this ritual on an unwilling subject. They will only consider someone who has earned their trust, and who understands what he will become if he survives the transformation.

The ritual begins with the preparation of the tattooing ink, blended from natural pigments and exotic poisons. This requires basic cooking gear, an hour of work, and a roll against both Poisons and Hidden Lore (Lytherion). Failure on either roll ruins the batch, but the preparer usually realizes this and can start over with fresh ingredients; a critical failure will kill the subject at the end of the ritual.

Using consecrated needles, the lytherion tattoos mystical symbols on the subject's entire body. This takes eight man-hours of work and a roll against both Artist (Body Art) and Symbol Drawing (Lytherion). A failure on either roll can be recovered with a second roll at -5; further failure ruins the ritual but does not immediately kill the subject.

The toxins then work their way into the subject's body, causing Severe Pain (p. B429) and requiring a HT roll every hour to avoid taking 1d-1 damage. Medical care can lessen the pain, but nothing will stop the process; antivenins will make it worse, reducing the roll to HT-2! If the ritual was botched, this continues for 1d+1 days and will likely be fatal. Otherwise, after 24 hours, a surviving subject undergoes a physical and psychological transformation, reborn in his new skin as a lytherion.

The mystical markings are specific to each lytherion, and can be used to identify a particular individual without error by anyone with the Hidden Lore (Lytherion) skill, or by someone who succeeds at an Occultism-4 roll. This reveals basic details about the subject's creation, including the artist responsible, when the ritual took place, and where it happened. The coloration of the symbols gradually shifts over time; anyone in contact with a lytherion for at least a month will notice this change on a Perception-4 roll. This roll, as well as any Occultism roll to identify a lytherion, is at +1 for every three full months spent in the lytherion's company.



Supernatural Feature: Mystic Tattoos

Your body is covered in slowly shifting tattoos that cannot be removed, dyed over, or disguised. They can be covered up by clothing. They can be used to identify you and determine your background, which can be both a blessing and a curse. In addition to any Social Stigma or Appearance level this may cause, anyone who spends a great deal of time with you will react at -2 as your tattoos change over time. Occultism rolls to deduce your secret are at +1 for every three months spent in your company. -10 points.

A Diet of Poisons

Lytherions have a digestive system that reverses the nature of toxins. They need a steady diet of poison, venom, and (weak) acid – at least a few ounces per meal. Normal food and drink make them sick. Without this diet, they will slowly starve to death just like a normal human. Due to this reversal, antivenins and antitoxins affect lytherions as if they were the poisons that they normally stop.

Ironically, lytherion blood and flesh is not poisonous. Their bodies convert the poisons they consume into healthy nutrients and energy, removing all trace of toxicity. This transformation is the source of their power. It gives them superhuman health and supernatural attraction (see below). It also slows the speed at which they age; each lytherion has a life expectancy of 500 to 700 years.

Lytherions are experts at locating and concocting the poisons they need. They pass this information to each other through an oral tradition. Only the most recently created lytherion will lack the Poisons skill. Some of the older lytherions have related skills such as Chemistry, Pharmacy, Herb Lore, and Alchemy.

Attraction of the Supernatural

Whether they want to or not, lytherions bring out the supernatural potential in the people and situations around them. They attract strange forces, stir up the occult atmosphere, and shift the natural balance of what is real and unreal. This causes minor supernatural forces to evolve and ensures that strange and unexpected events happen wherever the lytherion goes. It is not a sudden or overt effect – a lytherion on horseback does not leave fairies and will-o'-wisps in his wake. It builds up gradually when the lytherion settles down for at least few days.

Their presence enhances local legends, makes folklore real, and improves the chances that magic events occur. Ordinary people who spend time near a lytherion subconsciously sense this ambient magical energy. In a low-mana world, magicians and magical items are raised to their full potential, often causing what were thought to be mundane objects to suddenly exhibit strange powers. In a normal-mana world, non-mages who have picked up a bit of “hedge

witchery” knowledge – perhaps a core skill such as Ritual Magic or Thaumatology (see *Ritual Magic*, p. B242) – suddenly find they can use rituals and chants to produce actual results.

Anyone with innate magical or psychic powers who spends a few days in the same area as a lytherion will feel their powers emerge. The presence of a lytherion acts as a catalyst, which can justify players upgrading their latent abilities to actual ones as well as the GM gifting characters with unexpected magical powers.

While the magnetism of a single lytherion is relatively subtle, two or more can be dangerous. The combination of their energies pushes the local supernatural level too high, exponentially increasing the number of strange and inconvenient events. The mana level remains the same, as the environment bleeds away any excess to fuel these flashes of weirdness. Because of this, all but the most callous lytherions avoid settling down together, only meeting for short periods of time to interact and catch up. They rely on different types of remote communication to maintain friendships and share information. The specific type of remote communication depends on the game world, from written messages to global computer networks.

Lytherions cannot breed. Their only way of producing offspring is to transform normal humans.

Additional Options

To make things more interesting, the GM can add either of the following two options:

Toxin-Fueled Aura

If the diet of poisons, venom, and acid is pure and potent, the lytherion's effect on local supernatural forces becomes stronger – and less random. This requires the toxins consumed over the course of a day's meals to be of the same amount and quality as those used to tattoo a new lytherion (see *Which Poisons?*, p. 11). If so, the lytherion can make a Will roll after the last meal to interrupt the flow of supernatural energy he emits for one full day, essentially turning off his magical aura.

The lytherion stores this interrupted energy internally, and can spend it all (in a single burst) once on the *following* day, when his aura is active again. This gives the lytherion a limited amount of control; he could clear up a cloudy day but could not dispel a hurricane. Follow the guidelines for Wild Ability (*GURPS Powers*, p. 90), bearing in mind that the GM can justify almost any effect as long as it makes “magical sense.”

If more than one lytherion is involved, they can coordinate the interruptions, making the effects even more selective. This allows a handful of lytherions to conspire to create and control magical forces around them, like powerful wizards who reach out with invisible hands to manipulate every supernatural force in the area.

Vampire Rivals

Lytherions are natural rivals of vampires, due to the similarities between the two creatures. Both live for centuries, are immune to normal diseases, and heal quickly. Both need a special diet and must hide their supernatural origins. Both were once human and can pass for human.

Vampires are too territorial to live comfortably among lytherions. They get nervous when they feel the local occult forces rising. The lytherions see vampires as obsessive predators, little more than animals with pretensions of civility.



Vampires plot to kill a lytherion if they find one. Lytherions are always on the look-out for vampires, and they band together to defend themselves when they find any. This rivalry has favored the lytherions over the centuries – they use their ability to live among normal people (and their freedom to be active in daylight) to stay one step ahead.

Adventure Ideas

Lytherions were designed to fit into the underclass of any society, from medieval life to science fiction slums. They are lightning rods for mystic storms, and they generally use their power wisely. Although some lytherions have low intelligence, most are shrewd, wielding their power as effectively as possible.

In any setting featuring traveling circuses, particularly in the 19th and early 20th centuries, lytherions are often the secret ingredient. The circus owners know that if they have a lytherion with them, the sideshow attractions and magical exhibitions will gradually develop real supernatural traits. The lytherion will either be part of the administration of the circus or one of the performers, kept happy with a regular diet of toxins and poisons obtained by the circus owners.

One way to start a campaign is with the player characters as ordinary teenagers who meet a lytherion when the circus comes to town. They discover its secrets and find evidence that local supernatural forces are rising. One of their older friends disappears, and they learn he has decided to become a lytherion. They might try to save him, or they might stay in the background as he struggles to transform. The adventure climaxes with the player characters developing innate magical powers the night before the circus leaves.

Lytherion

274 points

Attribute Modifiers: HT +3 [30].

Advantages: Extended Lifespan 3 [6]; Immunity to Disease [10]; Immunity to Poisons (Treats antivenins as poison, -40%) [9]; Mana Enhancer 1 (Area Effect, 256 yards, +450%; Nuisance Effect, Causes strange events, brings out latent abilities in strangers, and interacts poorly with other lytherion auras, -15%; Onset, 1 day, -30%) [253]; Regeneration (Normal) [25].

Perks: No fingerprints [1].

Disadvantages: Restricted Diet (Poisons and toxins) [-20]; Secret (Lytherion) [-10]; Social Stigma (Minority Group; “Tattooed Freak”) [-10]; Supernatural Feature (Mystical Tattoos, p. 10) [-10]; Unnatural Features (Dark eyes; Black tongue) [-2]; Weirdness Magnet [-15].

Racially Learned Skills: Hidden Lore (Lytherion) (A) IQ-1 [1]-9.

Racial Skill Modifiers: +3 to Poisons [6].

Lenses: Optionally, apply one or both of the following:
Toxin-Fueled Aura: Wild Talent (Accessibility, Only after interruption, -40%; Mana-Sensitive, -10%; Wild Ability, +50%) [20]. Add Switchable (Limited by Minimum Duration, One Day; Requires Will Roll; Trigger, Exotic poisons), +45%, to Mana Enhancer [22].

Vampire Rivals: Enemies (Nearby vampires; Hunter; 6 or less) [-15].

Which Poisons?

The poisons used by lytherions are kept intentionally vague, to better allow the GM to fit this race into any campaign. The toxins for the tattooing ink involved in the creation ritual should be difficult to obtain (requiring a specific Contact or a great deal of roleplaying and Streetwise rolls) and expensive (about 10% of starting wealth). If the GM allows them to be grown locally, the cuttings will cost ten times as much and require regular rolls against both Poisons and Farming to cultivate properly.

The day-to-day dietary needs of the lytherions, on the other hand, should be relatively easy to obtain, costing only slightly more than what a normal human would spend on his meals. In a low-tech game, snake venom and toxins extracted from plant leaves can suffice, while the pest control section of the local store will do in a modern game.

NERLOCH

Nerlochs appear as thin, pale humans in tattered robes. Their faces look like skulls with flesh stretched across the bones, and their elbows and shoulders poke at their robes like knife-points.

Their skin is disturbingly pale because they are always underground. They live in tunnels and caves, deep below the surface world. They do not require food, water, or sunlight. They are neither alive or dead; they are undead creatures, animated corpses kept alive through their dark god's power.

They are always found in groups, from three to 10, with rare bands of larger numbers (To randomly determine the number encountered, roll 2d+1. If the result is 11 or more, add another 4d.)

Underground zombies who paralyze victims and feed them to their sleeping god.

Set into the forehead of every nerloch is a glowing gemstone. This hard, smooth bump shines with a dim light that is undetectable except in complete darkness, where it is bright enough to illuminate faces, shoulders, and chests.

The nerlochs' claws cut for only 1d-4 (minimum 1) damage, but their black fingernails are coated with a slimy poison that can paralyze anyone they scratch. The poison is long lasting but weak, requiring multiple doses to have any effect. For every unarmed attack that does at least 1 point of damage, the victim must make a Will roll. If the victim fails five Will rolls, he is paralyzed.

The paralysis lasts for 2d hours. (Roll separately for each character.) Victims can see, hear, think, and breathe, but speaking takes great effort and moving a limb is nearly impossible. A successful ST-4 roll is needed to say a few words. A successful ST-10 roll is required to use a limb for one simple action.

Nerlochs are quick and agile but not very smart. With minds just slightly more advanced than a dog, they function primarily on instinct. They do not communicate beyond single-syllable words, their vocabulary is limited to about twenty words, they are illiterate, they do not create complex plans, and they do not negotiate or consider the pain of others.

The Below-God

The only interest (beyond survival) of the nerlochs is to feed captured animals to a giant, shadowy *Thing* that sleeps underground. They whisper its name – Anagon – as they hunt in the darkness. Anagon's lair is deep enough to keep it far from intruders and explorers. The path leading to it is a maze of twisted passages.

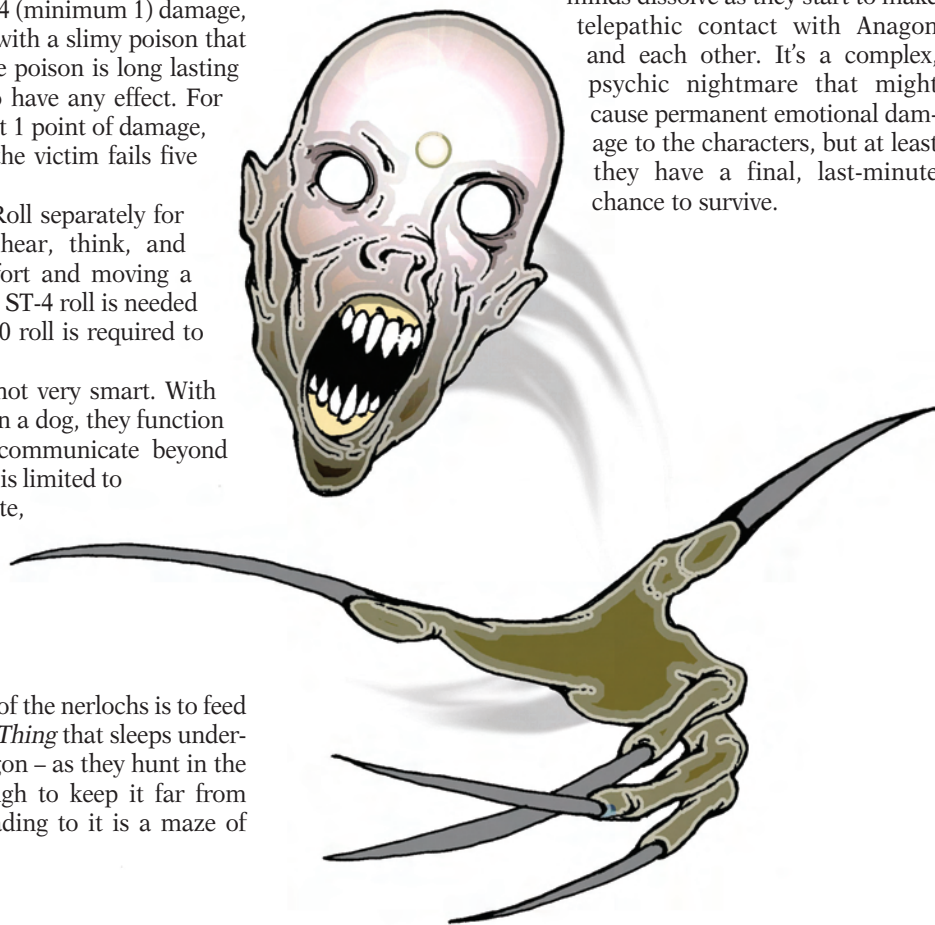
Nerlochs offer living animals to their god as often as possible. They are always exploring underground, looking for rodents, stray pets, and other easy prey. But they would rather capture humans; nothing makes them happier than finding a human in one of the tunnels, clawing their victim with their fingernails, and carrying the paralyzed body to Anagon.

Anagon is a gigantic mound of slow-breathing flesh, resembling a demonic hibernating dinosaur. When it gets hungry, ST 25 pseudopods emerge from its body and pull the paralyzed bodies inside. Rodents and other small animals are dissolved slowly in its acid-filled stomach, but humans are converted into new nerlochs. The dissolution of human victims takes place physically, mentally, and emotionally. Anagon's acid seeps into every part of them, stripping away their flesh and their minds. The victim must *win* a Contest of Will every minute to avoid losing 1 point of IQ *and* a Contest of HT every minute to avoid taking 1d corrosive damage. (If the victim somehow escapes, his IQ heals at the same rate as his hit points.) When the victim reaches either IQ 0 or -HP, he spends the next 1d minutes being transformed into a nerloch, before being pushed out of a narrow orifice to be cloaked by a handful of waiting nerlochs and introduced to his new life.

If this is the fate of a group of player characters, let them lay next to Anagon for a while. This gives them a chance for the paralysis to wear off. Maybe the characters can communicate, regain the use of a few limbs, and figure out a way to escape.

If they are swallowed, they will remain conscious for a brief period. This gives the GM a fun challenge: running part of the adventure from inside a gigantic sleeping demon-thing. The

characters feel the transformation. Their minds dissolve as they start to make telepathic contact with Anagon and each other. It's a complex, psychic nightmare that might cause permanent emotional damage to the characters, but at least they have a final, last-minute chance to survive.



Encountering Nerlochs

To expand the range of adventures, the nerlochs' hunger for human prey occasionally brings them to the surface – at night, under overcast skies, or during the new moon. They want to move fast, find their victims, and get back under ground to be close to Anagon. The Thing Below gives them the life-force they need. The distance between them and Anagon is bad enough; being out of their natural environment of pitch-black tunnels is even worse, causing them stress, which manifests as FP loss.

If nerlochs are known to exist in the campaign, they will be part of the local culture's folklore. They can appear in stories about bogeymen. There may be legends of heroes who fought a thousand nerlochs and killed Anagon a century ago. Wizards will want someone to capture a nerloch so they can analyze the gemstones on their foreheads and the poison under their fingernails. In a fantasy campaign, there may be a few special spells such as Locate Nerlochs, Cure Nerloch Paralysis, and Turn Nerlochs.

Adventure Ideas

The most obvious adventure is an accidental underground encounter. The nerlochs chase the player characters, attack them, and paralyze them. Maybe some of the PCs will avoid being captured. They have to save those who were paralyzed and taken down to be eaten.

Or, the GM can reverse this idea and send the adventurers into the underworld to find nerlochs. They might want to capture a few, save someone, or kill the sleeping Below-God. If nerlochs are treated like a special kind of zombie in the campaign, the characters might want to rescue an old friend who has become a nerloch. He will have to be found, captured, and cured – or put out of his misery.

Taking this idea to its extreme, the GM can turn the player characters into nerlochs. The PC nerlochs are a new breed, as smart as they were before they changed but unable to resist serving Anagon (see *Nerloch Characters*.) Let the PCs explore, hunt humans, bully the other (dumber) nerlochs, and then find a way to change back to their former selves.

More Options, Variants, and Additional Ideas

To make it easier for nerlochs to find their prey, give them Detect (Life; Vague). Any warm-blooded animal bigger than a mouse that is within 100 yards makes their forehead gemstones shine brighter. Larger animals (and animals in groups) increase the amount of illumination. The glow helps them find the animals, but it also makes the prey see the nerlochs coming. To counteract this, nerlochs can dim the gemstone glow for very brief periods if they concentrate. But it takes real effort; as the nerlochs get closer, they have trouble holding back the glow. The moment they get within reach, the gemstones burst back to full strength.

GMS can give the creatures the power to teleport through shadows. If they remain still in complete darkness and force the gemstones to turn off for a moment, they disappear. This is Warp (Anchored, Anagon; Environmental, Darkness; Reliable 10); the nerlochs always reappear standing next to Anagon. This power helps them to escape being captured. It

Nerloch Characters

While no sane player would ever choose to be a nerloch, this template may be forced upon those who lose themselves to Anagon. This is a smarter, more free-willed nerloch – though still bound to Anagon's service.

Nerloch (67 points)

Attribute Modifiers: ST-2 [-20]; DX+2 [40]; HT+2 [20].

Advantages: Accessory (Gem light source) [1]; Affliction 1 (Will; Based on Will, +20%; Extended Duration, Special, 2-12 hours, +100%; Follow-Up, Claws, +0%; Melee Attack, C, No Parry, -35%; Paralysis, +150%; Requires five doses, -10%) [33]; Claws (Sharp) [5]; Fit (Below ground only, -20%) [4]; Immunity to Metabolic Hazards [30]; Injury Tolerance (No Blood; Unliving) [25]; Unaging [15].

Disadvantages: Appearance (Monstrous), Universal, +25% [-25]; Duty (Anagon; 12 or less; Involuntary) [-15]; Reprogrammable [-10]; Sexless [-1]; Social Stigma (Dead) [-20]; Weakness (Being above ground; 1d per 5 minutes; Fatigue Only, -50%) [-15].

Features: Night Vision 7*.

* Nerlochs can see normally when the vision penalty for humans would be -7, but are at -1 to Vision rolls for each level by which their environment is either dimmer or brighter.

also allows every nerloch in the maze of tunnels to suddenly show up next to Anagon – a nice surprise for characters who have resisted the paralysis and are about to escape.

For GMs who want an unlimited supply of nerlochs terrorizing the characters, give the monsters 1 HP and Fragile (Unnatural), making their bodies so sickly that each one can be killed by just 2 points of damage. The corpses of these nerlochs decompose fast, melting and giving off a horrible stench. With these options, characters can fend off a small army of nerlochs in the tunnels, dispatching them easily as they create piles of foul-smelling corpses to block the passages and escape.

Nerloch

ST 8; DX 12; IQ 6; HT 12.

Will 10; Per 11; Speed 6.00; Dodge 9; Move 7.

SM 0; 100 lbs.

Traits: See *Nerloch Characters* (above).

Skills: Brawling-15.

Anagon

ST 50; DX 10; IQ 12; HT 16.

Will 16; Per 13; Speed 6.50; Dodge 9; Move 0.

SM +6; 100 tons.

Traits: Affliction (Alternate Form, Nerloch; Extended Duration, Permanent; Requires Digestion); Appearance (Monstrous); Dark Vision; Extra Arms 10 (Extra-Flexible; Weak, 1/2 ST; Reach 7); Extra Attack 2; Immunity to Metabolic Hazards; Injury Tolerance (No Blood; Unliving); Low Pain Threshold; No Legs (Sessile).

POOL BEAST

A pool beast is a large, violent monster that lives in a deep well of blood. When anyone comes too close to its home, it bursts out, hovering over its prey like a cobra. Half of its body remains in the pool, anchoring the creature. The upper body that emerges looks like it is made out of clumps of muscle and knotted skin. It has a small head with a huge, fang-filled mouth. A pair of nearly useless tentacles hang at its side like the arms of a Tyrannosaurus Rex.



The pool beast is covered in blood. Its eyes shimmer with hunger and rage as it roars. It smells like rotten flesh. One look at a pool beast requires a Fright Check; having one suddenly lunge out from hiding requires a Fright Check at -5!

The mouth of the monster's dwelling place is found in the floor of underground chambers, caves, and other large subterranean rooms. They are typically located in a place where they can guard something – a secret door, treasure, or a sacred tomb.

A big bloody thing that bites anyone who comes near it.

The wider the pool, the bigger the beast. For every foot of diameter, the beast can extend itself one yard.

It sleeps at the bottom of its well until it detects prey above. To sneak by the pool, heroes must win a Quick Contest of Stealth versus the beast's Vibration Sense roll of 12.

In addition to the normal damage from their fangs, their bite numbs victims, causing the prey to lose their sense of touch and hand-eye coordination. Anyone injured by the pool beast must make a HT-2 roll or suffer the effects of the Numb disadvantage (p. B146) until he is back up to full HP and FP.

The statistics below are for the most common pool creature, found in a 10-foot-wide pool, which can attack anyone within 10 yards for a 2d cutting bite. Add or subtract 1 point of ST, 2 hit points, and one yard of reach for every foot of difference in pool diameter.

Adventure Ideas

The pool beast is a simple "dungeon monster." It isn't supposed to interact with characters or advance the plot of the adventure. It just leaps up, hovers for a moment to cause a Fright Check, and then starts biting people.

The beast doesn't have to be alone. The characters might discover a room with a dozen circular pools. If they are very quiet, they might be able to get past the pools without being attacked. If they wake one beast, all of them pop out like bloody jack-in-the-boxes and attack.

Alternatively, the beasts could be in a chamber with an evil wizard, sitting on his throne at the far side of the room, with two wide pools between himself and the characters. If they venture too close, the creatures come out and roar, ready to attack if the characters take one step closer.

ST 24; DX 16; IQ 4; HT 12.

HP 48; Will 14; Per 7; Speed 7.00; Dodge 11; Move 7 (Water).
SM +7; 24 tons.

Traits: Acute Vibration Sense 5; Affliction 3 (HT-2; Disadvantage, Numb; Extended Duration, Permanent until healed; Follow-Up, Teeth); Combat Reflexes; Dependency (Blood, Constantly); Doesn't Breathe; Ichthyoid; Teeth (Sharp); Vibration Sense (Water).

PTALLANT LIZARD

This creature looks like a harmless blue lizard, with a round body, long tail, and short spines. In truth, it is a creature of pure magic that can cause widespread destruction with a flick of its tail.

The Quake

A ptallant lizard has no conventional attack. Its bite and claws are harmless. It is mild tempered and can be held, carried, and touched. If approached aggressively, overtly attacked, or harmed, the lizard will defend itself by smacking its tail on the ground. This creates an earthquake, centered on the lizard. The ground shudders and shakes, buildings sway or collapse, and rivers slosh over their banks.

A small reptile that causes earthquakes.

Everyone within 1,000 yards must make a DX+4 roll every second to avoid falling down, and any physical action that *requires* a roll is at -2. In a modern world, water pipes burst and the power goes out. Inflexible structures crack. A few collapse. Roll 3d once for each building; on a 6 or less, something significant happens (a fire starts, a wall crumbles completely, etc.).



Portable Earthquake

Once they realize the power of a ptallant lizard, smart adventurers might want to use it as a weapon. They can carry the lizard, place it on the ground, and then scare it, causing it to smack its tail.

If this disrupts the adventure, the GM can simply allow the frightened creature to dive into a crack in the earth as soon as it smacks its tail, escaping for good.

If the lizard isn't just startled but is afraid for its life (GM's decision), it will concentrate the force of the earthquake into a much smaller area. Everyone within 25 yards is affected as above, but all rolls are at an extra -4, and any building in the area suffers serious damage on a 10 or less.

After one minute, the earthquake subsides. The ptallant lizard ignores the effects of the quake, though not residual effects – if it was inside a house when it began, it may very well be crushed if the house collapses. If it was in fear for its life, it will likely have used the time to escape, often by diving into a crack in the ground.

Origins

A ptallant lizard is created by a critical failure on an Earth spell. The GM decides when this happens, or can replace results “3” and “18” on the *Critical Spell Failure Table* (p. B236) with “A ptallant lizard is created.” There are many conflicting theories; no one is sure of exactly why this happens or what it means.

The lizard never appears immediately or nearby. Roll 4d to determine the number of hours after the spell backfires. To determine its location, roll 1d for direction as for *Scatter*, p. B414, and roll 2d+4 on the *Size and Speed/Range Table*, p. B550, for distance.

Because it is a completely magical creature, it does not sleep, eat, or reproduce. When it reaches -3 HP, it dies and its body vanishes.

It can be found in any terrain. It has a strong inherent magical power, adding +5 to any attempt to locate it with Detect Magic or Magery sense.

Most mages have heard of ptallant lizards, but few people are aware that there is a “fault familiar” for every spell college. They have a similar set of characteristics: the appearance of an ordinary, generally harmless animal; irregular coloration; and a simple, catastrophic attack.

Other *fault familiars* include: bat (albino, Necromantic college, causes pestilence), salamander (amber fur and white hooves, Fire college, creates fire), fox (black and yellow fur, Mind Control college, causes mass hallucinations), and hawk (green beak, Weather college, causes sudden thunderstorm).

Adventure Idea

The player characters are traveling in the wilderness when they spot a round, blue lizard, but there's no way to know for certain what kind of creature it is. The next day, they meet an

old woman. She is a wandering druid, a spell-casting nomad who acts as the steward of the area. As she talks to them, they mention the ptallant lizard (or she asks if they have seen it). She explains what the creature is and what it can do, and she asks them to help her capture it. She doesn't want it to be startled and cause widespread destruction.

After some days of searching, the druid is abducted by a group of men in black cloaks. The PCs are unable to save her, but she discretely drops a magic item that explains what is going on – the cloaked men are her enemies, a group of Earth magic warlocks. They want to take control of the wilderness area she cares for. The magic item directs the PCs to the enemies' mountain lair, where they can save her. (The miscast spells of the greedy warlocks created the ptallant lizard the last time they attacked the druid.)

On the way, they see the ptallant lizard. If they can grab it without scaring it, they will have a weapon to use when they are trying to save the druid. (If the GM thinks they will have trouble capturing – or using – the lizard, the magic item is full of advice that will make these tasks much easier.) If they succeed, they will find the lair, use the ptallant lizard to cause a localized earthquake, and save the druid.

ST 3; DX 11; IQ 3; HT 12.

Will 14; Per 9; Speed 5.75; Dodge 8; Move 5.

SM -4; 8 lbs.

Traits: Control Tremors 6 (Accessibility, Only when on the ground; Cosmic, No die roll required; Emanation; Extended Duration, 3x; Magical; Natural Phenomena; Persistent; Selectivity); Control Tremors +19 (Accessibility, Only when on the ground; Cosmic, No die roll required; Emanation; Extended Duration, 3x; Magical; Only to increase area affected; Persistent); Dependency (Mana; Constantly); Doesn't Breathe; Doesn't Eat or Drink; Doesn't Sleep; Feature (No Fatigue Points); Fragile (Unnatural); Immunity to Metabolic Hazards; Quadruped; Tunneling 1 (Magical); Unnatural Features 5 (Only for magical detection); Unaging; Wild Animal.



SHOULDER GIANT

A shoulder giant is a huge, dumb, strong humanoid, 11 to 12 feet tall, that hibernates in secret tunnels under the foundation of a building. They have a knack for finding the foundation's weakest spot; that's where they feel comfortable.

The shoulder giant finds its hibernation spot by exploring subterranean caves and tunnels, then digging toward a building. It isn't smart enough to know why it needs this, or to explain how it finds it. Once it finds the spot, it goes to sleep. It wakes up once a month to find food.

Shoulder giants are terrified of bright flashes of light, explosions, and fire. If it can hear a thunderstorm outside its lair, it will shiver. This makes the building above move, as if a small earthquake were taking place. If it is face to face with lightning, a fireball, or a bomb, it will panic. This causes the same earthquake effect, but this time it is strong enough to topple the building.

The shoulder giants make their homes under any kind of permanent, large structure. The obvious examples are houses and castles, but they can also be found under a skyscraper, bridge, tower, or church.

They are solitary creatures. Once every five years, two shoulder giants find each other to procreate. They hibernate together, forming an entangled lump, and then break apart a week later. In the spot where they slept, a soft, large egg is left behind. It hatches, and a new shoulder giant is born. It grows to full size within a month.

If the reproduction process is interrupted in any way, the newborn is mentally deformed – it is a *berserker* shoulder giant. It acts like others of its kind, except that once it is startled, it attacks anything and everything until it is killed. (Tales of berserker shoulder giants usually depict them as bulky, with multiple limbs, but no one can confirm the rumors that these temperamental breeds are physically different from the normal kind.)

*A humanoid who sleeps
under a castle.*



Fighting a Shoulder Giant

A shoulder giant's fists do 5d+1 damage and weigh 5 lbs. for the purpose of breaking weapons that parry them (p. B376). It can pick up a 200-lb. man in one hand and throw him 50 yards into a wall for 5d+2 damage. Fortunately, shoulder giants are too dull to wield improvised weapons or make deceptive attacks.

A smart hero remains mobile, retreating and moving. Hiding behind rocks or stalagmites is usually a bad idea, as the giant can easily pound such obstacles into dust. However, if timed correctly (roll Tactics-2), hiding can allow for a sudden counterattack, at -1 to the giant's defenses.

Adventure Ideas

The player characters are in a castle during a violent thunderstorm. The storm wakes the shoulder giant, who shivers and shakes the castle above. The PCs are sent down to the dungeons to find the giant and kill it.

The adventure could be that simple. Or GMs can add a twist: Shoulder giants are not dumb brutes. They are just misunderstood (raise IQ to 10 and remove Bestial.) When the PCs find it, it asks them to leave it alone, and they decide not to kill it. They need to get it out of the dungeons and help it find a better home. If the castle's lord finds out, he disagrees and wants it dead, so they have to secretly help the giant escape.

A different adventure involves the creation of a shoulder giant as a golem (see box). A local mage is building one, designed to burrow under the wall of an enemy's tower and topple it. The mage needs the PCs to find the final, special ingredient for the spell – and then escort the giant at night to a cave that leads down below the tower.

Or, if the local mage is an enemy of the PCs, he is creating the giant in a different way. He has captured one of their friends and is using a special spell to transform the friend into a shoulder golem (see box). Instead of finding the special ingredient, they need to stop the spell from being completed (or reverse it if they fail).

ST 50; DX 9; IQ 6; HT 13.

Will 12; Per 10; Speed 5.50; Dodge 8; Move 5.

SM +2; 1,200 lbs.

Traits: Bestial; Detect (Structural Weakness; Precise); DR 3; Ham-Fisted 2; Hidebound; Lifting ST +18 (Super-Effort); Metabolism Control 5 (Accessibility, Only under key structural points; Hibernation); Phobia (Fire; Loud Noises; Sudden Light) (9); Tunneling 3; Uncongenial.

Skills: Forced-Entry-11.

Alternative Shoulder Giants

At the GM's option, shoulder giants may not be natural beings at all. Instead, they could be created through a magical spell or ritual. In this case, ignore the reproductive information given and use the following rules.

Shoulder Golems

Mages may be able to create a shoulder giant through the use of the Golem spell (*GURPS Magic*, p. 59). In order to do so, the caster must obtain the first stone(s) to give way from a destroyed castle or keep. These might be the foundation stones that cracked when an earthquake hit, the stones that were removed from the outer wall by a sapper before enemy forces sacked the place, or something similar. The stone is then ground into sand and mixed with an appropriate amount of clay. It costs 1,330 energy to animate a shoulder giant as a golem.

Shoulder Giant (Golem)

540 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST +40 (Size, -20%) [320]; DX -2 [-40]; IQ -4 [-80]; HT +2 [20].

Secondary Characteristics: Will +2 [10]; Perception +2 [10].

Advantages: Detect (Structural Weakness; Precise, +100%) [40]; Damage Resistance 3 (Can't Wear Armor, -40%) [9]; Doesn't Breathe [20]; Doesn't Eat or Drink [10]; Doesn't Sleep [20]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Immunity to Metabolic Hazards [30]; Indomitable [15]; Injury Tolerance (Homogenous, No Blood) [45]; Lifting ST +18 (Cosmic, +50%; Reduced Fatigue Cost 1, +20%; Size, -20%; Super-Effort, +400%) [297]; Pressure Support 1 [5]; Tunneling 3 [45]; Unaging [15]; Unfazeable [15].

Disadvantages: Automaton [-85]; Cannot Learn [-30]; Fragile (Unnatural) [-50]; Ham-Fisted 2 [-10]; Mute [-25]; No Sense of Smell/Taste [-5]; Reprogrammable [-10]; Social Stigma (Valuable Property) [-10]; Unhealing (Total) [-30]; Wealth (Dead Broke) [-25].

Features: Neither has nor spends Fatigue Points.

Skills: Forced Entry (E) DX+2 [4]-10.

Cursed Giants

A shoulder giant could be a normal human being who has been cursed. Depending on the mood of the campaign, killing the giant may either kill the victim or dispel the curse and free him.

Victims who retain their free will have the same traits as normal shoulder giants. Replace Bestial with Reprogrammable if the subject is forced to follow the wizard's orders. If the spell completely drains the victim's ability to act on his own, replace Hidebound with Automaton as well.

This works best with the spell as a plot device, especially in a setting in which magic is a strange and fickle force. If it is necessary for the campaign to fit this spell into the standard *GURPS* magic system, treat it as a unique Enchantment spell (Shoulder Giant Curse), which costs 1,000 energy to cast, is resisted by the victim's Will at the end of the process, and has Enchant and Transmogrification as prerequisites. It is up to the GM whether Remove Curse will undo the change.

SLAKE HOUND

A slake hound is an ugly, green, dog-shaped beast. It has human-like hands, hooves for hind feet, wrinkled skin, and a large mouth. Dozens of flexible spines stick out of its back, similar to catfish “whiskers.” While it is possible to encounter a solitary slake hound, they typically live in packs. They are dumb, violent, and always thirsty.

Slake hounds can be encountered in any number of places, from dungeons and swamps to forests and fields, wherever they might find food.

Thirst

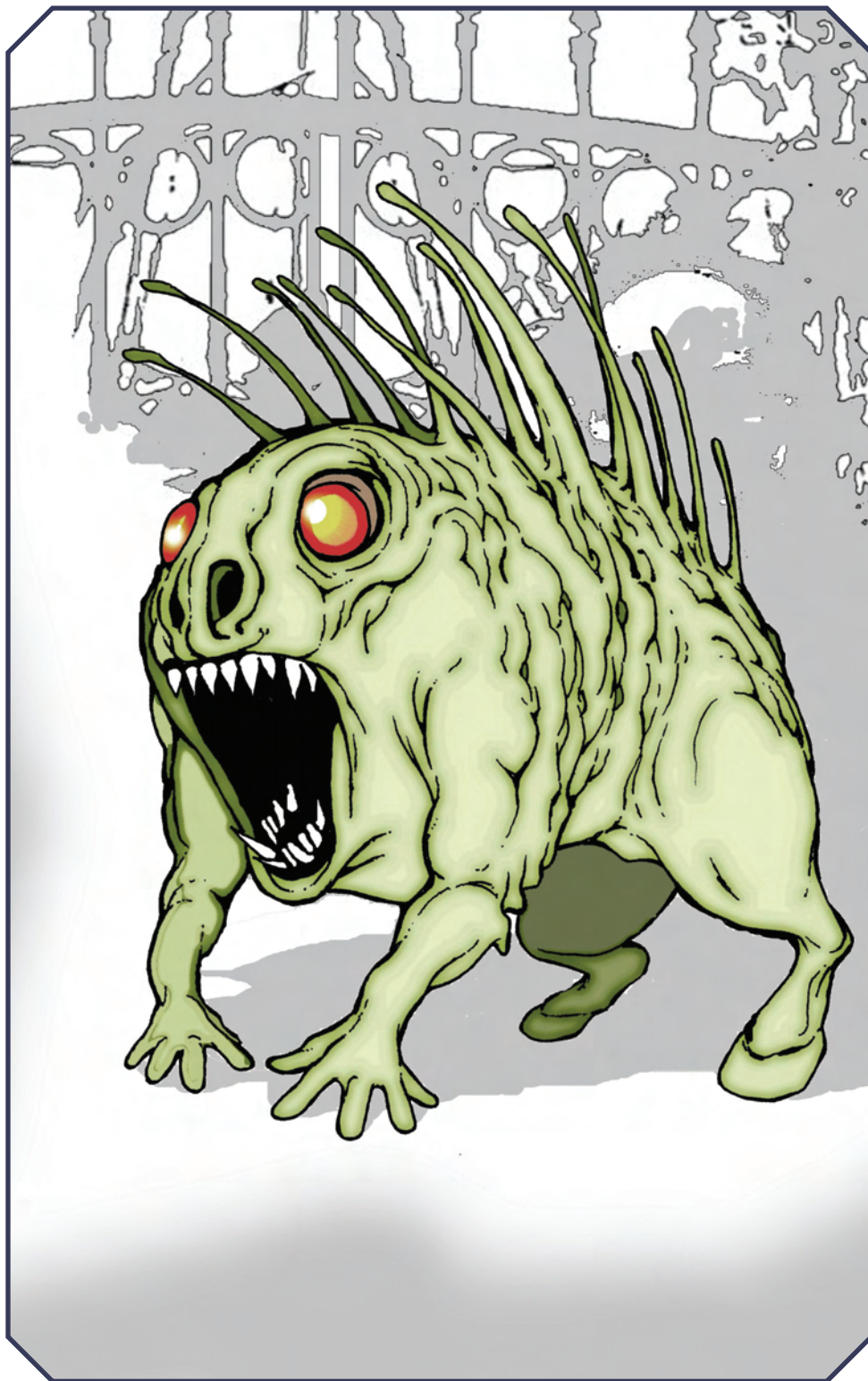
Slake hounds drain bodily fluids from humans and animals to survive. They drink through their spines, extending them forward to grab a victim, penetrating the skin with tiny mouths, and draining moisture. This mosquito-like attack draws more than blood. The victim suffers from a weakened immune system, extreme fatigue, dizziness, and dehydration.

If the slake hound’s prey has any bare skin showing, the hound only has to successfully grapple (treat its spines, working together, as a single arm) to begin draining the victim on its next turn. If the prey cannot break free, the hound drains 2 FP per turn, which can only be recovered with rest and drinking water. When the victim reaches 0 FP, he begins losing HP instead. Every 4 FP or HP lost also lowers the victim’s HT by 1, cumulatively, until the loss is healed.

Clothing delays the draining for one turn, as the hound’s spines worm their way into the fabric. Armor prevents the drain for additional turns equal to its DR – but only sealed armor blocks it completely. DR with the Tough Skin limitation provides no protection.

A slake hound drinks up to 10 fatigue or hit points before being sated. When it is filled with fluid, it runs away. The fluid digests (see *The Bile Organ*, below) over the course of a day, after which the hound goes back to hunting for more victims.

Blood-sucking four-legged beasts with a special inner organ.



Senses

Slake hounds are completely deaf, but their spines are sensitive enough to detect nearby sounds and movement through vibrations in the air. They have a keen sense of smell as well, easily detecting any prey that is upwind.

Slake hounds have perfect vision in darkness but are nearly blind in daylight – reverse the normal vision modifiers (e.g., -0 for total darkness but -10 for bright daylight.) Their eyes are adapted for tracking prey as it flees; if a person can stand completely still and maintain shallow breaths (roll Autohypnosis, Meditation, or Will-4), the hound overlooks him unless it catches his scent.

The Bile Organ

The fluids absorbed by the slake hound collect in an internal organ. This sac fills up, expanding until the monster is satisfied. The fluid inside is transformed into a thick, caustic liquid, which sustains the slake hound.

Any attack that damages the vitals punctures this organ, as does any cutting, impaling, or piercing attack to the torso that does over 6 points of damage (after wounding modifiers.) If this happens, things get messy. The black, acidic bile shoots out with intense pressure in all directions. Anyone within four yards of the hound is sprayed for 1d corrosive damage on a 10 or less each turn; the only defense is to block with a shield. Slake hounds are immune to their own bile.

A hound whose bile organ is punctured dies quickly, losing 1 HP per second. The acidic spray stops once the hound dies, but it does not decrease in volume or potency until then.

If safely removed from a slake hound, an intact bile organ can be useful in several different ways. Adventurers may wish to use it as a weapon. If thrown or launched at an enemy, the force ruptures the sac, producing a spray as above for 2d turns.

Alchemists and chemists find the bile useful in its own right. Under controlled circumstances (roll applicable skill at -2, modified for lab quality, to avoid an accidental rupture), the organ can be tapped and its bile distilled into a potent acid.

The bile organ can also be used as an ingredient in making acid-based magic items. When incorporated into the ritual for enchanting any spell with “acid” in the title, it adds 200 free points of energy to the enchantment.

Extracting the organ is difficult. First, the slake hound must be killed without rupturing the sac. Then, it must be removed carefully, requiring a Veterinary-2 or Surgery-5 skill roll. If successful, it must be transported gently – anything that causes even 1 point of damage bursts it. It stays potent for 1d+1 days.

Adventure Ideas

The player characters are hired by a local hedge-wizard to retrieve a bile organ. He needs it as a component for a spell. They explore a nearby forest, where they had been told some slake hounds live. But when they arrive, they discover that another mage has captured all of the slake hounds and is using them for watchdogs. He has them fenced in to his property around the short tower where he lives. To get the bile organ, the PCs will have to secretly capture and kill a slake hound.

Then things get more complicated. The local villagers have been trying to drive out the tower mage for years. They are

Pack Attack

Up to three slake hounds can attack a human-sized victim simultaneously – the drain from multiple hounds is cumulative. Anyone successfully grappled is at -1 to dodge or -2 to other defenses to avoid further attacks. On his turn, he can either attack (at -4) or try to break free. If he tries to break free, make a single ST roll for the slake hounds, at +2 for each additional hound (e.g., three hounds grappling a man have an effective ST 14). Fortunately, slake hounds rarely attempt takedowns and never pin (p. B371), though if their prey fights back, they often bite for 1d+1 cutting damage instead of grappling.

scared of his magical experiments, and when a villager is missing, they are sure he is responsible. While the PCs are planning to capture a slake hound, they hear the village mob approaching. If they get out of sight fast, they can see the tower mage confront the mob. He casts a spell that scares them away, but they promise to come back – with reinforcements.

At this point, all kinds of things can happen. The PCs can join the mob when they return, leading the villagers against the tower mage. Or, they might choose the other side of the conflict and offer to be the mage’s bodyguards.

Of course, they could keep things simple and carry out their plan to get the bile organ, get the money from the hedge-wizard, and be done with it. But if anything goes wrong, the tower mage catches them, throwing them right back into the conflict.

The hedge-wizard could be the rival of the tower mage (maybe his brother). To make things even more complex, the hedge-wizard *could be* the tower mage. For some reason, he plays two roles, dressing differently and answering to two different names. The PCs discover this secret and realize that the tower mage has hired them to steal a bile organ from his own pack of slake hounds. But why? Does he have a split personality? Is he testing them to see if they will be suitable long-term henchmen? Maybe the plot is part of an elaborate spell ritual, one that requires the village mob as victims . . . or spell components.

ST 10; DX 12; IQ 4; HT 12.

Will 8; Per 10; Speed 6.00; Dodge 10; Move 6.

SM 0; 100 lbs.

Traits: Combat Reflexes; Corrosive Attack 1d (Area Effect, 4 yards; Blockable; Bombardment; Cosmic, No Active Defense, Dodge only; Costs Hit Points, 1 HP; Emanation; Unconscious Only; Uncontrollable); DR 2 (Partial, Skull); DR 10 (Limited, Corrosive); Deafness; Discriminatory Smell; Extra Arm (Grappling Spines; Extra-Flexible); Ham-Fisted 2; Horizontal; Leech 2 (Contact Agent; Dehydration; Link; Only Heals FP; Steal FP then HP); Leech 1 (Contact Agent; Extended Duration, Only when other Leech drains HP; Link; Only Heals FP; Steal HT; Takes Extra Time 1); Night Vision (Special); Restricted Diet (Bodily Fluids); Striking ST +7 (Bite Only); Teeth (Sharp); Vibration Sense (Air); Wild Animal.

TELLANODE

Tellanodes are plant-like blobs that sprout from the ground in the middle of the night. Each tellanode is at least 10 feet tall and looks like a cross between a mushroom and a diseased football. They grow silently and quickly, reaching their full height within minutes.

They always sprout in a circle around a home in which three or more people live. This is usually a normal house, with the tellanodes standing in the front and back yard, but any dwelling is possible. Roll 2d+1 to determine the number of pods that appear.

When the sun comes up, they turn invisible. They remain invisible until they are touched – any physical contact between a human being and a tellanode makes it visible. It vanishes again the next time the sun rises.

Inside Information

Though mindless, the tellanodes possess an innate ability to gather secrets. They draw upon the memories and thoughts of local people and project them into the minds of those living inside the tellanode circle. The residents become *Insiders*.

A group of invisible pods that give special powers to people nearby.

The Insiders know who in town is secretly rich, who has a criminal record, and who is cheating on a spouse. They learn which local legends are true. They find out which local businesses are doing well, and which are going bankrupt.

This information begins on the first night, in dreams. Over the next week, the Insiders gain information as they daydream, staring into space for a moment while a burst of new secrets enters their minds. Some of the information is shared (that is, all of the Insiders realize it at the same time), and some secrets come only to individuals (that is, one Insider finds out everything going on in the police department, while another learns that a certain drug will cure the illness of the woman living down the street.)

Every day, the tellanodes scan the minds of the locals, until they have uncovered 1d-2 (minimum 0) secrets. The GM should choose which secrets are revealed, or roll 3d (once per Insider) on the following table to determine how serious the secret is; see p. B152 for more details.



<i>Roll</i>	<i>Secrets</i>
3-8	Quirk-level (secret recipes, embarrassing favorite songs)
9-11	Serious Embarrassment (checkered past, overcharging customers)
12-13	Utter Rejection (infidelity, selling completely worthless goods)
14-15	Imprisonment or Exile (tax fraud, repeated burglaries)
16-18	Possible Death (murder, rape, worshiping the wrong gods)

Roll 1d for each secret. On a 1-3, everyone in the circle gains this secret; on a 4-6, only one Insider learns it, determined randomly.

Anyone in town for a full day or more has his mind scanned for secrets daily; roll a Contest of the tellanodes' IQ (minus Long Distance Modifiers, p. B241) versus the target's Will. If the tellanodes win, roll to see what type of secret is uncovered. If the result isn't applicable, they pick up something less serious. If the subject has reason to be wary, roll a second Contest of the tellanodes' unmodified IQ versus his Perception-4. If the person wins, he detects an anonymous mental intrusion.

Anyone engaging in inappropriate behavior may be directly observed by the tellanodes as well. Any time a character does anything that would be better kept out of the eyes of others, there is a 1 in 6 chance that the tellanodes are observing him and passing on the indiscretion.

Inside the Circle

If a single Insider leaves the tellanode circle, the flow of information stops until he returns. So it is safe for one Insider to go into town and run errands – to get food, to go to a job, or to create the appearance that nothing weird is going on at the house.

If more than one Insider leaves, the secrets begin to fade. Starting with the most significant secrets known, one secret is lost each day for every missing Insider past the first. For example, if a second Insider leaves before the first comes back, the group immediately forgets its most important secret and will

lose one additional secret each day. If the third leaves, each Insider forgets two secrets each day, and so on.

(Secrets can be written down, but a document can vanish as easily as a memory. A hard drive can lose a file, and a piece of paper can be lost.)

If an Insider dies (or leaves and doesn't come back), the others need to find a replacement. But one new person is not enough – for every lost Insider, the tellanodes require two new people to keep the flow of information active. The replacements go through the process of learning secrets through dreams and daydreams, as the previous Insiders did.

Insiders come in several types. One is the opportunist, who uses the secret information for personal gain. Another is the moralist, who is shocked by the secret sins of the community, and wants to right a few wrongs. And there are Insiders who use one small piece of information to make their lives easier, and ignore the rest.

The combination of personalities and secrets can create a lot of tension in the house, including a special sense of paranoia and greed. They know the tellanodes are out there – the tellanodes are visible to the Insiders – and they can easily deduce that the tellanodes are causing the influx of information. A moralist might want to destroy them, but the other Insiders will oppose that idea. If they get the feeling that anyone (inside or out) wants to damage the tellanodes, they are likely to attack that person. They can become addicted to more information.

If the number of Insiders is low, or they already have a pecking order (like a nuclear family), this tension will be sorted out relatively quickly. If there are a lot of Insiders and they don't know each other, all kinds of plots and subplots are likely to emerge.

Nosy Neighbors

If someone comes close to the house, they could bump into an invisible tellanode. That could cause problems (as the giant, lumpy blob suddenly appears in the yard), so the Insiders have to take precautions to keep outsiders away. They might build a fence or dig a trench. (Hopefully they are not foolish enough to build protection around a handful of seemingly empty spots in the yard.)

Nosy neighbors are intercepted before they get too close, and they are escorted away as soon as possible. If the Insiders use their knowledge to harm people in the community, the confrontations are much worse. Someone could sneak inside the circle, burn the house down, or cause other kinds of trouble.

An obvious approach would be to destroy the tellanodes themselves. This is fairly effective. Every tellanode destroyed has the effect of a lost Insider (see above), which can cause the flow of information to stop or even reverse itself. This can be compensated for by adding new Insiders, just as for any loss – the new minds revitalize the influx of knowledge. Additionally, a replacement tellanode eventually sprouts to fill the gap in 1d-1 days (treat a result of 0 as twelve hours), so the Insiders can survive the loss of one pod.

If every single tellanode is destroyed before they have a chance to regrow, the link is permanently broken, guaranteeing that no new pods will sprout again.

Origins

How do the tellanodes do what they do? Why do they appear? GMs should tailor the answers to their campaign, but here are some suggestions.

Classic Fantasy: They are enchanted plants, grown from the residue of a magical event. Their abilities are innate spells, a common feature of fantasy creatures.

Fairy Tale: The tellanodes grew from the fragments of a shooting star, when a child wishing upon it just wanted to be able to share a secret with someone. Removing the pods permanently requires the townspeople to openly share their deepest secrets with each other.

Modern or Moral Fantasy: They are the product of repressed secrets, made physical by the collective subconscious of the community.

Science Fiction: The tellanodes are almost-sentient, psionic fungoids. They came from another planet, or were created in a laboratory.

The Insider Campaign

If the tellanodes surround the home where the player characters live, they could become local heroes by using the secret information to right the wrongs of the community. In an extended campaign, this requires a bend in the rules: For the PCs to have enough freedom to come and go – leaving home together to go into town, for example – the standard loss of secrets is delayed. All of the characters can leave home for up to one full day without any penalty. But they need to return soon . . .

When using the anchor special feature, make the anchor an NPC. This way, someone is always back at the house, but none of the players are left out of the action.

This campaign could take place in any number of different eras. It could be a suburban town in the United States, a medieval village, or an outpost on another planet.

Special Features

The following features are optional.

The Anchor

One Insider (randomly chosen by the GM) becomes the anchor. As long as the anchor is within the circle, the flow of information never shifts to a negative value. This allows the others to come and go freely. But if he ever leaves, the tellanodes vanish and the information begins fading quickly (1d+1 secrets per day.)

What happens when the anchor doesn't want to stay home? In that case, he might need to be imprisoned, threatened, or bribed. He could be drugged, or given anything he wants as long as he stays home. He could be chained in the basement, too.

For an added twist, the anchor knows everything the other Insiders know, plus a little more. He might be stuck at home, but he is the alpha of secret knowledge.

The Taproot

A long, thick vine extends underground beneath each tellanode. If anyone touches it, they instantly absorb all of the knowledge the tellanodes have collected so far. This causes a significant mental stun, bad enough to knock the character unconscious. The Insiders feel a jolt when this happens, but they don't know necessarily what is going on.

To touch the taproot, the character must either dig it up or get to it through an underground passage. Someone in a cave below the tellanode might see the taproot and touch it, unaware that the tellanode is above.

Time Travel

The tellanodes sprout in the same place every generation, around a location that is always inhabited. For thousands of years, that spot has always been the home of a specific group of people, on the edge of a community.

The Insiders who inhabit that dwelling can slip through time, to a different period in the same house, if they gather together and concentrate. They might discover this power

accidentally, or they could learn it when they absorb new information about local legends.

Once they enter a new time period, they begin to learn secrets of that era. They learn names and places quickly, so they can explore their new surroundings without attracting too much attention.

Adventure Ideas

Instead of a house, the home could be a hotel, apartment building, or cabin in the woods. It could be an overpass where a handful of homeless people live, or a tent in a campsite. Regardless of its form, it must be a place where people live – at a minimum, it is where they sleep every night, share space with others, and store their belongings. It could also be a place of strong emotional investment for the people who live there, the kind of home they have lived in for years and do not plan on leaving any time soon.

The player characters are just as likely to be nosy neighbors. They might have an idea of what is going on, based on the actions of the Insiders when they go into town. Or, they might stumble on to the big secret accidentally, by bumping into a tellanode.

If an Insider leaves and doesn't come back, two or more of the PCs could be invited in as replacements.

Ship of Secrets

In this fantasy adventure, a small ship drops anchor near the port of a trading city. In the night, a cluster of tellanodes appear, floating on the water. The sun rises and they turn invisible.

The sailors are local merchants who transport goods up and down the coast. Their captain has ties to all of the local merchant guilds. The player characters meet the captain when they are hired by a merchant guild to investigate the ship. It seems that the captain is not smart enough to use the information he has learned in a subtle way – he clearly knows a lot of things he shouldn't know.

The PCs will have to visit the ship, talk to the sailors, and meet with the captain. If they get too close to the solution of the mystery, the captain asks them to join the crew and double-cross the guildsmen.

One way to resolve the situation would be to force the ship to sail away. This could be accomplished by an attack on the ship or by using special abilities to create a storm. Once the ship leaves the circle of tellanodes, the flow of information quickly reverses itself.

ST 0; DX 0; IQ 16*; HT 12.

HP 50; Will 16*; Per 16*; Speed 0.00; Dodge 0; Move 0.

SM +2; 1,000 lbs.

Traits: Clairsentience (Increased Range, ×1,000, Link; Second Nature); DR 2; Features (Neither has nor uses fatigue points; Photosynthetic); Fragile (Combustible); Injury Tolerance (Homogenous; No Blood; No Eyes; No Head; No Neck); Invisibility (Accessibility, Not to Insiders; Disrupted by contact until next sunrise); Mind Probe (Accessibility, Secrets only; Increased Range, ×100, Link; Long Range 1; Low Signature; Ranged; Universal); No Legs (Sessile); No Manipulators; Telesend (Accessibility, Insiders only; Broadcast; Link; Short Range 1; Universal).

* For the purpose of Clairsentience, Mind Probe, and Telesend only. For *all* other purposes, the tellanodes have IQ 0.

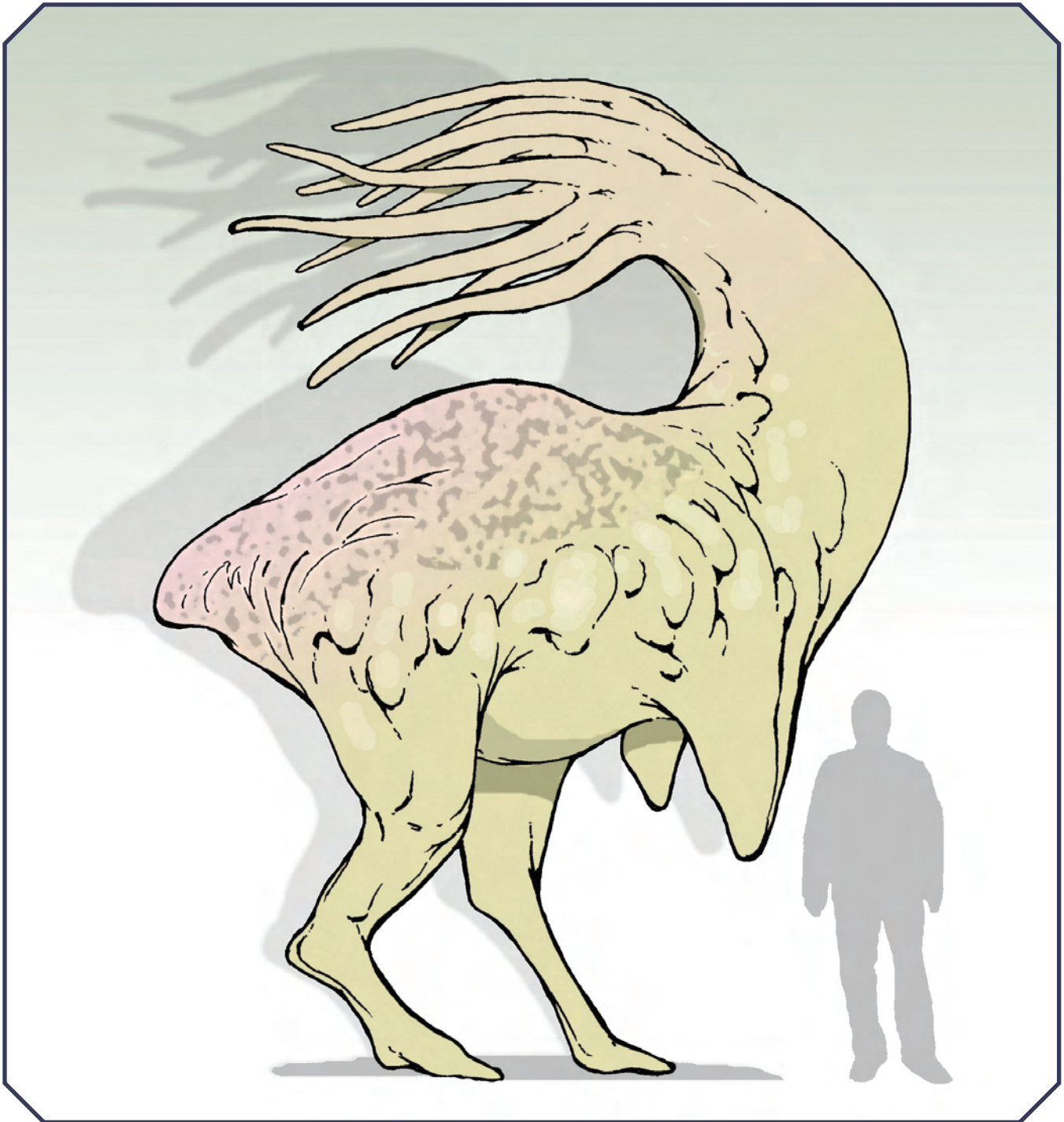
UROTH

An uroth is the size and shape of a giraffe, with a face of tentacles. It has light fur over thick skin, with two short flippers for arms. Herds of uroths live far from populated areas, in the wilderness.

Uroths “eat” stones. They walk slowly, grazing in large fields, grabbing stones with their tentacles and feeding them into their mouths. They swallow every stone, clean the soil and bugs from it with their stomachs, and spit the stones back out, leaving a trail of polished rocks behind them.

A tall two-legged herd animal that eats stones.

They will not spit out precious stones, gems, gold, or silver. Those types of minerals get stuck in a pouch connected to the stomach, where they stay forever. If the pouch fills up, the uroth gets sick and dies.



Their bodies are infused with minerals, so when they die, the corpse deflates into a formless lump and quickly petrifies. Within two days, the body becomes soft stone. A week later, it is hard, solid rock. An uroth body that has been sitting for a year will become part of the landscape, covered with grass and moss.

Combat

Uroths are docile unless they are provoked. They can be skittish, so if a herd is attacked, they will stampede. A charging uroth slams for 3d damage (and typically takes 1d damage from hitting a human); see p. B371. If this knocks the person down, the uroth tramples him for 2d+1 damage, and the unfortunate soul must dodge every other uroth running behind that one.

These creatures defend themselves with their feet and tentacles. A kick is as powerful as that of an ostrich, doing 2d+3 damage. The tentacles can whip and pummel attackers for 1d-2 damage, although this attack is more frightening than physically threatening.

Senses

Uroths do not have a single set of eyes. Their tentacles are sensitive to light, scents, and vibrations. They are covered with tiny eyespots, which allow them to detect color and distance. They “see” using passive echo location, similar to a bat. They perceive a wider part of the spectrum, with a more precise form of depth perception, than any human or normal animal.

Magic Items

While grazing, an uroth can accidentally eat a small magic item – a ring, gemstone, or other small enchanted object that has been buried or lost. These items are particularly tasty, so the uroth will not hesitate to swallow it. In a campaign in which enchantment is common, a full-grown uroth has a 1 in 6 chance of carrying a magic item in its stomach pouch.

In rare cases, the item’s power manifests in some way. For example, the item might change the uroth’s appearance (a powerstone causes its skin to turn purple) or give the creature strange new abilities (its intelligence rises to human level, it can heal quickly, etc.)

A skillful wizard who encounters a herd of uroths can cast a Detect Magic spell to find any hidden magic items. He could be looking for a particular item that was lost in that area, or he might find something unique and try to discover how the creature came by it.

In Water

Uroths love water. When they migrate to a river, they wallow in it for days. They dive under the surface and graze along the riverbed, coming back up to breathe and temporarily dry their tentacles. If they find a pond or swamp, they stay for weeks, scrounging among the rocks until the area is picked clean.

They reproduce in water, so when they are encountered in a river or pond, they are unusually energetic and short-tempered.

Adventure Ideas

Uroths are a source of wealth and magic items in fantasy campaigns. Most adventurers who know about these beasts want to kill one, gut it, and take the treasure inside. The only serious danger comes from an uroth attack or a stampede of the herd.

The gems and gold can also be removed from an uroth corpse. It is not easy to tell a dead uroth from a normal rock. Anyone with an appropriate Expert or Professional skill – e.g., Expert Skill (Cryptozoology) or Professional Skill (Uroth Scavenger) – and either Naturalist or Survival (Plains) can roll against the lower of the two skills to identify a dead uroth. Those without both roll at -4.

The rock must be broken open to remove the treasure. If caught in the first week after death, the side of the petrified uroth that covers the stomach has DR 40* and HP 60. Otherwise it has DR 150* and HP 90. (The DR is ablativ or semi-ablativ; see the note on p. B559 for details.)

The Caravan

After being hired as bodyguards for a merchant caravan, the player characters are asked to hunt uroths. The leaders of the caravan send the PCs with a low-level mage to an area nearby, where a giant herd is grazing. They are supposed to protect the mage as he casts a Detect Magic spell to find any magic items, and then capture and kill any treasure-carrying uroths.

The weather turns, with dark clouds rolling in, just as the mage learns that they hit the jackpot – three uroths are carrying something magical and powerful. But before the PCs can catch the creatures, the storm scares the herd and they stampede.

They might stampede toward the caravan, or they might run in the other direction. The PCs will have their hands full, trying to get the treasure without getting trampled or lost.

Uroth Riders

The player characters find a tribe of humanoids who ride domesticated uroths. They witness the tribesmen capture an uroth, ride it until it is subdued, and then start to train it to act as a mount or beast of burden. The tribesmen use the uroths for money, as well – they trade polished stones and rare gemstones, which they cut out of dead uroths or pick up from the ground before the uroths eat them.

The PCs live among the tribe for a few weeks, learning to ride. Then a rival tribe threatens to attack, so the PCs are asked to join. They can become honorary members by helping to defend their friends. Each PC is given his own uroth steed, armored and ready for a battle.

ST 23; **DX** 10; **IQ** 3; **HT** 12.

Will 11; Per 10; Speed 5.50; Dodge 8; Move 6.

SM +2; 1,700 lbs.

Traits: Acute Vision +4 (Disrupted by ultrasonics; Emits signal); Claws (Blunt; Feet only); Doesn’t Breathe (Oxygen Storage ×25); Enhanced Move 1 (Ground Speed 12); Injury Tolerance (No Eyes); No Fine Manipulators; Weak Bite; Wild Animal.