

**GURPS**

Fourth Edition

# CREATURES OF THE NIGHT

VOL. 3



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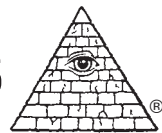
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Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition*. Page references that begin with B refer to that book, not this one.

# INTRODUCTION

Beings of motion, born to move. These creatures can't be still, will not rest. In the sea, the pets of mermaids surround a boat and pull it to pieces. In the forest, a green guru slips from place to place. On the plains, super-intelligent cows stand placidly, chewing their cud, and then vanish, to reappear a continent away. In the shadows, giant spiders spin webs that drag their attackers through time.

In this installment of *Creatures of the Night*, a variety of imaginary animals and dream-spun villains share the common thread of *movement*. This collection will suit any campaign world, from time travel to fantasy, from science fiction to modern day horror investigations. Each creature is fully described with stats and traits, combat options, a list of useful skills during encounters, and adventure ideas.

## About the Authors

Scott Maykrantz lives in epic splendor in Eugene, Oregon. For over 20 years, he has avoided the real world by staying home, typing strange ideas into his computer, and selling those ideas to people. This is called "freelance roleplaying game design."

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# CHRONOCHAOTIC SPIDER

The threads of time are taut and straight, tightropes stretched between possibilities. But nothing is perfect. Disruptions in the temporal flow can create a tangle of threads. Inside such time-knots, chronochaotic spiders are born.

A chronochaotic spider is approximately two feet tall; its legs span over six feet. It is pale and translucent, like colorless wax, and its abdomen bears a vague clock-face symbol.

*A giant arachnid with the power to alter the flow of time.*

The spider rests in its web, preying on animals and humans. It wraps its victims in silk, saving them for later. The web is located in a dark and hidden location, such as a castle or cellar.

If left alone, the spider has no effect on the world around it, and could be mistaken for an ordinary giant arachnid. But when the chronochaotic spider is agitated (chased, trapped, hurt, etc.), the flow of time shifts around it, like a hurricane spinning around its eye. While this sudden movement of time is usually obvious (the sun rising and setting, weather changes, etc.), individuals in an enclosed environment (dungeon, room without windows, etc.) may not notice any time change until they venture outside or peer out a window.

## Time Travel Destinations

The direction of the time-shift is based on how recently the spider has fed. To determine this randomly, roll one die. On a 1-3, the spider is hungry and moves into the future; on a 4-6, it is satiated and moves into the past.

The amount of time shift is determined by the number of seconds during which the spider is agitated. After the encounter is over, roll 1d and consult the table below. Add +1 if the encounter lasted seven seconds or more, +2 if it lasted 15 seconds or more, +3 for 30 seconds or more, +4 for one minute or more, and +5 for two minutes or more.

Roll	Time Shift
1-4	One day
5	One week
6	One month
7	One year
8	One decade
9+	One century

If several chronochaotic spiders are encountered, make one time-travel direction roll and apply it to all the creatures, multiplying the length of time by the number of spiders. For example, if the GM rolled a 6 after a fight with three hungry spiders, time moved three months into the future. If some of the spiders escape or are killed partway through the

encounter, the overall time traveled will be reduced. The GM can work out the actual calculations, or adjust the final result as he sees fit.

Note that the spider has no control over the time shift . . . it does not direct its power like a time-altering spell.

## Chronolocation

To notice the world has changed, each time traveler makes a Perception roll. Modify the result for the length of time.

One day (Per-5). The differences are subtle. Yesterday and tomorrow look a lot like today. Checking the date helps, but may also cause confusion.

One week (Per-2). People have vanished, having left days ago or arriving soon. Active construction projects show signs of sudden progress or setback. Travelers are in the past will relive the same seven days of weather.

One month (Per+1). Changes are quite obvious. Crops and seasons show significant changes. If the travelers are in the future, the locals wonder where they've been ("We haven't seen you for a month! What happened?").

One year or more (Automatic success). Birthdays and holidays have been skipped or will be repeated. Familiar people might be noticeably older or younger, maybe even dead or unborn. The land and cities may be significantly altered.

## In Combat

Chronochaotic spiders are agile, cunning combatants that strike with blinding speed and easily dodge blows by hand weapons. Their poisonous bite does 1d impaling damage. After any successful attack, the victim must roll HT. If he fails, he acquires Bad Sight (Nearsighted) lasting 30 minutes for every point the roll failed. Further successful attacks extend the duration cumulatively.





## Variants

### *The Uplifted Species*

The IQ of an uplifted chronochaotic spider is equal to 4, +1 for every spider in the area. For example, if five spiders are encountered, each one has IQ 9, as long as it remains near its fellows. Uplifted spiders speak to each other. They may set traps or post guards to deal with intruders. At the highest levels (IQ 15+), the spiders can communicate using telepathy or spells. They understand their powers and find ways to control them for their own benefit.

### *Nearly Harmless*

Instead of a giant arachnid, a chronochaotic spider is of normal size. Its venomous bite inflicts zero hits of injury, but can still impair vision. At this size, the creature is likely to be considered a pest, and any "fight" will be brief, likely moving time no more than one day forward or back. However, if the spider is abused for an extended period of time, the abusers will be very surprised by what has happened.

### *Going Home*

There are two ways for time travelers to return to their original time: a subsequent encounter with chronochaotic spiders, or using the web as a guide for some external method of time travel.

A second encounter could transport the travelers back if they are lucky enough to trigger the correct direction and distance. Anyone who knows about the spider's powers can put his knowledge to use. For example, travelers seeking to return to the past should try and attack the spider after it has fed. Individuals with Serendipity may even be lucky enough to return to the exact moment they left!

A surer way is to use the spider's web in conjunction with a time-spanning spell, gadget, or power, as every twist in the time-stream is recorded in the web. If the web is intact – and the travelers are using powers or technology able to read its data – they can use the information to calibrate their temporal travel accurately, ensuring their return to the proper time. At the GM's discretion, the magical power within the web itself may supply all of the energy for a spell, or provide up to a +4 bonus for any non-magical time travel.

Any chronochaotic spiders present during the use of a web in this manner will attempt to disrupt the procedure. Destroying both the webs and spiders may leave the travelers stuck!

### *Useful Skills During Encounters*

The Perception roll to notice a different time period (see *Chronolocation*) can be replaced (or augmented) with Area Knowledge or Current Affairs – use History if they have been flung into the distant past.

Occultism, an appropriate version of Hidden Lore, or (in some worlds) Biology (Zoology) can be used to identify the arachnid and its abilities. Physics (Temporal Physics) or Thaumatology will help understand its powers.

The Escape skill is useful for anyone trapped in the spider's web.

### *Adventures*

Groups unaware of a chronochaotic spider's nature are in for a surprise – their involuntary time-travel will undoubtedly put a kink in the adventure's plotline. Victims of the spider's poisonous bite may initially have trouble recognizing the change if their vision is too blurred to see details.

Some might seek out a chronochaotic spider for the purpose of time travel. Such individuals or groups will benefit greatly from spells or special gadgets to control the direction and distance of the journey.

Interesting results are possible during encounters with chronochaotic spiders. A shift to the past might allow time travelers to meet their earlier selves or ancestors. A shift to the far future could set them in a vastly changed landscape (e.g. post-apocalyptic) and/or allow them to meet their great-grandchildren.

### *The Drained Land (Fantasy)*

In the midst of a dungeon crawl, the adventurers encounter six chronochaotic spiders. When the battle is over, they have traveled several decades into the future, and can easily leave the now-empty dungeon. Emerging from the dungeon, they discover magic has disappeared from the world! Spells no longer work, magic items are useless, and supernatural creatures have vanished.

The time travelers soon discover a village of wizards who explain that a mana-draining storm devastated the world some years ago. The wizards want to return to the past to prevent this storm from forming. To help the wizards, the adventurers will need to revisit the dungeon and bring back a chronochaotic spider and its web. The spider and web will be used as the key components in a grand ritual allowing the wizards and heroes to return to their former timeline.

### *Chronochaotic Spider*

**ST** 15; **DX** 14; **IQ** 3; **HT** 13.

Will 13; Per 11; Speed 6.75; Dodge 9; Move 6.  
SM 0; 250lbs.

**Traits:** Affliction 1(HT; Disadvantage, Bad Sight (Nearsighted); Cumulative (Duration); Extended Duration x30; Follow-Up, Fangs); Binding 15 (Melee Attack, C; Extended Duration, Semi-Permanent; Persistent; Takes Extra Time 2); Clinging; Combat Reflexes; Dark Vision; Extra Legs (Eight); Fangs; Horizontal; Jumper (Time; Affects Others; Area-Effect, 32 yards; Cosmic, Can affect unwilling subjects; Unconscious Only; Uncontrollable); No Fine Manipulators; Subsonic Hearing; Wild Animal.

**Skills:** Brawling-16.

# COWS FROM SPACE

In the late 1960s, a secret project of the Russian space program accidentally created a super-intelligent cow. The animal was strapped into a pod at the end of a rocket and launched into orbit. But the spacecraft drifted out of radio range.

*They roam among us!*

Assumed lost, the pod whirled around the sun at increasing speeds, accelerating into a radical time-dilation. The bovine cosmonaut rapidly evolved, mutating through thousands of generations while only two decades passed on Earth.

At the climax of this high-speed transformation, the cow achieved total awareness of its surroundings, enabling it to return home by directing the craft's movement using telekinesis. It secretly returned to Earth and lived among normal cattle. Through careful breeding, it spread its offspring across the planet.

Now, in the first decade of the 21st century, the Cows from Space are ready for revenge! They have carefully-laid plans to take over the world and enslave humanity.

## The Cattle Conspiracy

Fortunately, they are still cows, always postponing their plots in favor of a peaceful day chewing cud, releasing flatulence, and snoozing.

The Space Cows concentrate their efforts on gathering information and conveying it to each other using their "Cow Tongue" gesture language. Any information they can find in the news, or through overheard conversations, is shared

## *Bos supremus*

The accelerated evolution of the original Space Cow brought its dormant psionic abilities to the surface. The creature developed a high level of self-awareness, with telekinetic and teleportation powers. However, due to the cramped environment of the space capsule, these powers were limited.

The Prime Cow could only practice its telekinetic power by manipulating the pod. This limited its psionic ability to metal objects. Lacking a wide landscape to practice teleporting, it never learned to "warp" quickly and casually . . . it had to think carefully, and visualize its destination perfectly. These limitations were passed on to its offspring.

The compressed evolution created a stronger body; Space Cows have a supernatural immune system, live for a very long time, and ignore the effects of poisons.

through complex ear wiggles, lip movements, and tail twirls. This knowledge is passed on until it reaches every Space Cow on Earth.

To spread the word on other continents, the Space Cows secretly teleport, disappearing in the blink of an eye to reappear in a herd thousands of miles away. Very few humans have ever witnessed this.

With their network established, the Space Cows will strike . . . very soon . . . any day now . . .

## Useful Skills for Encounters

To notice some members of a herd are *not quite right*, use Animal Handling, Naturalist, or Observation. If the individuals supplement their suspicions with research, Hidden Lore (Conspiracies) and Weird Science will come in handy. Anyone with History (Russian space program) will be able to uncover the origins of the Cattle Conspiracy with relative ease.

The Space Cows' reaction rolls when someone confronts them are modified by the Cows' feelings of trust – individuals with Leatherworking are at a significant disadvantage, while vegetarians and dairy farmers get a bonus.

## Adventures

The Cows from Space are useful in lightening the mood of a conspiracy campaign. They can serve as a recurring joke, or as the focus of an off-beat adventure. The Cows' disposition varies; they may be hostile, dismissive, or possibly interested in alliances with selected humans. It is likely the humans won't understand the cows – the combination of cosmic genius and epic procrastination may be too much for the mind of *Homo sapiens* to comprehend.

To add flavor to an encounter, include any of the following elements: slaughterhouses, sacred cows in India, the beef industry, cow-tipping, cattle-worshipping cultists, legendary space program hoaxes, bull mythology, Mad Cow Disease, animal rivals (such as the Monkeys from Space), bullfighting, and the Great Chicago Fire.

## The Mutilators (Modern Day Conspiracy)

As the Prime Cow was evolving in space, it battled a flying saucer. The crew of the saucer managed to limp home. Now the aliens are back to settle the score.

The aliens are mutilating cattle all over North America. They leave the shredded bodies in the open so they will be found, sending panic through the Space Cow network.

The heroes are independent investigators. While studying the mutilations, they meet one of the aliens. It warns them to stay out of the conflict. Of course, they don't, and are forced to choose sides in this strange war.

## Got Ark? (Modern Day Conspiracy)

The adventurers join up with the Sky Watchers, a small, nomadic group of conspiracy theorists, who visit sites of

*Fortunately, they are still cows, always postponing their plots in favor of a peaceful day chewing cud, releasing flatulence, and snoozing.*



possible extraterrestrial activity all over North America. They share many stories about the Cattle Conspiracy with the adventurers.

While camping one night, the Sky Watchers receive a vision of a cow-shaped starship hovering over Devil's Tower. They travel to Wyoming and learn that a bio-weapon terrorist scare has led to an evacuation of the Devil's Tower area. But the landscape is full of cattle.

If they can sneak past the military perimeter (and stay out of sight of the black helicopters) the Sky Watchers will discover the cow-shaped spaceship at the foot of the diabolic monolith.

If the Sky Watchers are captured by the military, the leader of the Space Cows – the original bovine cosmonaut – intervenes. The Prime Cow is pure white, with wise old eyes. After years of practice, it can extend its teleportation to affect other creatures. The Prime Cow transports the Sky Watchers onto the ship, where they can observe a line of Space Cow pairs slowly walking on board.

The grand old leader asks the investigators to perform a service. Any Space Cow left behind will seek the Sky Watchers. The group can then signal the Ark, so the Prime Cow can use its teleportation to rescue the missing Space Cow. If they accept, the Sky Watchers have this responsibility for the rest of the campaign.

### *Cows from Space*

**ST 22; DX 9; IQ 18; HT 15.**

Will 12; Per 18; Speed 6.00; Dodge 9; Move 6.

SM +2; 1,500 lbs.

**Traits:** Absent-Minded; Bad Sight (Nearsighted); Chummy; Colorblindness; Domesticated Animal (No Fixed IQ); DR 1 (Skull only); Enhanced Move 1 (Ground Move 6/12); Hooves; Incurious (12); Immunity to Disease; Immunity to Poison; Languages (Cow Tongue, plus several human); Laziness; Longevity; Megalomania; Night Vision 4; Peripheral Vision; Phobia (Loud Noises) (12); Restricted Diet (Vegetarian); Quadruped; Secret (Genius-level animal hidden among dumb cattle); Telekinesis 20+ (Magnetic; No Signature); Ultrahearing; Warp (Cannot concentrate for less than 30 seconds; Limited Use, 1/day; Reliable 5); Weak Bite.

**Skills:** Anthropology (Human)-16; Area Knowledge (Earth)-18; Astronomy/TL8-16; Current Affairs (Politics)-18; Current Affairs (Science & Technology)-18; Erotic Art-20\*; Hidden Lore (The cattle conspiracy)-20; History (20th Century Europe)-17; History (20<sup>th</sup> Century Asia)-17; History (20th Century Americas)-17; Immovable Stance-15; Intelligence Analysis-19; Observation-18; Push-14.

\* Just kidding.



# WOLLIG

The wollig is an amphibious animal the size of a full-grown dolphin. It has a stubby tail, two arms, a canine face, and a crest of spines.

Wolligs travel in packs of 2d+2. They are strict vegetarians and will eat almost any plant life.

## *Vandals of the sea.*

Wolligs' strong arms and fingers are matched by an incessant urge to pull things apart. They love to dismantle buoys, boats, docks, and bridge struts. If they can't find something to take apart, they will move stones along the seabed or dig holes along the coastline.

Sailors aware of wolligs call them "vandals of the sea." They know the creatures will destroy their ship unless captured, killed, or distracted with food.

## *Breeds and Pets*

There are two breeds of wollig: the tidal wollig, found along coastlines, and the sea wollig, found in the ocean.

The tidal wollig is slow and tough. It grazes like a manatee. Although it swims relatively slowly, its body is thick and strong. If a tidal wollig is hungry enough, it will crawl on land at night, looking for gardens or garbage cans filled with vegetables.

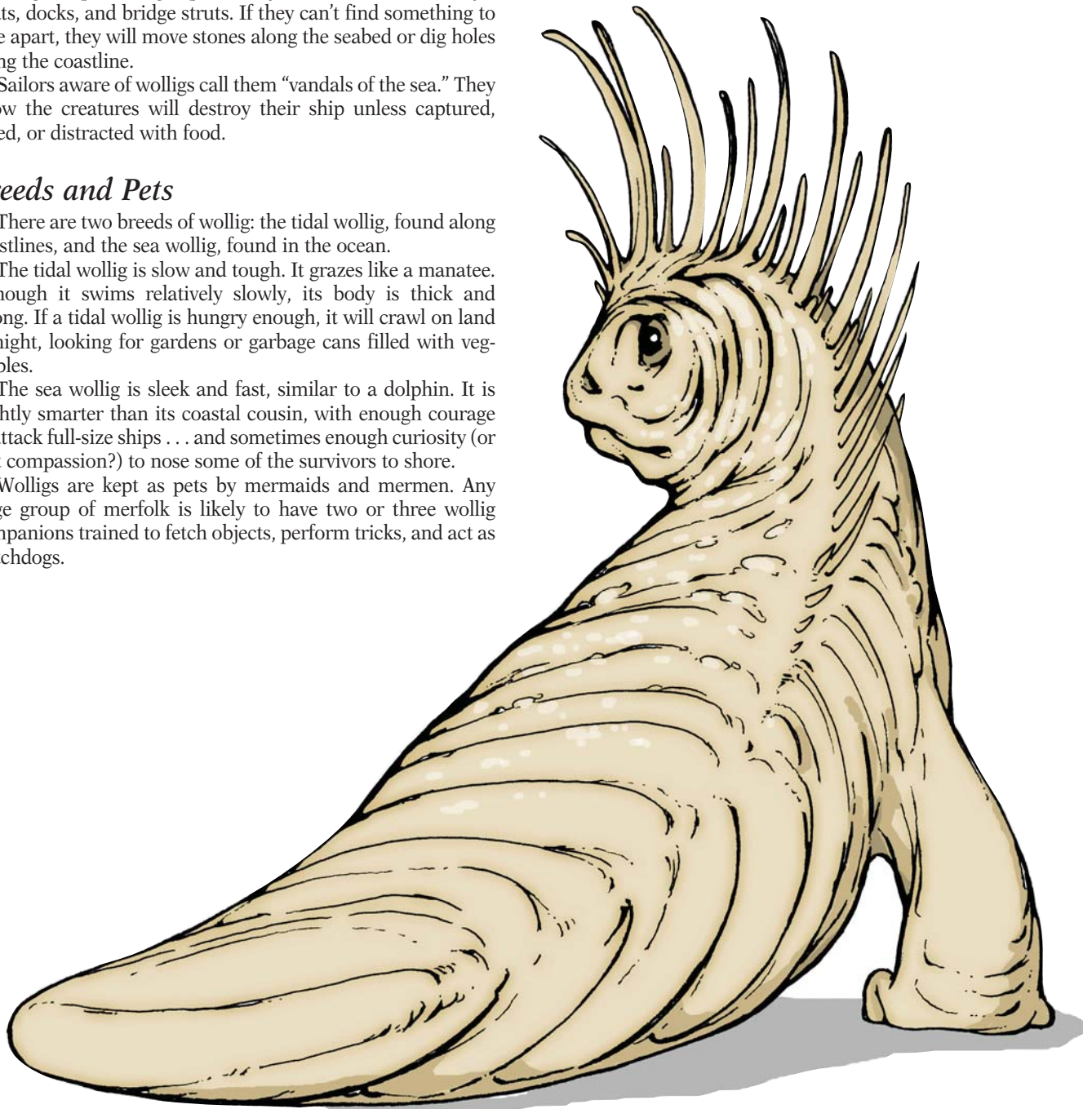
The sea wollig is sleek and fast, similar to a dolphin. It is slightly smarter than its coastal cousin, with enough courage to attack full-size ships . . . and sometimes enough curiosity (or is it compassion?) to nose some of the survivors to shore.

Wolligs are kept as pets by mermaids and mermen. Any large group of merfolk is likely to have two or three wollig companions trained to fetch objects, perform tricks, and act as watchdogs.

If a mermaid or merman transforms into a Sea Giant (see *GURPS Creatures of the Night, Volume 2*, p. 10), its wollig pets remain with their master in the new form. This gives the Sea Giant an assistant or two in building and guarding the sea-floor pattern.

## *Useful Skills During Encounters*

Swimming, Boating, Survival (Island/Beach), and Survival (Open Ocean) are valuable. Reaction rolls can be made using Animal Handling (add +3 if the hero offers appropriate food to the wollig).



*Wolligs' strong arms and fingers are matched by an incessant urge to pull things apart. They love to dismantle buoys, boats, docks, and bridge struts. If they can't find something to take apart, they will move stones along the seabed or dig holes along the coastline.*

### **Adventures**

Wolligs can be encountered in the middle of the ocean, at the mouth of a river, or in coastal marshland. Tidal wolligs are usually a nuisance – they may knock over clotheslines as they search for food – while sea wolligs are an actual threat to ships at sea (especially smaller craft).

In a fantasy world, wolligs could be a known part of the local ecology – no one who sees them is surprised. In a modern world, they will inspire the same astounded disbelief as the sighting of a mermaid or sea serpent.

#### **Isabella's Garden (Modern-Day Conspiracy)**

Isabella is a middle-aged woman with a huge garden in the yard of her coastal home. At least once a week, a pack of wolligs make a nighttime visit to the garden, to feast on cabbage, carrots, and other vegetables. Isabella sometimes feeds them by hand or sets out food for them.

The heroes are conspiracy theorists living next door. One night, they discover the wolligs devouring Isabella's garden. The creatures see them, grab a few vegetables, crawl to the water, and swim away. If asked, Isabella says she isn't sure what the creatures are, but doesn't mind them coming into her garden.

The next night something strange happens. While the wolligs are feeding, Men in Black arrive. They attempt to stun the creatures and take them away.

As the MIBs fight with the wolligs, Isabella comes out of the house, armed with shiny, alien-designed guns. She hands one gun to each hero and instructs them to shoot the MIBs. The MIBs are shocked, but manage to defend themselves. At Isabella's command, the wolligs join in the attack on the MIBs.

### **Dangerous for a Day**

Four times a year, at the height of each season, wolligs become very aggressive. Like animals during mating season, they become temperamental and protective. During this period – which lasts 24 hours – the wolligs tear apart any object they find and readily attack other creatures, even each other. They are also very hungry, and may be pacified with enough food.

After the firefight (no matter who survives), the heroes learn Isabella is an ex-MIB. She was hiding out, zeroed from society, when the wolligs arrived and blew her cover. Creatures like wolligs are tracked by the Agency. The Agency's surveillance of the wolligs – and the conspiracy-obsessed heroes – led the MIBs to her.

If Isabella survived the fight, she feels embarrassed at letting her affection for the creatures lead to this. If she didn't survive, the MIBs tell the heroes she was a wanted woman and traitor.

At this point, any number of things can happen. The heroes could be recruited to work for the Agency. They could escape, hunted by the MIBs. If Isabella is alive, she could escape with them.

No matter what happens, someone has to hide the mess before the local police and media arrive!

#### **Wollig, Tidal**

**ST 19; DX 12; IQ 4; HT 15.**

Will 10; Per 12; Speed 6.75; Dodge 9; Move 1 (Land).

SM +1; 900 lbs.

**Traits:** Compulsive Behavior (Vandalism) (6); Discriminatory Smell; Doesn't Breathe (Gills); No Legs (Semi-Aquatic; Water Move 6); Pressure Support 1; Quirk (Docile); Restricted Diet (Vegetarian); Subsonic Hearing (Underwater only); Vibration Sense (Water); Wild Animal.

**Skills:** Brawling-13; Survival (Island/Beach)-15.

#### **Wollig, Sea**

**ST 16; DX 13; IQ 5; HT 12.**

Will 10; Per 12; Speed 7.00; Dodge 10; Move 1 (Land).

SM +1; 800 lbs.

**Traits:** Compulsive Behavior (Vandalism) (6); Discriminatory Smell; Doesn't Breathe (Gills); Enhanced Move 1 (Costs Fatigue, 1 FP; Water Move 7/14); No Legs (Semi-Aquatic; Water Move 7); Pressure Support 1; Quirk (Docile); Restricted Diet (Vegetarian); Subsonic Hearing (Underwater only); Vibration Sense (Water); Wild Animal.

**Skills:** Brawling-15; Survival (Open Ocean)-14.



# WOODLAND ORACLE

Wandering through the woods is an old and peaceful spirit. The spirit is aware of everything within the forest and moves through it effortlessly, spending one moment lying within a brook, the next flowing into a tree several miles away. It keeps an eye on travelers within its home and listens to their conversations. If travelers comment on their desire to improve their skills and talents, the spirit may decide to take physical form and assist them.

*A plant elemental that guides a student's personal development.*

Loose leaves and branches fuse together, forming a humanoid shape colored every shade of green. Fresh berries, the size of acorns and the color of honey, are visible around its face and hands.

The woodland oracle can see the future as a series of paths. When the student chooses a path, it leads to another set of choices spreading outward like a branch. As he travels along a particular time-path, the distance from other possibilities increases. "For this reason," the woodland oracle explains, "awareness of the correct path accelerates personal improvement."

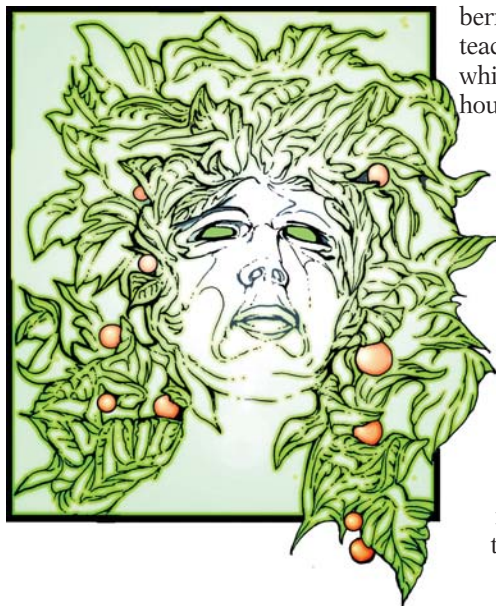
## Face to Face

Travelers meeting the woodland oracle can strike up a conversation. It will listen to their stories and offer trivial advice. Make a reaction roll, modified for the degree of respect the travelers show the oracle and the type of traits they seek to improve. The oracle prefers to guide students toward awareness, peaceful expertise, helping others, and knowledge in important fields. It will react poorly to students who only want to improve skills emphasizing conflict and destruction.

On a Good or better result, the oracle will explain its philosophy and offer magical assistance to improve any skill. By eating one of its berries, the student feels a surge of strength in his heart and mind. This is an increase in the ability to concentrate, directing the student along the best path and dramatically reducing the amount of time spent training.

## The Path of Improvement

In game terms, the berry makes improvement through study (p. B292) 10 times as effective. For example, someone studying under a teacher can gain one point in a skill for just 20 hours of study instead of 200. This can be applied to any *one* skill, learnable advantage, or (with the GM's permission) attribute, as determined by the oracle when it gives the student the berry. The recipient will intuitively know what the trait in question is.



Only *Self-Teaching* (40 instead of 400 hours per point) and *Education* (20 instead of 200 hours per point) benefit from this focus. The intensity of the studying is already greater than *Intensive Training*, and the focus required precludes *Learning on the Job* and *Adventuring*. Note that the oracle will never tutor the student directly – its guidance is always indirect.

## Example: Summer Scholar

Astrid Meadows, a university student planning to spend her summer studying the world of the supernatural, meets a woodland oracle in the forest behind her dormitory. After an enlightening introduction and the consumption of a berry, she persuades the university's librarian to tutor her into the night.

Astrid's been awake for six hours and has full FP. Four hours into the training, she makes a Will roll. Eight hours in, she makes another Will roll. At 12 hours, she has been awake for 18 hours and has lost 1 FP, so she makes a Will-1 roll. At 16 hours, she has lost another FP, makes a Will-2 roll, and fails! Astrid must make an immediate Will-5 roll to keep focused, and does so. At the end of the training (20 hours), she has lost yet another FP, but succeeds at her Will-3 roll. She gains one point in Occultism, learning it at IQ-1.

Astrid spends the rest of her summer on this path – conversing with the oracle, consuming berries, and studying with her librarian mentor. By autumn, her Occultism skill is at an expert level, and the oracle has disappeared.

Each berry allows the student to gain one point from training. The student must train for the full amount of time, all in one sitting, immediately after eating the berry. For example, a student with a teacher must train 20 hours in a row, while a self-taught student must train 40 hours in a row. Keep track of the student's sleep cycle and lost FP (p. B427). The Less Sleep advantage will be very useful.

The intense concentration involved requires a Will roll at the end of every four hours of study, at a penalty equal to any lost FP (due to sleep or otherwise). Single-Minded adds its normal bonus. If a Will roll fails, the student makes a second roll immediately – at an extra -3 – to snap back to attention. If this second roll fails, his concentration is broken and the time has been wasted.

If the student succeeds at all required Will rolls, he gains one point in the trait being studied. He can begin training again when his FP is at full strength.

Note that “continuous” training does not mean nonstop movement or study – the student is allowed to pace himself and take brief breaks. For example, if he is trying to improve his ST level, he can lift weights, take some time to stretch and eat, and resume lifting. Intensity is crucial, but intensity comes from mental discipline, not overexertion.

## *Player Students in Training*

Students can train together if they are all working on the same trait. This helps keep them involved in the same storyline.

Students may want to train up their Will specifically to double the effect – each Will improvement makes it easier to make study rolls! While this is legal, the GM should keep an eye out for abuse. The oracle is not obliged to give out “Willpower training” berries, no matter how nicely students ask.

For teachers and other resources, the training rules still apply – this is for formal, intensive training, not natural gains from adventuring use.

## *Missions and Tasks*

As students make use of the woodland oracle’s guidance, it may that ask a task be performed before giving out an additional berry. This is not an exchange or barter – it is a way for the oracle to see which path the students have chosen, and how far along it they have walked. As the benefits of the berries increase, the GM can make these tasks more difficult, taking longer periods of time.

The tasks can be divided into four types:

**Physical Labor.** The students have to perform “janitorial” work in the forest, such as clearing out trees or planting seeds. The work is harmless and dull. Impulsive or Selfish students may have to make self-control rolls.

**Journey.** The students must contact a druid on the other side of the forest, transport a seed and plant it far away, or gather

information from the local town for the oracle. The task requires at least two days of travel. It could be safe and simple.

**Protection.** The woodland oracle needs the students to stop crop-sprayers from defoliating the nearby fields, prevent an army from marching down the forest road, or other protective task. This is always complex and dangerous.

**Quest or Great Task.** Raising the students’ traits to super-human levels calls for epic adventures! The students are sent to bring peace to warring tribes, save a village in peril, slay a dragon, monkey-wrench a lumber mill, etc.

## *Adventures and Encounters*

The woodland oracle appears because it wants to – it can disappear at any time and never come back. Students must treat it with respect. Demands or threats will not accomplish anything.

The oracle could be introduced at the end of an adventure, allowing the students to enter a training period with the oracle in the background. Or, they might seek out the oracle to request its assistance.

In addition to the normal traits, the GM may allow students to improve or add spells, psionic powers, or perks, and to reduce (or eliminate) disadvantages.

The woodland oracle is not a fighter. If threatened, it simply flows back into the forest, its body returning to a mundane collection of leaves and branches. If successfully attacked, the oracle falls over. Its eyes go blank, and it is gone. The oracle’s life force will return in a different place at a different time.

### **Leo Zero (Modern Day Conspiracy)**

Leopold Zedd studied the Conspiracy for years. He almost gave up when his twin sister disappeared. Then he met a woodland oracle. It offered to help him learn the deepest, darkest secrets of the world. Leo ate the first berry, studied, and came back for more.

When the students meet Leo, he is Illuminated. He is also cosmically Zeroed – the Conspiracy doesn’t know he exists. The students can use Leo as their source of information as they battle the secret alliances, the Greys, and the Men in Black.

After the students’ first adventure, Leo disappears. But he sends cryptic messages with alarming regularity – through the internet, by mail, and other means. Leo tells the students he thinks his sister is alive. He directs them to the woodland oracle. They meet the oracle, and it offers to help them learn, just as it helped Leo.

The next phase of the adventure is a combination of intense study and cat-and-mouse chases. Leo guides the students using his secret messages. The Conspiracy tries to prevent them from learning, but they can evade their foes if they are lucky and smart.

By the time they are done, the students have enough clues to find Leo and solve the mystery of his missing sister.

### **Breakout (Near Future)**

A group of political prisoners, victims of a corrupt regime, encounters a woodland oracle while working in the orchards of the New Alcatraz prison farm. They want to escape, of course, and the spirit is willing to use its powers to help. A few good Reaction rolls lead the captives to fellow prisoners willing to teach Lockpicking, Holdout, and other skills they may need. The escape will also be physically challenging; the party members will have to train and exercise to build Hiking and similar skills, and possibly even Acrobatics. Thanks to the oracle’s berries, they will learn very quickly.

## **Alternatives**

The procedure to gain the training bonus is strict – one berry at a time, after a face-to-face meeting with the oracle. The GM can alter this to suit the student and campaign.

One option is to have the student search for the berry. The oracle sends the student to the other side of the forest, giving clues to locate a bush of berries. They glow when he arrives. The student eats one, and then trains.

Alternately, the student is allowed to gather a handful of berries, consuming one before each training period. Once he has eaten them all, the student can search for the oracle and find more. This allows the student to train quickly and easily. In some campaigns, this is preferable to a long-term training subplot.

The oracle could offer something other than a berry – a nut, leaf, seed, etc. If the oracle offers an inedible item, such as a small stone, the student is required to carry it throughout the training rather than swallow it.





As they improve their skills and learn new ones, they must deal with the guards, and perhaps with predators among the prison population. Bribes, coercion, and tricks are all useful. They may even meet a sympathizer among the guards . . . or is it a trick?

After the breakout, the campaign might continue as the escapees, now fugitives, become the core of a resistance movement.

A map of the prison – search online for a variety of suitable maps – will help the GM once the prisoners are ready to make their escape attempt. Don't forget to add the orchard where they meet the oracle.

### *Woodland Oracle*

**ST** 8; **DX** 8; **IQ** 18; **HT** 16.

Will 16; Per 16; Speed 5.00; Dodge 8; Move 5.

SM 0; 80lbs.

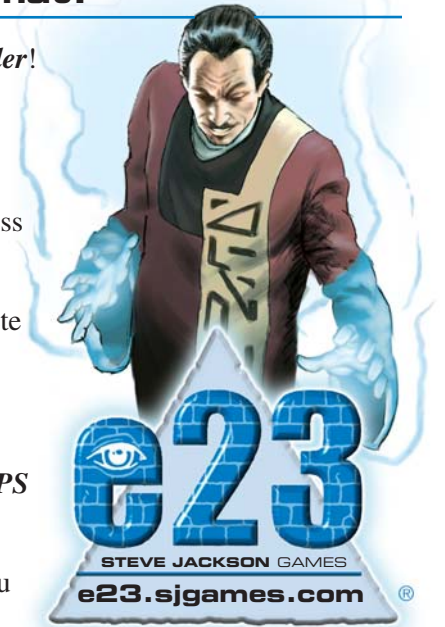
**Traits:** Animal Empathy; Dead Broke; Dependency (Sunlight, fresh soil, fresh water; Daily); Doesn't Breathe (Oxygen Absorption); Doesn't Eat or Drink; Doesn't Sleep; Empathy; Injury Tolerance (Homogenous; No Blood); Intuition; Invertebrate; Pacifism (Total Nonviolence); Permeation (Woodlands; Meld 2); Responsive; Speak with Plants; Unaging; Unkillable 3 ("Death" triggered by any damage); Unusual Background (Access to secret woodland berries).

**Skills:** Detect Lies-20; Diplomacy-18; Hidden Lore (Forest Lore)-25; Naturalist-18; Psychology-19.

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