

**GURPS**

Fourth Edition

# CREATURES OF THE NIGHT™

VOL. 5



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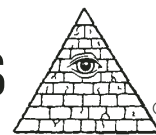
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# INTRODUCTION

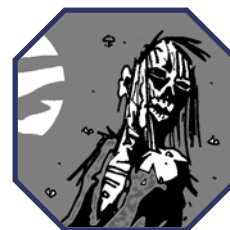
These new creatures will test the wits and skills of any hero. Some hide beneath the water and muck, emerging when no one sees. Some hide in plain sight – as an innocent plant, or suit of armor, or even a "normal" building. All are suitable for adventures, as either the focus of an entire campaign or as a quick and simple encounter to surprise a party of heroes.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Scott Maykrantz lives in epic splendor in Eugene, Oregon. For over 20 years, he has avoided the real world by staying

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# CRAYFEN

The crayfen are aquatic humanoids who divided into three subspecies: the many (the warriors), the few (the divers), and the one (the monitor). Although they can walk on land, they spend most of their lives hidden in lagoons and along the coasts of the sea.

The tribe dies four times a year, at the end of each season. To avoid extinction, the crayfen tend to the next generation with obsessive attention. In a secret underwater alcove, they maintain a pod of eggs. The warriors hunt for animals and humans, using their prey to provide the necessary protein for the pod. The divers act as midwives, delivering the food and monitoring the eggs. The monitor sits quietly on its seat under the waves, coordinating these activities.

*A tribe of fish-men, stuck on the brink of extinction.*

## THE WARRIORS

The warriors are the most numerous, approximately 30 per tribe. They have webbed hands and feet, thick fishy bodies, and predatory faces. They hunt for red meat, of which human flesh is usually the most attainable. They attack in packs, often against a single terrified person or animal. The body is brought back to their underwater lair, where it is shredded and prepared for consumption.

If left to their own instincts, they would raid every human settlement within reach, kidnapping as many victims as possible. To suppress this wild and self-destructive urge, the monitor has a form of telepathic control (see *The Monitor*, below).

They use simple weapons made from vines, sticks, and rocks. During patrols on land, they prefer clubs, blowpipes, bolas, and hatchets. In water, they wield nets and stolen knives. They also can claw for 1d+1 crushing damage.

## THE DIVERS AND THE POD

The divers look like warriors but with darker skin and sleeker bodies. Each diver has a single antenna with a glowing orb at the end. It needs this biochemical flash-light to find its way through the darkness. The tribe has one diver for every 15 warriors.

The pod of eggs is located deep below the surface, where the pressure is high. The crushing force of the water holds the pod together. The eggs develop inside their constrained space, giving the crayspaw the necessary strength to fulfill their duties as adults.

In addition to food and pressure, the eggs need heat. Sources of heat come in three types: natural (a geothermal vent), technological (a cache of car batteries dumped in the water), and supernatural (a “leaking” magic item resting at the bottom of the sea). The heat reacts with the growing crayspaw, triggering a complex pattern of development.

The divers swim to the eggs at least once a day. They carry strips of muscle, prepared by the warriors. The divers feed the protein-rich flesh to the pod, gently pushing it into the gelatin-like shell. Then they touch the pod, using their own weak telepathy to sense the health of the embryos. The condition is reported back to the monitor through its telepathic connection.

## THE MONITOR

The monitor is the chieftain and psychic hub of the tribe. It sits on a stone under the waterline, deep in contemplation, strengthening its telepathic links and coordinating the efforts of the other crayfen. It telepathically suppresses the atavistic urges of the warriors and receives regular reports from the divers. The effects of this trait are limited to the tribe.

The monitor is intelligent enough to converse with sentient beings. When encountered along the surface, or sitting under water, make a reaction roll. The visitors need to provide their own form of communication – telepathy or magical mind-linking is best. They could also employ gestures, but at a penalty of -4 owing to the extreme difference in species. The monitor will warn the outsiders to leave the tribe alone. On a reaction of Good or better, it describes the brief lifespan of the crayfen in an attempt to elicit sympathy. If the adventurers appear threatening, the monitor summons the warriors to attack.

## THE NULL PERIOD

The monitor sleeps for just three hours each night. During this time, the psychic link weakens, affecting the warriors and the divers.

From midnight to 3:00 a.m., the warriors are free to give in to their Bestial, Bad Temper, and Berserk disadvantages. If they encounter prey at this time, or engage in combat, a self-control roll is required to prevent them from making All-Out Attacks on every human in sight (or even attacking each other). This occurs only if something provokes the warriors, such as a late-night patrol of the area stumbling on a campsite.





Note that only *some* of the warriors leave the lair at night. A few packs of three or four might sneak along the coast; the rest of the warriors are back in the water.

The divers give in to their Cowardice and may wander far from the tribe. During the null period, any diver who encounters a threat must make a self-control roll to avoid swimming away as fast as possible. By the time the diver comes to its senses, it could be miles from the tribe. A team of warriors will be sent by the monitor to bring the diver back home.

## OFFSPRING AND EVOLUTION

The moment the pod hatches, the newborn crayfen swim upward to the open water. The rest of the tribe greets them and welcomes them into the world.

The full-grown creatures then swim down to the bottom of the sea, find a suitable location for a new pod, and grasp each other, forming a tight mass of scales and fins. They die in this embrace. From their bodies, a new pod of eggs is born.

The litter is born casteless, but within a week, they grow to full strength and comprise 2d+23 warriors, two or three divers, and one monitor. A full-size litter has at least half a dozen runners who die early. Once fully grown, the newborn monitor establishes contact with the tribe and instructs the divers to inspect the new pod. The tribe gathers for a funeral ritual, honoring the past generation.

If the pod was overfed or it sat over a particularly intense source of heat, the new tribe is larger than the last, by as much as 50%. The reverse is also true: A low-powered heat source or a limited diet reduces the population of the next generation to as little as half the size.

If the source of heat is unusual (such as a damaged magic item leaking mana, or a barrel of smoldering uranium), the new tribe could have special traits. For example, the monitor can cast spells, the divers are hemophiliacs, all members of the tribe can regenerate 1 HP per hour while underwater, the warriors have the Lunacy disadvantage, and so on.

If one diver is killed, the remaining divers have to work harder. A tribe without any divers – or a monitor – dies unless the new generation is born soon. The pod can get through one day without food before it dies, so if the tribe loses its key

members less than 24 hours before the litter hatches, the young will survive but may be weaker due to malnourishment.

## THE UNDERWATER VILLAGE

If the tribe's home is perfect, allowing them to give birth to hundreds of new generations, they begin to build a village under the waves. They carve chambers and columns from the rocky sea floor. Each section is inscribed with symbols and connected by corkscrew tunnels.

The crayfen are not natural masons or artists, so the work takes years. But as long as each new monitor can maintain continuity between generations, the construction is eventually completed, resulting in a singular, crayfen-esque habitat.

## USEFUL SKILLS DURING ENCOUNTERS

The most obvious water-related skills are Swimming, Diving Suit or Scuba, and Boating. Breath Control, Shiphandling, and Fishing are useful as well. Submarine and Submariner suit modern underwater adventures; to detect a crayfen tribe with scanning devices, roll against Electronics Operation (Sonar). Those who choose a confrontational approach may prefer Explosives (Underwater Demolition) or Crossbow (Speargun); see *GURPS High-Tech* (p. 201) for the latter.

Those searching for a tribe can use Hidden Lore (Oceanic) or Occultism while they examine a suitable body of water. Add +1 to +3 if the person is also skilled in Biology (Marine Biology), Navigation (Sea), or a salt-water specialty of Survival.

## ADVENTURE IDEAS

The crayfen are limited to deep-water bodies close to a steady source of food. If they are encountered in water that seems too shallow, they have their dwelling place in a deep cave at the end of a narrow passage.

Tribes prefer lairs in the sea, close to an active port. If they dwell no more than a few miles from the docks, they will have plenty of victims sailing over their hiding spot. Ships that anchor just outside of the port will be in grave danger.

### *The Specimen (20th-Century Horror; Near-Future Horror)*

The characters work in a laboratory on the edge of a vast marsh. One of their co-workers returns from the field with an incredible specimen: a crayfen diver. After a thorough examination of the creature's physiology, they discover that it is dying.

This discovery leads to more questions about the nature of the crayfen, so they organize an exploratory party and head into the marsh. At the early stage of the mission, the scientists in the group disagree about how to treat the crayfen. Some of them see the creature as an animal to be dissected, but others want it treated as an intelligent being.

When they meet the tribe, these divisions become more intense. The heroes must deal with this subplot as they carry out their dangerous work. If they want to protect the crayfen, they could establish a bond of trust with the monitor. If they want to destroy or capture the tribe, the adventure will focus on combat rather than interaction and investigation.

## Human Prey

Crayfen can live without humans, relying instead on wild pigs, stray pets, dolphins, and other animals. But *Homo sapiens* tend to be the closest source of red meat, as well as being particularly appealing to crayfen taste buds. When the warriors hunt humans, the monitor advises them to snatch one person at a time, quietly.

Coastal campsites are good targets. The warriors tear into a tent or set simple traps in the forest to catch hikers. Campers must win a Quick Contest of Perception (or Perception-based Traps) against the crayfen's Traps to avoid them.

Warriors can climb aboard passing ships at night, snatching a lone sailor as he watches the stars. If a small craft is anchored over their lair, they attempt to sink the vessel and devour the entire crew.

At any point in history, at least one cult or primitive culture performs ritual sacrifices to a crayfen tribe. The ceremonies provide a steady source of food.

The plot can take several different turns: The scientists could capture the entire tribe, the tribe could capture the *scientists*, or the heroes could help the crayfen.

The tech level of this adventure should have a significant effect on the temperament of this scenario's participants and the resources they can use. If they are in the early 20th century, their scientific background gives them a more rigid (and upper-class) interpretation of the world than the scientists of later decades. At the other end of the spectrum, in the near future, they have a broader understanding of the diversity of the natural world. In their professional lives, they deal with issues of funding (including directing their research toward profitable results) and have more diversity in their group.

## ***Powderburn Bridge*** ***(Modern-Day Horror; Weird War II)***

Powderburn Bridge is used by soldiers, shipping companies, and commuters. It passes over a wide, deep river. Years ago, toxic-waste containers fell from a truck and sank to the bottom of the riverbed. A tribe of crayfen has moved in, using the heat of the leaking barrels to grow new egg pods. For food, they attack lone travelers on the bridge, passengers on boats, and hikers along the riverbank.

The PCs are paranormal investigators who are contacted by a man seeking their help. He survived an attack on the riverbank, but his friends were captured by the crayfen. He asks them to help.

If the heroes take the case, the first phase of the adventure is the investigation of the area. The detectives can use Naturalist or an appropriate version of Survival to learn more about the river itself, Forensics and Tracking to find details about the attacks, and Area Knowledge and Engineer (Civil) to get details about the bridge.

The second phase begins when the crayfen notice the group and decide to attack. The creatures make sure their attacks are secretive – they won't attack in broad daylight. The GM should give the crayfen a special trait of some kind, caused by the toxic waste. Choose an example from *Offspring and Evolution*, p. 4, or devise a new one.

The final phase of the adventure is the struggle to destroy the tribe. If the heroes need help, they could enlist the aid of someone else who uses the bridge, such as the head of a shipping company or soldiers at a nearby military base.

## **WARRIOR**

**ST** 13; **DX** 11; **IQ** 7; **HT** 13.

**Will** 13; **Per** 10; **Speed** 6.00; **Dodge** 9; **Move** 6 (Land/Water).  
SM 0; 160 lbs.

**Traits:** Amphibious; Appearance (Hideous); Bad Temper (Mitigator; Monitor's telepathy); Berserk (Mitigator; Monitor's telepathy); Bestial (Mitigator; Monitor's telepathy); Blunt Claws; Cold-Blooded (50°); Dead Broke; Dependency (Immersion in water; Daily); Discriminatory Smell; Doesn't Breathe (Gills); Duty (Tribe; 15 or less); Hidebound; Infravision; Obsession (Birth of the next generation) (6); Odious Racial Habit (Eats humans); Pressure Support 1; Sharp Teeth; Terminally Ill (Three months).

**Skills:** Axe/Mace-14; Area Knowledge (Coast or Dock)-13; Area Knowledge (Tribal area)-14; Blowpipe-11; Bolas-13; Brawling-13; Knife-12; Net-11; Physiology (Human)-12; Survival

## **Tribal Divisions**

With every passing year, the chance of a tribal split increases. The split occurs when the dying monitor, in a spontaneous decision during the greeting ceremony, swims away, taking as many old and newborn tribe members with it as possible. If it can find a suitable location quickly, the monitor establishes a new tribe before it dies, leaving behind a smaller than normal egg pod. One of the hatchlings grows to become a monitor, one or two are divers, and the rest are warriors.

New tribes are found close to their old home – they cannot travel very far, and the features of the former home (types of prey and a suitable spot for the egg pod) likely exist within a few miles. This leads to tribal wars. If the two tribes come into contact, they attack each other out of evolutionary rivalry.

In this way, adventures can involve more than one tribe. The heroes could be caught in the middle of a war, forcing them to choose sides – or fight both tribes at once. In this case, give each tribe a distinctive physical feature, such as pale yellow skin or an extra pair of arms.

(Island/Beach)-12; Survival (usually Deep Ocean Vent)-13; Swimming-17; Tactics-12; Traps-14.

## **DIVER**

**ST** 11; **DX** 12; **IQ** 8; **HT** 14.

**Will** 13; **Per** 12; **Speed** 6.5; **Dodge** 9; **Move** 6 (Water)/3 (Land).  
SM 0; 140 lbs.

**Traits:** Accessory (Light); Amphibious; Blunt Claws; Cold-Blooded (50°); Cowardice (Mitigator; Monitor's telepathy) (6); Danger Sense; Dead Broke; Dependency (Immersion in water; Hourly); Doesn't Breathe (Gills); Duty (Tribe; 15 or less); Flexibility; Hidebound; Infravision; Mind Reading (Melee, C; Racial; Vague); Mindlink (Pod); Obsession (Birth of the next generation) (6); Odious Racial Habit (Eats humans); Pressure Support 2; Sensitive Touch; Sharp Teeth; Slippery 3; Terminally Ill (Three months); Ugly.

**Skills:** Area Knowledge (Tribal area)-14; Diagnosis (Eggs/Newborns)-13; First Aid-13; Housekeeping-14; Survival (usually Deep Ocean Vent)-16; Swimming-15.

## **MONITOR**

**ST** 10; **DX** 10; **IQ** 13; **HT** 13.

**Will** 13; **Per** 13; **Speed** 5.75; **Dodge** 8; **Move** 5 (Water).  
SM 0; 180 lbs.

**Traits:** Cold-Blooded (50°); Common Sense; Dead Broke; Dependency (Immersion in water; Hourly); Doesn't Breathe (Gills); Duty (Tribe; 15 or less); Infravision; Less Sleep 5; Mind Reading (Long-Range 1; Multiple Contacts; Racial); Mindlink (Tribe); Obsession (Birth of the next generation) (6); Odious Racial Habit (Eats humans); Pressure Support 1; Racial Memory (Passive); Semi-Aquatic; Telesend (Broadcast; Racial); Terminally Ill (Three months); Ugly.

**Skills:** Area Knowledge (Tribal area)-14; Detect Lies-12; Diplomacy-14; Leadership-15; Psychology (Crayfen)-13; Survival (usually Deep Ocean Vent)-14; Swimming-15; Tactics-13.

# DREADSTALK

The dreadstalk is a top-heavy plant that stands 10 feet tall. Its roots look like wrinkled tentacles, colored green and brown.

When humans or animals approach, the creature's giant mouth bursts open. Two dozen long spines peel away from the trunk and lash out. It can attack with up to three spines at once for 1d impaling damage each. The dreadstalk then bends over to bite its impaled prey, swallowing the victim whole.

The creature's body is made of dense but flexible vegetable material. Projectiles such as arrows and bullets stick in it without causing serious harm. Attacks with blunt or bladed hand weapons have full effects, however.

*A carnivorous plant with a giant mouth and impaling spines.*

If the dreadstalk is attacked from a distance, it returns fire with its spines. It reserves this tactic for desperate situations, because each spine requires one week to grow back. It typically waits until it has been reduced to 1/2 HP or worse by ranged attacks before launching its spines at the source. The plant can shoot up to three spines at once, but it always reserves at least three or four for close combat defense.

The plant has two sensory organs, at either end of its body. Its roots can detect the passive tremors caused by hooves, boots, and wheels. At the top of its "head," it uses a fat lump to sniff the air. This olfactory organ has a very acute sense of smell, enabling the dreadstalk to differentiate between familiar and foreign animals in the area. Its sense of smell also is used to determine the nutritional value of prey wandering nearby – it can sense the number of animals, their basic diet, and whether they are warm- or cold-blooded.

## TREASURE UNDER THE ROOTS

The dreadstalk digests its food slowly, dissolving soft tissue from bones. All hard materials are deposited under the roots, into a pit created by a secretion of its acidic fluid. If the dreadstalk stays in the same location for weeks, it

accumulates a cache of bones, jewelry, weapons, and other undigested materials.

Once the cache fills up, the dreadstalk slowly and laboriously crawls away. Its roots carry it at one yard per minute along the ground to a new location. (As this is exhausting for the plant, it travels no more than 200 yards per day.) Before leaving, the creature covers the pit. The undigested objects become hidden treasure.

## PLANT COLLEGE SPELLS

A mage who knows spells from the Plant College can use his talents to injure, manipulate, or heal the carnivorous plant. For example, a mage who casts Shape Plant can inflict 2d of damage per strike, and Wither Plant kills the creature if it fails to resist with HT. Blight doubles the time it takes for spines to grow back and makes it impossible for the plant to move.

The Seek Plant spell can find the nearest dreadstalk in range. Plant Vision allows the mage to see what sort of meal it is currently digesting; on a critical success, the top layer of the cache is visible as well. The mage can enslave the dreadstalk by casting Plant Control, force it to move using Animate Plant, or speak to it with Plant Speech.

Bless Plants doubles the speed at which spines return and gives the dreadstalk Move 1 for as long as it remains in the area of effect. Heal Plant instantly brings the dreadstalk back to full HP; this does not regenerate any spines, but a casting of Plant Growth can do so instantly. Rejuvenate Plant returns a dead dreadstalk to life (unless it was reduced to -10xHP) with -HP.

## REPRODUCTION

A cluster of small seeds is embedded inside each spine. After missing a target (or falling out of the decomposing corpse of a victim), the spines shed their seeds. There is a 1 in 6 chance that the cluster takes root, survives, and grows into a new dreadstalk.

Newborns are thus usually found within firing range of the parent (or where their parent used to stand). The exceptions are those seeds from spines that stick into a wild animal without instantly killing it. The animal's wounded run can carry the seeds miles away, allowing new dreadstalks to find a different type of terrain.

## The Better to Eat You

The dreadstalk can be described as "a SM +1 creature with a SM +3 head." Attacks against its head are thus only -2 to hit. While it does not have a brain, such an attack (if successful) calls for a knockdown roll (p. B420) as usual.

If the creature successfully bites a foe, the opponent takes 1d+1 cutting damage and is considered grappled. He can attempt to break free (p. B371) on his turn, but the plant is at +5 in the Quick Contest of ST. On subsequent turns, the dreadstalk can *either* do its full biting damage again (this

does not require an attack roll) or attempt to engulf the opponent completely. Treat the latter as an attempt to pin (p. B370); the plant is at +6 in the Regular Contest of ST, assuming the foe is SM 0 and has at least one hand free. Success means the foe is trapped, continues to take biting damage, and can only attempt to break free (as above) once every 10 seconds!

See *Teeth* (*GURPS Martial Arts*, p. 115) for more details.



## USEFUL SKILLS DURING ENCOUNTERS

To identify a dreadstalk while it is waiting with its mouth closed and spines pulled in, roll against Observation (to notice something “off”) or Naturalist (to recognize that this is no normal plant). If a person knows what a dreadstalk is (from personal experience or second-hand information), he can roll against Gardening or Herb Lore as well. To locate a hidden cache that was left behind, use Prospecting or an appropriate version of Survival. One can sneak past a dreadstalk with a Quick Contest of Stealth versus its Per; Light Walk always adds its bonus here.

## ADVENTURE IDEAS

Dreadstalks can be found just about anywhere, in any genre: the barrens of a post-apocalyptic world, in the laboratory of an Atomic Age mad scientist, a swamp on the edge of a fantasy kingdom, on a distant planet, or in the garden room of an abandoned spaceship.

Before they are used, decide how many dreadstalks are encountered. Cinematic PCs optimized for combat may be able to handle two or three dreadstalks each, while more realistic adventurers call for one plant for every two to three heroes, instead! When in doubt, the GM can use fewer dreadstalks, but set the encounter in an environment where more can be hiding if the fight is going too easy.

### *Brown's Greenery (20th-Century Horror)*

The PCs visit a plant store located at the bottom floor of a medium-sized building in the city. It is run by a rotund and red-faced man named Cleveland Brown. He has two assistants, his daughter (Goldie) and Dewey Howe. Dewey is a cringing young man with thick glasses.

The characters are exterminators, called in by the landlord to clean out the building. They find strange creatures hidden inside the walls, the attic, and the cellar – for some reason, the building is packed with mutant rats, little gremlins, and other supernatural pests. On the ground floor, where Brown's Greenery is located, they discover a dreadstalk. Brown has been feeding customers to the plant.

Throughout the investigation, Goldie and Dewey are underfoot. Dewey wants to help, but he gets in the way most of the time. Goldie acts dumb, but she is quite intelligent once the party gets to know her.

The adventure ends that night when the group is trapped inside the store. Cleveland knows they might find out what he has been doing, so he locks them in with the dreadstalk. If the heroes are in danger of being killed, they could be saved by Goldie or Dewey.

### *The Grassland Guild (Fantasy)*

While traveling through a field, the adventurers find some townsfolk on their way to destroy

## Cache Contents

If someone find a dreadstalk cache, what's inside? Although mostly bones fill the hole, the debris hides several items.

In a fantasy world, the pit could hold coins, gemstones, a magic ring, jewelry, small knives, arrowheads, scraps of chain-mail, gauntlets, an axe blade, horseshoes, stirrups, or belt, pouch, boot, or shoe buckles.

In the modern day, one might find bullets, damaged cell phones, keys, eyeglasses, a gold tooth, a compass, dog tags (either for a dog or a soldier), nails, small tools, wristwatches, a radio or MP3 player, a digital camera, a pocketknife, handcuffs, a hearing aid, a garden trowel, or belt or purse buckles.

In the near future (including post-apocalypse campaigns), the cache may contain hand-held sensors, robot limbs, ultra-tech medical instruments, bionic body parts, a brain implant, a radiation scanner, or belt or satchel buckles.

half a dozen dreadstalks. The villagers' cows were eaten by the creatures when the livestock wandered away.

If the heroes accompany the angry mob, they meet a trio of mages dressed in green and beige robes, decorated with leaves. They are masters of the Plant College. They use the local fields and forests as their outdoor guildhall. Although they understand the concerns of the villagers, their devotion to the vegetable world forces them to protect the giant carnivorous plants.

The heroes can choose sides or try to find a compromise. If the villagers are not satisfied, they plot to kill the mages along with the dreadstalks. The mages defend themselves with spells and magic weapons if attacked. Any confrontation should take place near the dreadstalks – the source of the conflict. If the PCs attempt to maneuver the clash away from the dreadstalks, some of the mages may use Plant Form to *become* dreadstalks! Every two spines fired translates to -1 FP when the mage returns to human form.

## DREADSTALK

**ST 15; DX 9; IQ 4; HT 12.**

**Will 10; Per 12; Speed 5.25; Dodge: 3; Move 1/60.**

**SM +1; 350 lbs.**

**Traits:** Blindness; Deafness; Dependency (Soil/Water; Constantly); Discriminatory Smell; Extra Attack 1 (Bite); Impaling Attack 1d (Can be used ranged or as melee C-2 attacks; Limited Use, Special; Rapid Fire, RoF 3); Injury Tolerance (Homogenous, No Blood, No Eyes); Invertebrate; No Manipulators; Semi-Sessile\*; Sharp Teeth; Universal Digestion; Vibration Sense (Air); Wild Animal (with Mute).  
**Skills:** Brawling-15; Innate Attack (Projectile)-15.

\* A new option for No Legs (p. B145), worth -30 points: For the most part, you are *Sessile*, but you can transport yourself very slowly when necessary. You can move one yard per minute; this is considered paced running – roll HT every minute or lose 1 FP.



# GULLY DRAGON

The gully dragon is a limber, aggressive reptile that lives in a dry riverbed. It can rise upright like a primate for brief periods, standing eight to 10 feet tall. Its muscular tail is six feet long.

The dragon leaps on animals that drink from pools of water in the riverbed. It feeds primarily on deer and coyotes, but it also attacks humans who enter its habitat. Although the gully dragon is large, it can sneak quietly to its prey before it pounces, jumping up to nine yards and then biting or clawing for 2d+1 impaling damage.

It has large ears, like a bat, enabling it to hear faint noises at great distances. It is nearly impossible to sneak up on a gully dragon. Those trying tend to meet the dragon's tail, which does 3d crushing damage (but is at -2 to hit).

When rain fills the gully, the giant lizard wallows in the muck along the edge, snoozing under a layer of mud as the river flows past. It snatches fish from the rapids like a bear until the water level subsides. The layer of mud makes the creature very slippery, giving it +2 to dodge grapples and attacks with blunt weapons.

The creature has a non-magical breath weapon: a blast of dirty water. It collects water in its second stomach as it eats and drinks. If the stomach is full when the creature meets a threatening animal, it discharges a narrow jet of liquid mud that is as strong as a blast from a fire hose (2d crushing damage, Range 10/50). It can do this three times before running out, though it does not go out of its way to refill immediately, preferring to wait until its next meal.

The lizards are encountered alone (roll of 1-4 on 1d), in pairs (roll of 5), or trios (roll of 6). Solitary gully dragons are overfed and stout. Pairs and trios share food, so they have slightly narrower bodies and can often hold only two "mud jets" each.

## BOUND AND TAMED

The creature's wild temperament can be suppressed. If the circulation of its blood is restricted, the gully dragon experiences a sudden drop in its metabolism. If its legs are clamped into manacles or its neck is constricted with a rope, the creature stops moving, lowers its head, and purrs. It is instantly tamed and remains so as long as its restraints are in place. Once the restraints are gone and its blood flows freely, the gully dragon returns to its natural, aggressive state in 3d seconds.

*A giant lizard – with large ears, a mud-jet attack, and a fondness for muck – that can be captured and temporarily tamed.*

After a successful entangle attack using a lasso or similar weapon, roll against the creature's Will; apply a penalty equal to the margin of success of the attack roll. If the creature makes its Will roll, it attempts to break out of the grapple – by biting the rope, snapping the chain, etc. This response could fling through the air anyone holding tight to the restraint.

Should the Will roll fail, the gully dragon stops moving and its breathing slows. It can be controlled at that point using Animal Handling (Reptiles), influence skills via Animal Empathy, or appropriate spells.

If the creature remains in captivity for an extended period, roll against the captor's Knot-Tying skill or the manacles' HT+DR every few hours to check the bonds. If the roll fails, the rope or cuff has loosened and the dragon may make an immediate Will roll. Adventurers who want to keep the dragon under control should check the bonds regularly to be safe.

## ILL AWAY FROM HOME

Outside its habitat, the gully dragon will expire from infectious diseases. The bacteria that grow in the stagnant pools of riverbed water interact with the giant reptile's immune system, keeping it healthy. Without a steady infusion of these microorganisms, it gains a level of Susceptible to Disease every day, to a maximum of five levels. This weakness can be counteracted using magic and science. Healing spells are particularly useful.

## EGGS

Once a year, each female gully dragon finds a mate and lays a cluster of six to 10 eggs. These eggs are hidden in a narrow passage in the gully, covered by underbrush and other debris.

In embryonic form, the creatures are similar to real dragons. Once they hatch, this resemblance ends, but until then, a gully dragon egg can be used as if it were a true dragon's egg for the purpose of spell components and alchemy. This makes gully dragon eggs very valuable to the right people!

Mages familiar with gully dragons may have access to a special enchantment (see *GURPS Magic*, p. 16) using the Transform Other spell. This requires 1,000 energy and a gully dragon egg; if successful, it transforms the embryo inside into an actual dragon. When it hatches, it is an infant of a different species, ready to develop into a full-grown monster!



*Adventurers who want to keep a gully dragon under control should check the bonds regularly.*

## USEFUL SKILLS DURING ENCOUNTERS

Anyone exploring a riverbed may find evidence of a gully dragon. Roll against Naturalist or an appropriate specialty of Survival to analyze the clues. Use Biology or Veterinary to understand why a creature is sick; the latter also can help cure it. Captured gully dragons are controlled using Animal Handling (Reptiles), as well as Teamster if used as draft animals.

## ADVENTURE IDEAS

The gully dragon is usually found in its natural habitat, attacking unsuspecting passersby. Adventurers don't have to kill it. They could try to capture it, drive it away, or attempt to gain its trust using spells or food.

Outside the gully, the dragon is encountered as a pet, a guard, a beast of burden, or a mount. Its owner must bind the beast and counteract its weak immune system to keep the creature healthy and under control.

### *Hunters in the Cut (Post-Apocalyptic Fantasy)*

The PCs must travel outside a walled village to find a missing artifact. The item – a valuable battery array that the community needs for power – was stolen by a local thief. He ran down in “the Cut,” a nearby gully that no one has the courage to explore.

The heroes enter the wide riverbed, looking for the thief and the battery. They find human bones, dead animals, tangled vines . . . and a gully dragon. The creature leaps upon them and attacks. If they can respond with enough force, it retreats. The party can use this moment to return to the town and gather reinforcements, or devise a plan on the spot to deal with the dragon.

If they succeed, the battle coincidentally leads them to the missing artifact, lying on the other side of the Cut . . . next to the thief's dead body.

## GULLY DRAGON

ST 25; DX 15; IQ 5; HT 14.

Will 13; Per 12; Speed 8.00; Dodge 12; Move 8.

SM +3; 1,700 lbs.

**Traits:** Bad Grip 2; Combat Reflexes; Crushing Attack 2d (Limited Use, 3/day, Slow Recharge; Reduced Max Range, 1/2); Crushing Striker (Clumsy, -2 to hit); Discriminatory Hearing; Fangs; High Pain Threshold; Infravision; Parabolic Hearing 3; Perfect Balance; Reprogrammable (Must be bound); Semi-Upright; Super Jump 1; Susceptible to Disease 5 (Mitigator, Dry gullies); Talons; Wild Animal.

**Skills:** Innate Attack (Breath)-15; Jumping-15; Stealth-14; Survival (Swampland)-13.



## Better Than One

Once in a great while, a gully dragon is born with two heads. Such a dragon also has an enlarged upper torso, with additional muscles to support the extra weight. The powerful body has a double-sized mud-collecting stomach, which holds six shots at a time instead of three. This allows the dragon to fire one jet from each head, if it wishes to.

A two-headed gully dragon uses the normal statistics with the following changes: Raise SM to +4. Add +2 to ST (and +1 to damage), Extra Head 1 (which includes Extra Tracking 1), and Extra Attack 1. The Limited Use on the Crushing Attack becomes 6/day. This challenging variant is suitable for especially tough, capable, or intelligent heroes.

# MOON GUIRE

Moon guires are corpses that lay under a black cloud at the bottom of a lake. The cloud – known as the *spectral shroud* – is a vague shadow, almost impossible to detect from the surface. It has a close symbiotic connection to the corpses.

## NIGHT ATTACKS

When the sun sets, the moon guires come out from under the shroud, swim to shore, and begin hunting for human victims. They move quietly through the area near the lake. If anyone makes eye contact with a moon guire, the creature vanishes – its body disappears instantly, reappearing in slumber under the cloud. For this reason, the moon guires instinctively hide themselves when watching someone.

They try to grab victims and drag them back to the water without being seen, but this is difficult. They have to cover the victim's eyes, knock them out, or hold their head so they can't see who is attacking them. Their bodies are adapted for this – treat them as ST 19 for grappling purposes.

On nights of the full moon, the moon guires do not vanish when gazed upon. Rather, they become particularly aggressive and attack anyone who sees their eyes. If they cannot sneak up on someone, they may make All-Out Attacks (Determined) to the face to knock out their quarry, striking for 1d+1 crushing damage. If their prey successfully fight back, the creatures flee to the water.

The moon guires drown their victims under the spectral shroud. The shroud envelops the body, drains its soul, and creates a new moon guire. This process takes 1d+3 hours, giving friends a chance to rescue the body before the transformation is complete.

The moon guire's skin is covered in a thin sheath of slippery fluid – the residue of the slime at the bottom of the water, made magical by the spectral shroud. When the creatures walk, the slime drips down, and they leave footprints that glow in the moonlight. These fade within a few minutes but last long enough to attract the attention of anyone nearby.

## SEPARATION AND DECAY

If a moon guire fails to grapple a victim or run away, it could be captured. However, without its regular hibernation under the spectral shroud, it decays rapidly. The creatures loses 1d HP every 5 minutes after the sun rises. At -HP, it crumbles to dust.

## RESTORATION

The spectral shroud can be touched and divided, like a blob of algae hovering over the lake bed. It holds the spirits of the moon guires and can be used to drive them away or cure them.

If a moon guire touches the shroud (or even a container holding a piece of it) while outside the water, it regains its soul. It suddenly transforms, turning into the person it was when it was killed. The newly resurrected person is in critical condition; treat him as mortally wounded (p. B423) at -HP. Due to the shroud's preserving effects, invasive surgery may not be necessary; caretakers can substitute Physician or First Aid-5 to stabilize the

former guire. If successful, the person's skin gradually grows back and he regains his appearance as he heals and recovers.

Note that this recovery could take place a long time after the person turned into a moon guire. They could emerge into a world they don't know.

Moon guires are aware of this weakness, at least subconsciously, so they avoid any contact with the shroud outside the water. Thus, anyone who holds a piece of the shroud (in a container of some kind) is safe from moon guire attacks.

## THE MOVING CLOUD

If all of the moon guires are on the surface, looking for victims, the cloud can teleport to a different body of water, something close by. It could move to a pond, a slow-flowing river, or even an abandoned swimming pool. If it does, the moon guires sense its new location instantly; they know they have to travel to a different place to find the cloud.

The cloud performs this act for its survival. Like an insect that leaves a damaged hive, it understands that there is a time to relocate.

*Zombies that live in water, rise at night, and look for victims to drown.*

## HORDES OF SLIPPERY CORPSES

If the Game Master wants to make moon guires more dangerous, they can be encountered in hordes. There are two ways to do this. One method is to assume that the spectral shroud is *gigantic*, covering dozens of corpses (4d+20) who are ready to stalk the surface world when the sun goes down. Adventures with this large of a group will lead to widespread panic and the need for special attacks and defenses to deal with the creatures. Their presence in the area will be well-known (or at least the topic of passionate local rumors) because of their numbers.

The second option is to have a normal-sized spectral cloud, but it is able to replicate moon guires at will. Replicated moon guires have the same appearance; they are clones of a single corpse. The locals experience just as much fear as with a gigantic shroud, but the source is harder to find because it is small.

## IN THE DEEP

It is possible to encounter a pack of moon guires out at sea. In deep water, far from land, they sleep under a spectral shroud that covers a much larger area than in their more common, shallow habitat. The shroud generally floats about 100 yards below the surface; the creatures swim up from underneath it (taking about 20 seconds) when they sense a ship coming in their direction. They then climb aboard and attack everyone.

This type of moon guire can be added to ocean-going campaign when the characters discover an empty ship, adrift on the sea. There is evidence of what happened – or a single survivor can be found, hiding in the ship’s hold. That night, the moon guires come back to grab more victims.

Deep-sea moon guires use the normal statistics but add Pressure Support 2 and Vibration Sense (Water; Long-Range 1). They can perceive movement around them with much greater accuracy than their shallow-water counterparts; this sense enables them to detect approaching ships, locate overboard victims from a vantage point just below the surface, and avoid hostile marine animals.

## USEFUL SKILLS DURING ENCOUNTERS

If an attack takes place in the water, the adventurers need Swimming and Breath Control to escape. Diving Suit or Scuba is useful for exploring the bottom of the river or lake. Observation, Survival (Bank and River/Stream), and Tracking help with the investigation of an area.

## ADVENTURE IDEAS

The moon guires are meant for use in relatively simple, combat-based encounters. Although a GM could construct a plot around them, they serve better as a secondary element of a larger adventure.

As the GM prepares to introduce the moon guires into the adventure, decide what type of water body the cloud rests in. The range of possibilities depends on the campaign. In a modern-day world, for example, the moon guires could rise out of a river, pond, swimming pool, water tower, or sewage pool.

Then decide how many moon guires are under the cloud, and what type of victims they will encounter. There could be just two or three moon guires, quietly sneaking through a neighborhood at night. Or, there could be 30 of them, rising from a lake to attack everyone in a nearby campground.

Recent victims of a moon guire attack will not have the same degree of decomposition as the others. As a result, the creature’s face could resemble its former self. GMs who want to add a dramatic touch to the adventure can allow an NPC (or one of the PCs) to recognize a moon guire. This can provide the heroes with a motive to cure the monster instead.

To determine if someone can recognize the creature, make a Per roll with a penalty of -1 for every day since its death. In addition to the recognition, a successful roll causes a Fright Check.

### *The Outsiders (Modern-Day Horror)*

The party is camped out by a lake (perhaps as part of an investigation, or as relaxation on their off-time). A local man with whom they’ve made friends, feeling bored as the sun goes down, ties a pail to a rope and drags it along the lake bottom.

## Nerlochs and Moon Guires

The spectral shroud could be the offspring of Anagon, the sleeping god from *Creatures of the Night, Volume 1*. If you want to link the creatures, assume that Anagon’s dreams manifest as a fluid at the bottom of lake beds, ponds, and swamps. The shroud’s power is drawn from Anagon, creating moon guires in a way that is similar to the sleeping god creating its Nerloch servants.

If the adventurers encounter both pairs of symbiotic creatures, they could exploit their knowledge of one to deal with the other. Roll against Occultism or Hidden Lore (Undead) to make the connection.

He accidentally pulls up part of the spectral shroud and leaves the bucket near the characters.

Under the full moon, the moon guires come out of the water. They get close to the group, sense that they have the piece of the shroud, and walk away to find more suitable victims.

If the adventurers follow the creatures, they witness the zombies sneaking through the dark and attacking people. However, as long as they carry their piece of the shroud (and they stay close together), they are safe.

The moon will be full for two more nights. Trying to explain the situation to anyone else elicits stares of disbelief or amusement. If they can trick the moon guires into touching the container that holds the piece of the shroud, they can restore those people to their former life.

## MOON GUIRE

**ST 15; DX 9; IQ 6; HT 12.**

**Will 13; Per 11; Speed 5.25; Dodge 8; Move 5.**

5’-6”; 90 lbs.

**Traits:** Amphibious; Appearance (Monstrous); Detect Shroud (Long-Range 1); Doesn’t Breathe; Dread (Shroud); Feature (Can be reborn); Fragile (Unnatural); Immunity to Metabolic Hazards; Injury Tolerance (Unliving); Lifting ST 2; Metabolism Control 10 (Under shroud only); Obsession (Drown victims) (6); Slippery 1; Trademark (Simple; Footprint lingers in moonlight); Unaging; Warp (Anchored, Shroud; Unconscious Only; Uncontrollable); Weakness (Daylight; 1d per 5 minutes).

**Skills:** Brawling-12; Stealth-14; Swimming-15; Wrestling-13.





# STEALTH GOLEM

The suit of armor standing in the corner of a mage's chamber may not be what it appears. When the sun sets, the metal form awakens to serve its master. The golem moves with a fluid grace, dressed in a cloak and armed with a dagger or garrote.

## CONSTRUCTION AND ACTIVATION

The creation of a stealth golem requires a clockwork body of exceptional quality to be constructed within a suit of light steel armor. If the mage is building one by himself, see *Gears and Steel* (p. 13) for details. Most enchanters, however, commission a golem body from a renowned engineer. If this is a unique creation, the engineer charges at least \$100,000 and takes 1d months to build it. Where stealth golems are fairly common, reduce this to \$20,000 and 2d weeks.

Once the body is ready, the mage casts the Golem spell upon it, at a cost of 1,000 energy. Two special ingredients are necessary: a Powerstone and the blood of a vampire.

The Powerstone is installed in the head or torso, to provide magical fuel. It must have at least 10 points of energy; incorporating larger (20+ energy) Powerstones is common. Every night of activity drains two points from the stone. Since it recharges one point per day (in a normal mana area), this means the stealth golem can be active for a number of nights equal to the capacity of the Powerstone, after which it needs to rest and recover. It rarely pushes itself to that point; see *Abilities and Limitations*, below.

The vampire's blood – sometimes called ichor – flows from joint to joint, circulating under the metal skin like mercury. It infuses the golem with supernatural strength and the vampire's nocturnal schedule.

## ABILITIES AND LIMITATIONS

The creature is an expert thief, untroubled by morality or greed. It is adept at silent entry of secured rooms, snatching items, and disarming traps. In combat, the golem strikes killing blows from the shadows, typically armed with a fine long knife (4d-1 cut or 2d+1 imp). It retreats the moment it senses it is in peril.

During daylight hours, a weakness of vampires afflicts the golem: In direct sunlight, it is completely paralyzed. If it stays in the shadows (or under a cloak) between dawn and sundown, it can move, but it loses its agility and acute senses.

For similar reasons, the golem cannot let its Powerstone grow too weak. If the stone falls below 1/3 of its maximum energy, the creature suffers the effects of daylight, regardless of the actual time. A stealth golem with a weak Powerstone flees

to safety as soon as possible, before its lethargy drags it down to a dangerous level.

It can stash small items inside its body, under disguised metal flaps. These compartments can carry stolen jewelry, gems, and other valuables. The torso has a single holding compartment the size of a shoe box, which can hold approximately four pounds. Each limb has a compartment the size of a paperback book, able to contain up to one pound apiece.

## IMPROVING SKILLS

By performing the same act again, the stealth golem's magical mind calculates which movements earned the best results. Given the opportunity to pick the same lock or climb the same wall, its skill level increases.

For every repeated act that succeeds, raise the creature's skill by one level. This applies exclusively to that specific lock, wall, trap, etc. After level 20, the rate of increase slows to one level for every five repeated successes.

Game Masters can avoid detailed record-keeping by simply giving the golem a default level of 20 for any act it has obviously performed many times before on the same target, or level 25 for an act it has repeated every night for months.

## CLAIRSENTIENCE LINK

The stealth golem can optionally be enchanted to act as the eyes and ears for its owner. This requires providing the golem with one or more of the following spells: Wizard Ear, Wizard Eye, Wizard Hand, Wizard Nose, or Wizard Mouth. When the desired spell offers two different enchantment costs, use the least expensive one.

The wizard can rely on castings such as to see through its mechanical servant as it burglarizes homes in the night. Unlike the spells listed under *Temporary Strength* (p. 14), the energy cost for these spells is paid by the caster, who may use one of his own personal Powerstones to do so.

## EXTRA GADGETS

With the added expense of time and money, the creator can equip his stealth golem with the following gadgets. They are built from clockwork but powered by magic. Each of these devices is small and hidden from view until it is used. The energy cost is added to the cost to enchant the golem (*Construction and Activation*, above), while the monetary cost is paid to the engineer who builds it. Halve the dollar cost if the mage is building the body himself.

*Retractable Spines:* Treat as Long Spines (p. B88). Requires an additional 20 energy and \$3,000.

*A nocturnal clockwork thief that improves its skills through repetition.*

*Hot Finger:* Useful for melting locks and igniting fires, the finger becomes red-hot after two seconds – enough to do 1 point of burning damage per second. Requires an additional 10 energy and \$1,000.

*Dart-Gun:* This is a small blowgun that fires a single dart, mounted in the golem's forearm. The dart is propelled by a magical burst of air. Its stats are Damage 1d-2 pi-; Acc 3; Range 100; RoF 1; Shots Varies; Bulk -2. The dart can carry one of the four following toxins, determined when the golem is created: *Blinding venom* requires a HT-3 roll; failure blinds the subject for minutes equal to the margin of failure. *Disorienting venom* requires a HT-3 roll; failure dazes (p. B428) the subject for minutes equal to the margin of failure. *Poison* does an additional 1d of toxic damage per 10 seconds for the next minute. *Tranquilizer* requires a straight HT roll; on a failure, the victim falls unconscious.

This adds 5 energy and \$500 for *each* dart that the stealth golem can load, plus an *additional* 40 energy and \$6,000 for each type of toxin the golem can use. The blowgun can be reloaded with normal darts; this takes 3d minutes.

*Smoke Screen:* The golem can create a thick cloud of noxious smoke around itself in two seconds. Vision is impossible through the cloud (for others *and* for the golem). This allows it to obscure the area and escape – or make a sudden attack by leaping out of the cloud. This requires an additional 20 energy and \$3,000 for *each* time it can be used per day.

## USEFUL SKILLS DURING ENCOUNTERS

To notice something out of the ordinary about a motionless stealth golem, use Armoury (Battlesuits *or* Body Armor), Thaumatology, or Weird Science. If it is in motion, a successful use of Body Language or Observation reveals that there is no person inside.

To analyze the scene of a crime, use Forensics. Additional analysis of gathered evidence requires a roll against Criminology.

Maintenance of the clockwork frame requires Armoury (Body Armor) and Mechanic (Clockwork). If the design uses uncommon metals, use Metallurgy.

Technological spells can be devastating in combat, especially Animate Machine, Glitch, Malfunction, and Shape Metal. A mage who knows what he's dealing with can use Seek Machine to track down the golem. Note that spells like Machine Control and Machine Summoning have no effect, as the golem's mind is too complex.

## ADVENTURE IDEAS

Stealth golems are encountered in fantasy cities. They are the servants of mages, acting as guards or thieves. The adventure can pit the party on the side of the mage or in opposition. Locations for

## Gears and Steel

The creation of a clockwork body uses either the *New Inventions* rules (p. B473) or *Gadgeteering* rules (p. B475). The body is a Complex TL4 device with a "retail cost" of \$50,000. The concept roll is against Engineer (Clockwork). The prototype roll is against the *lower* of Armoury (Body Armor) or Engineer (Clockwork).

In a modern game, inventors can build a robotic body instead. Treat this as an Average TL7 device of the same cost that requires Engineer (Robotics) and Armoury (Battlesuits) instead.

encounters include: the mage's home, a wharf where a golem steals from ships, the homes of wealthy merchants, the city treasury, a cache of magic items in another mage's vault, a temple containing with valuable talismans, or a subterranean tomb filled with treasure.

Stealth golems also can perform assassinations. This expands the range of adventures to plots against a king, mayor, or other important individual. The local assassins' guild may be involved. Alternatively, the golem could be a free agent, on a mission to avenge the murder of its master.

If the adventure includes the creation of the golem, the group could be hired by a mage to procure a Powerstone and vampire's blood. Likewise, they could help the mage find a suitable engineer to build the body, which may require persuading him to undertake such a strange project.

Note that stealth golems are too heavy to swim, so any adventure featuring large water bodies should be played with this weakness in mind.

## Test of the Blade Guards (Fantasy)

The characters are an elite group of guardsman or mercenaries (called "Blade Guards" by some folks). They may work for one of the merchants' guilds, for the city itself, or even as mercenaries under the steady employ of a particular person or organization.

They are sent on a peculiar mission. The mages' guild has discovered a handful of stealth golems that think they are human – someone created the mechanical men with self-awareness, enchanted them with a Perfect Illusion Disguise (see *GURPS Magic*, p. 96), and set them free into the boroughs and alleys.

As the Blade Guards carry out their detective work, a thunderstorm begins. The rain keeps coming down, steadily, as they locate one golem after another.



There are five golems to find. When confronted, they are confused and angered by the fact that they are not real humans. They always fight back, with a desperate violence.

As the Blade Guards apprehend and destroy the golems, they learn the name of the mage who created them. Tyrell is a weather wizard, and he has gone mad. Through the complex enchantments that created the golems, Tyrell unleashed the unstoppable rain. They realize that the storm will flood the city if they do not complete their mission.

In a twist ending, the Blade Guards might discover that they, too, are self-aware stealth golems.

### *The Rose Bandit (Fantasy)*

A merchant guild hires a band of adventurers to guard a caravan as it travels into the city. The merchant guild is paying handsomely for any group of experienced warriors who will ride for a day to meet the convoy of wagons overloaded with valuables and escort it to the city gates.

The threat to the caravan is a single masked bandit. He has stolen the most valuable gems and magic items from every caravan that has passed through the area in the last three months. He always strikes at night. For reasons no one understands, he carries the strong, sweet smell of roses.

The party rides out, passing through a small forest, over a bridge that spans a fast-flowing river, and through a wide dusty road at the bottom of a ravine.

They rendezvous with the caravan, introduce themselves, and begin their service. They meet the other guards, the merchants, and the drivers. During their conversations, they learn that the bandit is expected to strike when the sun sets. They learn about his name, his methods, and his appearance. He wears a dark cloak, but anyone who gets close notices that he wears a full suit of plate mail. More importantly, he moves far more quickly than a human burdened by that much armor normally would.

A few of the guards seem look forward to it. Maybe they admire the thief, or they plan to kill him and collect a reward.

When they reach the ravine at sundown, the bandit strikes. He moves fast, steals from one of the wagons, and escapes with a valuable pouch of jewelry. If the characters can't stop him, they could pursue him into the wilderness. Should they catch him, they discover that he is a stealth golem. A quirk in his Powerstone creates the rose scent that surrounds him. After informing their employers, the merchants realize that the mages guild (or a single wizard in the city) is behind the robberies.

If they cannot catch the bandit, the heroes continue with the caravan to the bridge and the forest. By talking with the

## Temporary Strength

During the construction of the golem, the mage can add enchantments to the Powerstone before installation. The following spells are acceptable: Boost Dexterity, Boost Health, Boost Strength, Climbing, Grace, Might, or Vigor. The cost equals that of the standard magic item, *not* the "always on" variant.

Once the golem is animated, it can use these spells on itself, drawing upon its internal Powerstone. Doing so drains vital fuel from the stone, however – see the *Abilities and Limitations* section (p. 12) for effects of this.

other guards, they gather enough hints to notice that the guards are in the pay of someone – they are consciously letting the bandit escape. Should the PCs figure it out, they could tell the merchants, keep the information to themselves, or join in the conspiracy.

The stealth golem strikes at the bridge, and once more in the forest. The adventurers have these opportunities to try to stop him, play along with the guards, or any other option they decide to pursue.

## STEALTH GOLEM

**ST 21; DX 16\*; IQ 11; HT 14.**

**Will 13; Per 16\*; Speed 9.00; Dodge 12\*; Move 9\*.**  
SM 0; 300 lbs.

**Traits:** Absolute Direction; Automaton; Cannot Float; Danger Sense\*; Doesn't Breathe; DR 4; Fragile (Unnatural); Indomitable; Machine; Night Vision 9\*; Nocturnal (Can function weakly out of direct sunlight); Payload 1; Perfect Balance\*; Reduced Consumption (Based on Powerstone); Reprogrammable; Single-Minded; Unaging; Unfazeable; Vacuum Support.

**Skills:** Acrobatics-15; Brawling-18; Climbing-18; Cloak-15; Escape-16; Filch-16; Forced Entry-17; Garrote-18; Holdout-15; Knife-18; Lockpicking-16; Observation-16; Pickpocket-16; Search-17; Shadowing-14; Shortsword-16; Staff-16; Stealth-18; Tactics-12; Traps-14.

\* During daylight hours, the stealth golem has DX 10, Per 10, Dodge 8, Move 5, and loses these specific advantages. Modify all skills accordingly.

## Variant Stealth Golems

*Reduced Size:* Some casters may know how make golems that are only two feet tall. This version looks like a metal doll, weighs 20 lbs., and has SM -3 and ST 7. Cost to animate is 720 energy.

*Quirky:* If the Powerstone has quirks (*GURPS Magic*, p. 69), they can affect the golem. These may influence its activity cycle (e.g., cannot function on holy days), behavior (e.g., will steal gold before anything else), physical traits

(e.g., glows in moonlight), or immediate environment (e.g., dogs and cats fear it).

*Non-Vampiric:* There may be other creatures whose blood is as suitable as a vampire's. The GM should restrict this to any rare, nocturnal, supernatural creatures found in the campaign world, and may wish to vary the traits acquired by the stealth golem as a result. For example, troll blood may add greater strength as well as a vulnerability to fire.



# WATCHTOWER

*Olivia brought me to the foot of the high-rise. We were in a neighborhood cluttered with garbage and people, a place where the slow rot of the city had taken hold. She gripped my forearm, pressing her fingernails into my skin.*

*She pointed up. "See it? Something up there is making us crazy."*

*I looked to the top floor of the 10-story apartment building. It was the tallest structure in the area, sticking out like an antenna. From my vantage point, it reminded me of a stretch of highway, a rectangle that was warped by distance into a triangular shape.*

*It loomed so tall, a man standing on the top floor could see the whole borough. If his eyes were sharp – and he had x-ray vision – he could see everything that went on for half a mile or more. If he could read minds, he would be able to . . .*

*I snapped out of my trance. I couldn't remember how long had I been standing there, watching the building. Was it five seconds? It could have been longer, a full minute perhaps.*

*A surge of fear spread through my body like a slow electric current. I heard something in my mind, a voice echoing in my head. Olivia cried out when she saw my face.*

*I ran across the street, breathing fast, feeling the voice whisper secrets I never wanted to know. I didn't stop running until the presence in my mind had faded. I stopped in the park, far from it, sweating.*

*That was my first encounter with the watchtower.*

The watchtower is a tall, haunted building. The creature's mind inhabits a room on the highest floor, like an invisible brain at the top of a wood-and-stone body. It lives secretly among humans for decades, consolidating its power.

The watchtower is a ruthless presence, a psychic force that does not feel sympathy for natural, living organisms. Its intelligence is self-contained, immune to fear and unable to think creative thoughts. The watchtower has a keen awareness of its vulnerability – with no limbs to defend itself, the creature obsessively scans the brains around it for threats.

Heroes who challenge the watchtower can cleanse the building if they destroy the spirit. If they cannot exorcise the ghostly presence from the top floor, they can kill it by demolishing its body.

## LOOKING FOR THREATS

Using its Mind Probe, the watchtower scans the minds of every person in the area, like an invisible lighthouse beam. The goal of its secret search is to locate people who know skills that could be used against it. Some of the skills are obvious threats, but others are not so serious. Using its Photographic Memory, the watchtower forms a mental list of

people who possess the most threatening skills and keeps a casual eye on the lesser threats.

*Obvious Threats:* Artillery, Explosives, Forward Observer, and Gunner can be used to inflict devastating damage on the watchtower's body. Exorcism can be used to banish the spirit at the top of the tower. Psionic abilities and spells can target the spirit directly as well.

*Lesser Threats:* Architecture and various Hidden Lore skills can be used to research the weaknesses of the creature. However, most characters with these two skills will be relying them in a different capacity at the time of the scan and so do not constitute a direct threat. Forced Entry could be used to damage the building. Someone with Autohypnosis or Mind Block can defend himself from the creature's mental powers.

The watchtower examines anyone that approaches within 100 feet of it. If anyone with a threatening skill or ability enters the building, the creature gets ready to defend itself. Investigators can sense the Mind Probe (as a paranoid tingle) with a Per-4 roll, or straight Per for those with Danger Sense. Anyone with Mind Shield detects the intrusion automatically, as normal.

## SIDE EFFECTS

If the watchtower scans the same person too many times, it can cause brain damage. A subject that fails his Will roll to resist the mental probe by 5 or more, or critically fails, permanently gains a new disadvantage, chosen randomly. Roll 1d, adding Confused (15) on a 1 or 2, Delusion (Minor) on a 3 or 4, Paranoia on a 5, and Phantom Voices (Annoying) on a 6. Should the disadvantage rolled be one that has already been given to the target, increase its severity (or reroll if that is not possible). In all cases, victims can accumulate no more than -25 points from this effect; after that, the subject cannot get any worse.

*Example:* After being scanned a dozen times, Fred critically fails his Will roll. The GM rolls a 1, so Fred now has Confused (15). Several mind probes later, Fred critically fails again; the GM rolls a 5, giving Fred Paranoia. The very next day, Fred fails by 6, and the GM rolls a 5. Since Paranoia cannot get any worse, the GM rolls again, getting a 2. Fred's Confused (15) gets worse, becoming Confused (12).

Afflicted player characters should have a chance to overcome their mental disorder. They could use professional health care, unconventional cures, magic, or psionic healing. The Relieve Madness spell permanently removes one acquired disadvantage per casting.

*A malevolent spirit, possessing a tall building, scans the minds of people nearby, searching for threats to its existence.*

The watchtower is aware of this side effect. It realizes that overscanning too many residents attracts attention to itself. (A neighborhood of crazy people living around a tall old building is a magnet for paranormal investigators.) It applies common sense to gauge who needs to be scanned and when a rescan is necessary.

(Note that the GM should not set a rigid schedule for mind scans. This leads to too many die rolls and far too much brain damage. Play it loose. Assume that the watchtower, for all its intelligence, can't locate every threat every day. A high local population – and many people moving in and out of range – prevents the creature from “tagging” every threat with precision.)

## MIND CONTROL

The watchtower can attempt to enslave anyone within or near its body (apply normal range penalties from the building for outside subjects) with a Quick Contest of IQ versus the subject's Will. Having used its mind scan on the victim first, it knows his abilities and strengths. This allows it to make the best use of the puppet's abilities, as he acts as the watchtower's hands.

### Olivia Wellington (15 points)

Olivia (from the introductory text) was once a “psychic exterminator” – a professional exorcist and ghost-evictor. Now that she's in her sixties, she has retired and moved to a little house in the city. Unfortunately, her home happens to be near a watchtower. Since she arrived, the creature has kept a close eye on her, afflicting her with Confusion and Phantom Voices after too many mind-scans. She suspects that a watchtower is causing her problems, but she isn't healthy enough to conduct an investigation on her own. If she meets a group of paranormal specialists, she can help them locate the creature – and destroy it.

GMs should tailor Olivia's social background (TL, languages, etc.) to fit the campaign setting.

**ST** 8 [-20]; **DX** 8 [-40]; **IQ** 11 [20]; **HT** 9 [-10].  
Damage 1d-3/1d-2; BL 13; HP 8 [0]; Will 10 [-5]; Per 11 [0]; FP 9 [0].

Basic Speed 4.25 [0]; Basic Move 4 [0]; Dodge 7.  
5'5"; 125 lbs. (SM 0).

#### Advantages

Medium [10]; True Faith [15]; Wealth (Comfortable) [10].

#### Disadvantages

Confused (12) [-10]; Insomniac (Mild) [-10]; Phantom Voices (Disturbing) [-10].

*Quirks:* Doggedly persistent. [-1]

#### Skills

Area Knowledge (Neighborhood) (E) IQ+2 [4]-13; Driving (Automobile) (A) DX+1 [4]-9; Exorcism (H) Will+4 [20]-14; Hidden Lore (Conspiracies) (A) IQ [2]-11; Hidden Lore (Demons) (A) IQ+2 [8]-13; Hidden Lore (Spirits) (A) IQ+4 [16]-15; Research (A) IQ+1 [4]-12; Theology (Comparative) (H) IQ+1 [8]-12.

If a threatening person enters the watchtower's body, it may try to enslave him immediately, after which he will be instructed to leave, guard or repair the building, or even attack his friends. If this fails, the spirit finds someone else in the building to confront the invaders, which may include stray animals or pets. (Treat a swarm of rats, bats, etc., as a single creature for this purpose.)

The mental control requires constant concentration, which means that while it dominates its victim, the watchtower cannot scan for threats. This forces it to make use of the victim quickly.

## TINFOIL DEFENSE

The watchtower's telepathic powers are not magical or psionic in nature (though the GM can change this to fit the campaign), and thus mana level, anti-psi powers or devices, etc. do not affect them. However, a thin layer of metal acts as a *mundane countermeasure* (*GURPS Powers*, p. 20) against the spirit's psychic abilities.

Being inside a room or vehicle that has been *completely* enclosed in metal (tin foil on the windows, etc.) grants total immunity to the watchtower's senses and mental powers. Anything less, to a minimum of wearing a tinfoil hat, adds +5 to all rolls to resist its psychic attacks. In addition, the watchtower must make a Sense roll at -5 to even notice the person unless he is openly approaching the building or already inside (where the creature's normal senses can see him).

Note that the watchtower cannot detect the tinfoil – those wearing it do not register as alarming “gaps” in its psychic sight. When such investigators approach the building, however, the creature makes its typical scan. Once it notices that it cannot easily examine their minds, it prepares to defend itself.

## DEVELOPMENT AND MOVING ON

Over time, the watchtower trains itself to control and extend its powers. Its influence on the surrounding area becomes stronger every year. Yet paradoxically, it must prepare itself for the day when it evacuates its body and finds a new home. The being is aware that humanity possesses the will and ability to eventually drive it out or destroy it, assuming that the neighborhood itself does not crumble in time. This preparation takes centuries – the creature is too hidebound to develop its own skills easily.

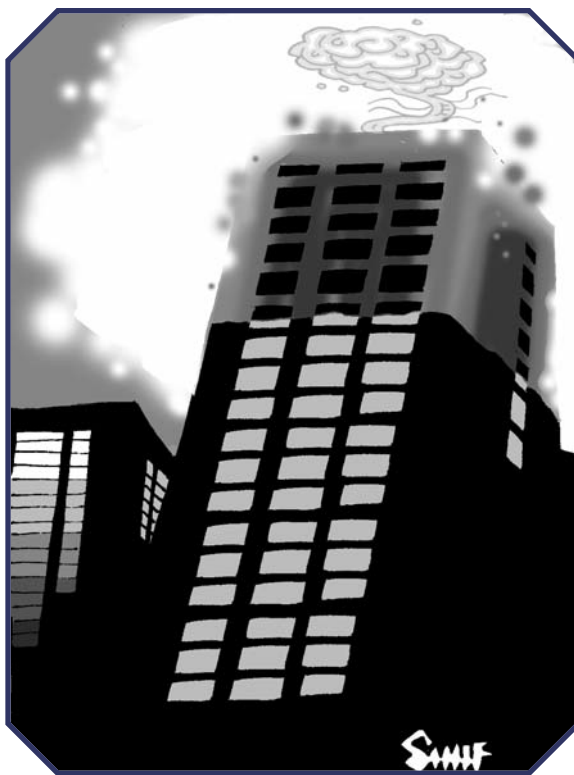
*50 Years:* After five decades of damaging innocent minds with its scanning power, the watchtower acquires the ability to control exactly which disadvantages it inflicts. From this point forward, it can choose one of the four disadvantages and stay locked into that choice for any period of time. It could, for example, restrict itself to Phantom Voices of a particular type and general content.

This is a relatively minor change to its traits. It's only useful if the creature decides that it gains something from a group of scattered, deranged people nearby who all hear the same voices, have the same delusion, etc.

*100 Years:* If it can survive a century without being exorcised or toppled, the watchtower gains the Oracle advantage. It can make a Per roll every day to notice hidden patterns in the landscape around it. Disparate phenomena such as traffic jams, clusters of pedestrians, and atmospheric pressure combine into an interlocking psychic jigsaw puzzle. The watchtower then makes an IQ roll to notice the missing pieces. If the creature detects the clues and analyzes them correctly, this can give it an edge on investigators. Assume it knows a few facts it shouldn't have known.

*150 Years:* At this point, the watchtower can condition one person to become its permanent slave; the building gets the traits Ally, Mindlink (One person), and Telesend (Only on slave). It uses the victim to scout the area for a possible new body. The watchtower is limited to low-IQ slaves – either an animal or a dull human.

*200 Years:* The watchtower now can make an emergency escape to a new body. This is risky and exhausting, so the creature only attempts it if it has no other options. The target must be within 10 miles. The watchtower has to know of its existence, either by sight or through a mind-scan. Treat this as a one-use version of Warp, but if it fails, the watchtower dies. It thus spends as much time as possible (and as much fatigue as necessary) on the jump, unless circumstances make that impossible. After a successful move, the spirit can only regain 1 HP and 1 FP *per day*, and cannot act in any way, until it has



fully recovered. Treat its age as zero, as it begins to build up its strength once again, in its new body.

## CONFRONTING THE BRAIN

At the top floor of the building, the invisible brain hovers. Adventurers who explore this area can detect it with traits such as See Invisible or by casting a spell such as Astral Vision. The brain can reveal itself for a brief period, turning off its Invisibility (by paying 1 FP/second). When this occurs, the slimy translucent brain appears, horrifying enough to cause a Fright Check.

Physical attacks do not injure the intangible brain. If forced to become substantial, or attacked with a weapon that can affect insubstantial foes, it is still very difficult to harm, being Diffuse (see *Injury to Unliving, Homogenous, and Diffuse Targets*, p. B380). Most mental spells and psionics can target it at -3, plus any relevant penalties for an invisible target (unless it became visible at one point or a supernatural sense is used to locate it). It cannot dodge or even move from the spot.

Alternatively, the being can be banished using Exorcism (p. B193). The exorcist must be in the same room with the brain. True Faith is effective against it, though not particularly useful as the brain is frozen to one spot.

Investigators can contact the spirit through the Channeling trait, allowing them to make reaction rolls to deal with the creature. As the watchtower is immune to influence skills (unless the speaker has Spirit Empathy), negotiations must involve something of use to the spirit.

## Structural Strength

Any building inhabited by the watchtower has the traits Injury Tolerance (Homogenous); Internal Senses (**GURPS Bio-Tech**, p. 97; the creature can automatically sense whatever happens within its “body”); Maintenance (One Person; Monthly); No Manipulators; Numb; Sessile; and Unhealing (Total). In addition, wooden buildings have the Fragile (Combustible) disadvantage, noted here with a “c” after their HT scores.

*Medieval Stone Tower:* TL3; Height 30 feet; SM +4; HT 12; DR 300\*; HP 600†.

*Persian Minaret:* TL4; Height 130 feet; SM +8; HT 13; DR 120\*; HP 500.

*New England Lighthouse:* TL5; Height 100 feet; SM +8; HT 12; DR 50\*; HP 800†.

*Victorian London Bell Tower:* TL6; Height 50 feet; SM +6; HT 11; DR 150\*; HP 300.

*Modern Wooden Building:* TL7; Height 50 feet; SM +7; HT 11c; DR 6\*; HP 600.

*Modern Brick Building:* TL7; Height 30 feet; SM +5; HT 12; DR 35\*; HP 800†.

*Late-20th-Century Skyscraper:* TL8; Height 500 feet; SM +12; HT 12c; DR 10\*; HP 3,700‡.

*21st-Century Skyscraper:* TL9; Height 900 feet; SM +13; HT 13; DR 15\*; HP 6,000‡.

\* DR is treated as *ablative* or *semi-ablative* against most attacks. See p. B559 for details.

† Takes an additional 50% injury from any attack specifically designated as sonic or vibratory.

‡ Excessive damage to the exterior rains glass shards on the sidewalk below. Everyone below is hit on a 10 or less for 1d+1 cutting unless they dodge or block.



## Optional Irregularities

Adding Weirdness Magnet to the watchtower's traits allows for some enjoyable bizarreness. However, bear in mind that this trait detracts from the creature's image as a being of obsessive control. It's more fun, but not as frightening.

If you add the trait, consider these possible effects.

*Escher's Architecture:* The upper floors are full of optical illusions: stairways that somehow don't extend up or down, corridors 10 times longer than they should be, etc. In some cases, there is a prosaic explanation. But other features are supernatural, bending space into unnatural shapes.

*Clocks Running Late:* Time moves at the wrong speed inside the building. For every minute spent inside, five minutes passes in the outside world. If the GM prefers, invert the two speeds: for every five minutes inside, one minute passes outside. If the group looks out the windows, they see the world moving at a different rate . . .

*Strange Inhabitants:* The Weirdness Magnet summons demons, ghosts, and other creatures. They travel from the countryside – or other dimensions – and find a secret spot inside the building to make their home. Those inside could discover pterodactyls on the roof, a necromancer in the basement, curse-bearing rats, zombie janitors, a comatose telepath lying in bed in a palatial suite, or a devil-worshipping hermit.

*Strange Artifacts:* Instead of (or *along with*) the strange creatures, the building attracts spell books, magic wands, voodoo dolls, disintegrator pistols, and more. Hitler's brain is in a jar on the third floor, the mainframe on the sixth floor is possessed, and so on. See **GURPS Warehouse 23** for further inspiration.

*Interior Aura:* The inside of the building is a high mana zone. Spellcasters are more powerful, giving them an advantage when they battle the spirit.

## USEFUL SKILLS AND ADVANTAGES DURING ENCOUNTERS

In addition to the traits mentioned under *Looking for Threats* (p. 15), the following traits are especially useful when dealing with the watchtower.

To research the history of the building, use Research to get records, Cartography to study neighborhood maps, Architecture to analyze the blueprints, Area Knowledge or History to learn what was going on when it was constructed, and Urban Survival to explore the neighborhood. A critical success uncovers special information about the creature's weaknesses, such as complete list of its structural defects.

Observation and Sociology can be used to investigate the effect the watchtower has on the people around it.

To scale the outside of the building, roll Climbing-3, plus any modifiers for equipment. The usual rate of ascension is two feet per minute. Those with Clinging do not need to roll, and can ascend at a speed equal to half their Move score.

Note that, while these traits are useful, they are not enough of a threat to attract the interest of the watchtower.

## ADVENTURE IDEAS

The most obvious adventure is an investigation of strange events around the building. The party follows the path of clues to the creature and decides to explore inside. Once they learn what kind of opponent they are dealing with, they need special skills and weapons to destroy it.

Before the watchtower is introduced, the GM needs to make a few decisions about its basic structure and interior features.

Decide what type of building the spirit inhabits. Use *Structural Strength* (p. 17) as a guideline for stats. Decide if the construction of the building was completed recently, or long ago. (The building's age is not necessarily the same as the age of the creature. It could have inhabited the building a long time after it was built.)

Make a few notes about the interior, listing any special features. In campaigns at TL8 or higher, the watchtower could have a computerized security system (see **GURPS High-Tech**, pp. 205-207, for examples), with which it has interfaced during possession. The building could also feature an atrium on the ground floor; deep basements, elevators or dumbwaiters, a boiler room, a greenhouse on the roof, secret rooms (with special contents), a kitchen, a library, suites and bedrooms, a torture chamber; a radio broadcast studio, an arsenal of stored weapons, a ballroom, or chambers for religious ceremonies.

Finally, make a rough estimate of the number of people who are in the building during daylight hours. This isn't important with a bell tower that is always vacant. But if the spirit is at the top floor of an office building, this decision is important to running the adventure.

### *The Haunt of Hawkspire (Modern-Day Horror; Cyberpunk; Conspiracy)*

While investigating a supernatural case, the adventurers meet a trio of eccentric computer programmers – Stuart, Leah, and Akiru. They call themselves the Hidden Persuaders. They wear tinfoil around their heads, day and night. When they go outside, they wear hats over the tinfoil. The walls of their apartment – known as “HP HQ” – are lined with tinfoil, allowing the trio to remove their protective headgear in the safety of their home.

The Hidden Persuaders have discovered that Hawkspire, a skyscraper on the other side of the neighborhood, is a watchtower. When they were researching local conspiracy theories, they found out that Hawkspire has been the hub of strange events for over a century. Their research led them to discover how to shield their minds from its scans.

Then they gained access to the computer. At the top of the building, there is a mainframe, used by the company that rents the top five floors. The watchtower's mind is passively linked to the computer, so the Hidden Persuaders can hack in and find clues that tell them what the creature knows and what it's planning.

## The All-Seeing Eye (Horror in Any Era; Conspiracy)

The PC group is traveling between villages in the Middle East. Coming over a hill, they see a vast grassland with a minaret in the center. Houses surround the ornate tower. It seems out of place – but not impossible – in this remote area.

If they explore, they meet the townspeople. Roll for reactions, applying bonuses if they make any effort to be friendly. The villagers are gracious hosts, if a little standoffish.

As they settle in, they learn two things. First, the townspeople worship a spirit that lives at the top of the tower, which they call the Eye. (The watchtower has afflicted them with the same delusion, perverting their normal faith.) Second, the tower is leaning, but the townspeople don't know how to save it. The local priests are convinced an earthquake is immanent. If the ground shakes, the tower will fall. (If the group doubts it, a minor tremor strikes and the tower visibly and audibly leans a few inches more.) The watchtower is old enough to have the Oracle advantage. It senses the upcoming quake, and has used its powers to feed this information to some of the townspeople. They ask the heroes to help them devise a way to save the tower.

The villagers make it clear that they will imprison the adventurers if they don't get to work immediately. The people have become suspicious of these travelers. Is it a coincidence that they arrived at the same time when the minaret is about to collapse?

The party can stall until the earthquake comes, escape, or try to save the tower. If they want to go inside, the townspeople refuse to help. However, a little clandestine investigation reveals a narrow doorway at the back that opens onto a spiral staircase. At the top is a room where the spirit floats.

The group might be able to engineer a new base for the watchtower, enlisting the aid of the townspeople. If they can't (or won't) fix it, they could confront the spirit. The GM should use the earthquake as a climax, inserting it into the adventure at the right moment.

## WATCHTOWER SPIRIT

**ST** 0; **DX** 10; **IQ** 16; **HT** 13\*.

**HP** 15\*; **Will** 18; **Per** 16; **Speed** 5.75; **Dodge** 0; **Move** 0.  
**SM** +2; 0 lbs.

**Traits:** Affliction 1 (Will; Based on Will; Extended Duration, Permanent; Link, Mind Probe; Malediction 3; No Stunning; Secondary Disadvantage, one of Confused, Delusion, Paranoia, or Phantom Voices); Hidebound; Horrific Appearance; Indomitable; Injury Tolerance (Diffuse); Low Empathy; Mind Control (No Memory; No Signature; Power Modifier†); Mind Probe (Power Modifier†; Universal); Mind Reading (Power Modifier†; Universal); Para-Radar (Extended Arc, 360°; No Intercept; Penetrating; Power Modifier†); Paranoia; Photographic Memory; Possession (Cannot survive out of a host; Specialized, Large buildings; Spiritual)\*; Secret (Its existence); Sessile; Spirit (Insubstantiality has Always On; Invisibility has Affects Machines and Extended, All non-supernatural senses); Unfazeable.

**Skills:** Area Knowledge (Neighborhood)-20; Detect Lies-17; Hidden Lore (Regional)-18; Observation-20.

\* While possessing a building, the watchtower uses the building's HT, HP, and physical traits (see *Structural Strength*, p. 17) unless attacked directly.

† See *Tinfoil Defense*, p. 16, for details.



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