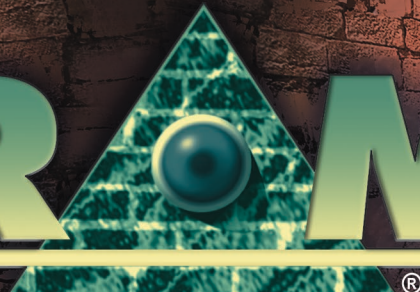


PYRAMID[®]



Issue 3/108 October '17

DUNGEON FANTASY[™]

POWERED BY GURPS[®]



MONSTER MODDING

by Sean Punch

THE HAND OF THE DEMON

by Christopher R. Rice

HYDRA ISLAND

by David L. Pulver

MORE MYTHIC & MAGICAL MONSTERS

by Peter V. Dell'Orto

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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ARTICLE COLORS

Each article is color-coded to help you find your favorite sections.

- Pale Blue:* In This Issue
- Brown:* In Every Issue
- Green:* Columnist
- Dark Blue:* GURPS Features
- Purple:* Systemless Features

COVER ART
Brandon Moore

INTERIOR ART
David L. Pulver
with Nikola Vrtis

The rumors are true, the omens have come to pass, and the treasures are within your grasp; the *Dungeon Fantasy Roleplaying Game* has arrived, and it's amazing! This issue of *Pyramid* is devoted to that boxed set, with new material you can use right away in your crypt-crawling campaigns.

When you're looking for a way to freshen up the battles of your creepy caverns, consider *Monster Modding!* *Dungeon Fantasy RPG* designer Sean Punch reveals 27 themes to inspire you, from spectral to energy draining to mutant and more. Each one includes recommendations for what type of monsters are suitable for these modifications and a list of game-changing ways to appropriately augment those creatures. You'll also get bonus tips for revising damage for these new critters and insight into creating hybrids of two or more creatures. Suddenly the monsters of the boxed set just got more monstrous . . .

Add nine new creatures to your repertoire with *More Mythic & Magical Monsters*. Peter V. Dell'Orto – author of *Dungeon Fantasy Magic Items* – describes unique beings of myth and legend, with complete *Dungeon Fantasy* stats that make them perfect adversaries for jaded dungeoneers.

Some of those new monsters from the previous article have already found themselves a new home . . . and it's bad news for any heroes who find themselves on *Hydra Island!* This installment of *Eidetic Memory* by David L. Pulver offers an adventure locale that's ready to tailor-fit to your campaign, complete with a trip through a swamp, stats for its typically atypical denizens, and a map of the destination. It's an island getaway you'll remember for a lifetime . . .

Discover the secrets of mysterious black structures that appear for a few days and then disappear – no doubt the work of *The Hand of the Demon*. Some rumors are recent, no older than the past few years, while others are decades old. Christopher R. Rice – co-author of *Dungeon Fantasy Traps* – presents an adventure outline that visits the ruins of a demon prince's castle, describing the monsters, hazards, and treasure that delvers can unearth.

In honor of the recent print release of *How to Be a GURPS GM*, check out the *Designer's Notes* from author Warren "Mook" Wilson. Learn about how that supplement came to be and some of the thoughts behind the design of each of the chapters.

Finally, this month's Random Thought Table ponders some in-game reasons why the heroes are *exactly* who's needed to handle any crises put in front of them. The *Dungeon Fantasy RPG* is a world of monsters, magic, and martial might. And now, its adventures can be yours . . . and better than ever, with this issue of *Pyramid!*

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FROM THE EDITOR

AT LAST, ALL DUNGEONS ARE OPEN FOR EXPLORATION!

Welcome to third issue of *Pyramid* devoted to the *Dungeon Fantasy Roleplaying Game*. It's an exciting issue from my point of view, since – as I type this – it's the first time where the physical boxed set is well-and-truly in the hands of scads of our fans. Given the vagaries of international shipping, it could be a bit before the remainder of the first wave of fans receives their copies. However, already boxes are appearing on store shelves, and we've received many reviews and kind words for the project.

In a lot of ways, this issue marks the point where the *Dungeon Fantasy RPG* really becomes “your” game. It's when the game stops existing solely in the realm of our constructs and ideas, and becomes the incubator and catalyst for *your* imagination. We're excited to see what you come up with!

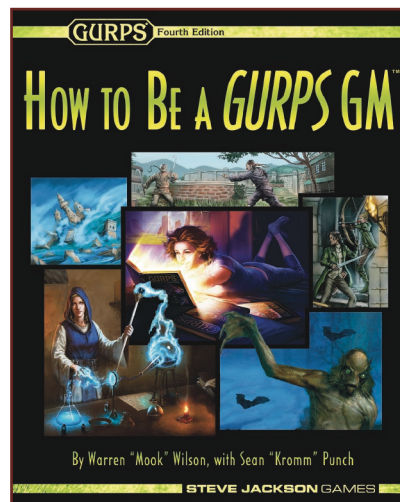
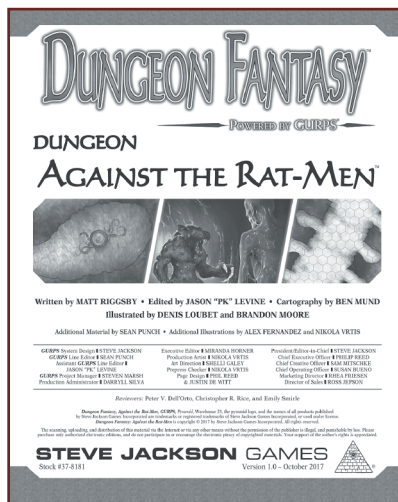
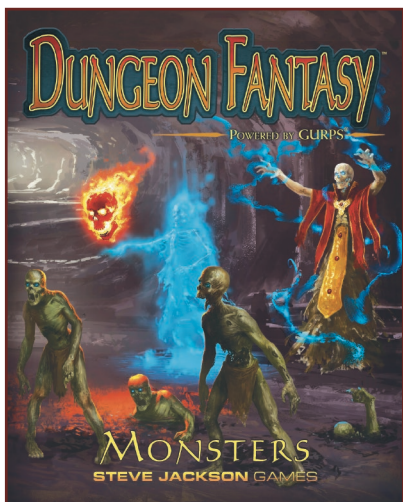
To help with that endeavor, this issue is devoted to giving you more of what you need to make your campaigns awesome: more monsters and monster augmentations, campaign hooks, and even a full adventure to challenge heroes.

Beyond that, the future is what you make it! If this game proves as popular as we hope it will, who knows what tomorrow holds? We know there have been folks clamoring for other add-ons, more options, additional possibilities for GMs and players alike . . . maybe even other boxed sets for different genres or campaigns. And all of those sound like great ideas we'd have a blast pursuing, if there's a market!

But, in the meantime, we have now: An island of monsters, rumors of treasures, and world of possibilities. Thank you for being with us on this journey!

WRITE HERE, WRITE NOW

So, what do you think? Do you want to find more support for the *Dungeon Fantasy Roleplaying Game* here in the pages of *Pyramid*? Is there some cool idea you'd like to see, or something you think we could do better with next time? Let us know, via private email to pyramid@sjgames.com, or by joining the public crypt-crawling community at forums.sjgames.com.



Additional Material: Sean Punch

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MONSTER MODDING

BY SEAN PUNCH

Dungeon Fantasy Monsters offers plenty of nasty foes! Still, the players will eventually grow familiar with these through game play or just reading the book, memorizing the creatures' traits – particularly *flaws*. This can make encounters boringly predictable.

Completely new monsters are the obvious way to revitalize things. Yet those won't always encourage innovative tactics and exciting risk-taking. Canny gamers might even go on the defensive: "We've never fought these – be careful!" The upshot? Battles that drag on because the heroes are fighting conservatively.

Monsters and Player Knowledge (*Monsters*, p. 5) offers an excellent alternative: Use the same old monsters, but change them. Surprise! The GM is free to alter *any* stat and add *anything* in *Monster Advantages* (*Monsters*, pp. 9-12), but inspiration never hurts.

What follows is exactly that: ideas for changing monsters in interesting ways. In all cases, if the basic creature already has an added trait, don't add it again unless it's one that comes in levels (the monster can always gain *more*) or a disadvantage with a self-control roll (which can get worse). If a note says to remove a trait that wasn't there to begin with, ignore it.

It's possible to apply several of these suggestions at once to create *interesting* bad guys – just add their effects. Where this gives conflicting traits, ignore the change you like least.

CRANK UP THE EVIL

Monsters are nasty and many are evil – but a few are even worse than anticipated! All of the following modifications make the monster "truly evil," if that was in doubt. Each twists the creature enough to give -2 to rolls to identify flaws; see *Exploiting Weaknesses* (*Monsters*, pp. 4-5).

Demonic

A living being – Animal-, Faerie-, Hybrid-, Mundane-, Plant-, or Slime-class monster – is possessed by a demon. A Construct- or corporeal Undead-class one is *animated* by a demon. A Spirit- or ghostly Undead-class one *is* a demon. In all cases, if the fiend didn't already count as "magical," it does now.

Demonic inevitably justifies further modifications – a few of *Malevolent* (below) and things from *Faster, Stronger, Better* (pp. 5-6), *Expert Monsters* (pp. 8-9), and *That's Just Wrong* (pp. 9-10).

Applicability: Anything *but* a Demon-, Divine Servitor-, Elder Thing-, or Elemental-class monster.

Modifications: Add Indomitable and +4 to Will. ● Add *at least two* of Bloodlust*, Callous, Compulsive Lying*, Dread (Holy objects; 5 yards), Intolerance (Good), Lifebane, and Sadism*. Disadvantages with asterisks have self-control rolls of 12 or the original monster's roll minus three, whichever is worse. ● Living beings suffer a Divine Curse: Treat Minor Healing, Major Healing, etc. as Resisted by HT, with failure to resist inflicting the injury the spell would heal. ● Add Demon to monster class (e.g., a golem becomes "Construct/Demon"), making the creature subject to the Banish spell.

Malevolent

Some monsters are just *evil*. They might start as Demon- or Undead-class, or end up that way as a consequence of *Demonic* (above) or *Spectral* (p. 5). Many turn to Evil because Good won't have them. Such beings are resistant to the abilities and attacks of Good.

Applicability: Anything with IQ 1+. (There *are* malevolent animals out there!)

Modifications: Add *any number* of Bad Temper*, Bloodlust*, Bully*, Callous, Compulsive Killing*, Dread (Holy objects; 5 yards), Intolerance (Good), Lifebane, Sadism*, and Uncontrollable Appetite* (for whatever the creature normally consumes). ● For every trait the monster has from that list (initially or after modification), add one level of Resist Good. Traits bearing asterisks require a self-control roll; if this is 6, the disadvantage counts double, adding *two* levels. ● For every *full* two levels of Resist Good, add DR 1 vs. Good, which affects the attacks of clerics and holy warriors, and damage from blessed or holy weaponry.

Psycho

In fantasy, living, sapient beings need not be possessed to be supernaturally scary – they can become so obsessed with murder that it's hard to kill *them*. This modification often accompanies *Malevolent* (above), but that isn't required.

Applicability: Any Animal-, Faerie-, Hybrid-, Mundane-, Plant-, or Slime-class monster with IQ 6+.

Modifications: Add Indomitable, Supernatural Durability, and Unfazeable. ● Also add Bloodlust *and* Compulsive Killing with self-control rolls of 12 or the original monster's roll minus three, whichever is worse.

Spectral

The monster died and returned as a vengeful or hateful ghost with a semisolid form (it cannot actually walk through walls). It looks and fights the way it did in life; spells like Aura, Sense Evil, Sense Life, or Sense Spirit are required to confirm the difference. The essential change is that it's Diffuse – it uses the wounding rules under *Diffuse* (**Exploits**, p. 55), can't be slammed or grappled, and has No Blood, No Brain, and No Vitals. It also lacks many other mortal frailties. Finally, it counts as a “magical creature.”

Applicability: Animal-, Faerie-, Hybrid-, Mundane-, Plant-, or Slime-class monster.

Modifications: Add Diffuse, which *replaces* Unliving or Homogeneous, if present. • Also add Doesn't Breathe, Doesn't Eat or Drink, Doesn't Sleep, High Pain Threshold, Immunity to Disease, Immunity to Poison, Indomitable, Unfazeable, and Unhealing (Total, unless underlying creature can steal HP). • Most also possess a Divine Curse to haunt a specific area, an Obsession (9) with vengeance, or Intolerance of all life. • Add Undead to monster class, making the creature subject to the Turning ability.

*In Evil's presence, death is often
a twisted beginning, not an end.
– Sister Miriam Suntemple, Cleric*

FASTER, STRONGER, BETTER

Not all people are created equal – compare delvers with typical townsfolk! The same goes for monsters.

These modifications are easy to make. Any number can be applied. The same one can be *reapplied*, too; GMs who like labels may prefix the second, third, and fourth instances with “very,” “extremely,” and “epically.”

Agile

Especially among sneaky and weapon-using monsters, there's often one who's more broadly capable than the rest.

Applicability: Any monster with DX 1+ (but never N/A).

Modifications: Add +1 to DX. • Increase all DX-based skills by the same amount and refigure any Parry or Block scores from improved combat skills. This increases the odds to hit with any attack – skilled or not – that requires an attack roll: bite, claw, fire-breath, gaze, grapple, punch, etc. • Do *not* change Speed or Move. • At the GM's option, IQ 6+ creatures might acquire Overconfidence and/or Trickster, the self-control roll starting at 15 and dropping by three with each repeated modification.

Driven

Guardians and loyal servants may be whipped into a lather by devotion or their boss' leadership. Evil monsters – especially undead servitors, such as zombies serving a lich – may draw on *supernatural* reserves.

Applicability: Any monster with IQ 6+.

Modifications: If the monster has neither Reprogrammable nor Slave Mentality, add Obsession with a cause (e.g., reclaiming lost tribal lands), Sense of Duty toward a leader, band, or tribe, or Fanaticism of *any* kind. • Add a Higher Purpose that gives +1 per level on dice rolls (attack, defense, damage, and resistance) when motivated by the associated disadvantage: attacking a racial enemy, carrying out the master's orders, defending tribal lands, fighting in sight of the great leader, etc.

Evasive

Some monsters – especially ones that fly or have negative SM – are annoyingly hard to hit. *Fast* (below) is simply better, but speed isn't always fitting.

Applicability: Any monster with Dodge 1+ (but never N/A).

Modifications: Add Enhanced Dodge 1, giving +1 to Dodge (only). • At the GM's option, an IQ 6+ creature might also have Cowardice (“Run away!”) or Overconfidence (“You can't touch this!”), the self-control roll starting at 15 and dropping by three with each repeated modification.

Fast

Many monster hordes include scouts and skirmishers who are speedier than expected.

Applicability: Any monster with Move 1+ (but never Sessile creatures).

Modifications: Add +1 to Speed, Move, and Dodge, and +2 to Air Move. • If notes indicate the creature is encumbered, then +1 to Speed might not be enough to improve Move, but there's no harm in quietly ignoring this to save time.

Savage

A few monsters are no bigger than their peers but far more *aggressive*.

Applicability: Any monster that makes a physical melee attack for crushing, cutting, impaling, or piercing damage; e.g., bite, claw, kick, horns, punch, tail, wing, or melee weapon.

Modifications: Add *any number* of Bad Temper*, Battle Rage* or Berserk*, Bloodlust*, Compulsive Fighting*, Compulsive Killing*, Gluttony*, Stubbornness*, and Uncontrollable Appetite* (for whatever the monster normally consumes). If a creature has IQ 6+, Odious Racial Habit (Eats other sapient beings) is an option. • For every trait the monster has from that list (initially or after modification), add *two* levels of Striking ST and increase damage to match; see *Revising Damage* (p. 6). Traits with asterisks require a self-control roll; if this is 6, the disadvantage counts double, adding *four* levels.

Strong

Of course, some monsters *are* bigger than their peers!

Applicability: Any monster with ST 1+.

Modifications: Add +2 or +20% to ST (drop fractions), whichever is *larger*, and raise damage to match; see *Revising Damage* (p. 6). • Raise HP by the same number of levels as ST (e.g., if a strong zombie goes from ST 13 to ST 15, its HP goes from 17 to 19). • If notes indicate the creature is encumbered, raising ST may improve Move, but the GM is free to ignore this to save time.

Tough

Due to supernatural protection, scar tissue, or sheer bulk – or just metal plates bolted on by a mad wizard – a monster might be harder than normal to injure. If the creature wears external armor, subtract the armor's DR to find *natural* DR before applying this modification. Add armor DR at the end.

Applicability: Any monster.

Modifications: Add +1 or +20% to *natural* DR (drop fractions), whichever is *larger*. • If added DR is scars, fat, or thick hide, it has the drawbacks of Tough Skin (*Adventurers*, p. 16). • If added DR is bolted-on armor, the GM may optionally worsen the creature's encumbrance by one level each time this modification is applied.

Vigorous

The monster may be no harder to wound, but it won't collapse or die easily. As well, while poison, Body Control spells, and similar physical threats might affect it, it resists them more readily.

Warning: This is a *scary* modification, as even a small HT boost can mean a creature must be battered to $-5\times\text{HP}$ to be defeated!

Applicability: Any monster.

Modifications: Add +1 to HT. • Increase FP (if not N/A) and all HT-based skills by the same amount. • Do *not* change Speed or Move. • At the GM's option, a creature that knows it's a born survivor might exhibit Battle Rage or Berserk, Compulsive Fighting, Overconfidence, or Stubbornness, the self-control roll starting at 15 and dropping by three with each repeated modification.

REVISING DAMAGE

Some modifications increase ST or Striking ST. To recalculate damage with muscle-powered attacks:

1. Find damage for the monster's original ST + Striking ST on the *Damage Table* (*Adventurers*, p. 10).
2. Compare damage from step 1 to the monster's listed attacks to find built-in damage modifiers; e.g., "thrust+4." Natural attacks use thrust; weapons use thrust or swing as usual.
3. Look up damage for the monster's *revised* ST + Striking ST.
4. Apply the modifier from step 2 to the damage from step 3.
5. If damage now involves a larger number of dice, add any damage bonus *per die* from Brawling or Weapon Master to the additional dice.

Example: A bear (*Monsters*, p. 16) has ST 19, giving thrust 2d-1 (bears don't swing weapons). Its 2d bite is thrust+1 and its 2d+2 claw is thrust+3. An epically *Savage* (p. 5) bear gains Striking ST 8 and does damage as ST 27: thrust 3d-1. Its bite therefore goes up to 3d and its claw to 3d+2. However, Brawling at DX+2 grants +1 *per die*, so as damage is now based on 3d and not 2d, the added die gets an extra +1, giving 3d+1 for bite, 3d+3 for claw.

Other Attacks

While not all attacks are muscle-powered, it's traditional for monsters that hit harder to be more dangerous with elemental attacks (cold, fire, etc.), death rays, and so on.

At the GM's option, *all* attacks affected by DR are augmented by changes to thrust damage.

Example: Making a large dragon *Strong* (p. 5) raises ST from 50 to 60, taking thrust damage from 5d+2 to 7d-1. Changing fire breath to match improves it from 5d+2 to 7d-1 burning.

Attacks unaffected by DR, like venom and death gazes, aren't usually scaled to thrust and shouldn't work this way. Instead, read damage *as if* it were thrust damage, find the lowest ST associated with that damage, increase *that* ST, and use thrust damage for the new ST as the upgraded damage. Damage reduced by a resistance roll retains the same proportional step-down.

Example: If the dragon were poison-breathing, its venom would do 2d (1d with a HT roll). That's thrust for ST 21. Strong raises this ST to ST 25. Thrust for ST 25 is 2d+2, so poison damage becomes 2d+2 (1d+1 with a HT roll).

IMBUED WITH THE ELEMENTS

A common adventure-fantasy shtick is the creature whose attacks are "elemental" – that is, based not on physical blows but on acid, cold, electricity, fire, poison, or even unholy or magical energy or energy *drain*.

Out of Your Element (*Monsters*, p. 16) briefly describes how to change creatures that already have such attacks. However, monsters *without* such abilities can be imbued with elemental energies, too.

The most important effect is that the creature's natural attack (*not* its weapon, if any) changes damage type – burning, crushing, cutting, etc. – or side effects (e.g., stunning or paralysis). If the creature boasts multiple attack modes, the GM may modify all or just some of them. When altering an attack that carries a follow-up (*Exploits*, p. 56), the GM might adjust carrier, follow-up, or *both*.

Example: A giant viper (*Monsters*, p. 31) bites for 1d impaling + follow-up 2d toxic, or 1d with a successful HT roll. A "fire viper" might bite for 1d burning + follow-up 2d toxic (fiery teeth) . . . or 1d impaling + follow-up 2d burning (say, a boiling or molten injection) . . . or 1d burning + follow-up 2d burning (both!). A successful HT roll still halves follow-up injury to 1d, but Resistant to Poison helps only vs. *toxic* damage. For a dire snake that's a venomous constrictor, the Constriction Attack may or may not inflict burning rather than crushing damage – a decision independent of whether the bite is in some way burning. To keep players on their toes, *all* variants could coexist in the same game, dungeon, or nest!

Attack changes usually come with an increased tolerance for the associated element, plus further, optional changes. If the original monster was *already* elemental, look up its old element, *remove* any such traits (extra DR vs. the former element, Vulnerability to its opposite, etc.) and replace them with traits suited to the new element.

Acid

The creature embodies corrosion. Former fire monsters that “burn” with acid rather than flame, and formerly venomous monsters that exude acid instead of poison, are especially likely. This modification often imparts a greenish-yellow tinge.

Applicability: Any monster with a physical attack other than acid.

Attack Modifications: Change damage type to *corrosion*.

Adaptations: Extra DR vs. acid equal to creature’s original DR score, minimum +1 DR vs. acid. ● Optional changes are even higher DR (or Injury Reduction!) vs. acid, levels of Nictitating Membrane (unless monster has No Eyes), and Sealed (if it has Doesn’t Breathe).

Cold

The monster is a denizen of cold and ice. Most modified creatures take on a bluish or whitish cast, or sprout white fur. Their chilly nature is evident to Infravision!

Applicability: Any monster with a physical attack other than cold/ice.

Attack Modifications: Change damage type to *burning* that cannot set fires: frostbite! ● A jet or cone, such as a breath weapon, might instead blast hail (change damage type to *crushing*), ice shards (*cutting*), or icicles (*impaling*). ● A follow-up which freezes from within, or a jet or cone that can encase victims in ice, requires a HT roll at -1 per 2 points of penetrating damage to avoid being frozen (paralyzed) for (20 - HT) minutes, minimum one minute. ● Against attacks that allow resistance rolls, Temperature Tolerance (Cold) helps.

Adaptations: Extra DR vs. cold equal to creature’s original DR score, minimum +1 DR vs. cold. ● Optional changes are even higher DR (or Injury Reduction!) vs. cold, Infravision, Limited Camouflage (Snow), Terrain Adaptation (Ice/Snow), and levels of Temperature Tolerance (Cold) – and possibly Vulnerability (Fire/Heat ×2).

Electricity

The creature crackles with lightning. Any monster might be transformed, but beings of fire seem especially prone. The sparks are blue or yellow, and let the thing see (and *be* seen) as if by torchlight. If it has a Stealth skill, it can switch off its glow to be sneaky.

Applicability: Any monster with a physical attack other than electricity/lightning.

Attack Modifications: Change damage type to *burning* that cannot set fires. Victims must roll vs. HT at -1 per 2 points of penetrating damage or be physically stunned; roll vs. HT at same penalty every turn to recover. ● This may be a blast affected normally by DR, an arc that treats metal armor as DR 1, or a field with armor divisor (5) against *all* DR.

Adaptations: Extra DR vs. electricity equal to creature’s original DR score, minimum +1 DR vs. electricity. ● The only widespread optional change is even higher DR – or Injury Reduction – vs. electricity.

Energy Drain

The fiend is a void, siphoning energy from its victims. This modification is especially likely for former creatures of cold – and for Elder Things! Such monsters are customarily shrouded in shadow.

Applicability: Any monster with a physical attack other than energy drain.

Attack Modifications: Change damage type to *fatigue*. At 0 FP, FP loss also costs HP (*Exploits*, pp. 63-64) – this attack can kill! ● This may be a physical drain against which DR insulates normally or a supernatural one that bypasses all DR. ● Either kind of drain might heal the monster at the rate of one FP and/or HP per three, two, or even one FP drained.

Adaptations: Nothing fixed, but extra DR (or Injury Reduction!) vs. energy – electricity, fire, light, and sound – is common. ● Other optional changes are Dark Vision, and levels of Chameleon (Only in darkness), Silence, and Temperature Tolerance (Cold).

Fire

The monster is imbued with flame or lava. Former acid or electricity creatures burn with fire instead of acid or lightning, and are particularly likely to be transformed. This modification usually results in orange or reddish coloration – and some part of the being inevitably glows as brightly as torchlight, though the Stealth skill lets it mask this to be sneaky. The associated heat cannot be masked; Infravision can always detect it!

Applicability: Any monster with a physical attack other than fire/heat.

Attack Modifications: Change damage type to *burning* – real fire, so *Flame* (*Exploits*, p. 68) applies. ● Against attacks that allow resistance rolls, Temperature Tolerance (Heat) helps.

Adaptations: Extra DR vs. fire equal to creature’s original DR score, minimum +1 DR vs. fire. ● Optional changes are even higher DR (or Injury Reduction!) vs. fire, Infravision, and levels of Temperature Tolerance (Heat) – and possibly Vulnerability (Cold/Ice ×2).

Magical

The thing is charged with pure destructive magic. This is common among (former) electricity and fire entities, and Construct-, Faerie-, and Spirit-class monsters – but regardless of class, the modified creature counts as “magical.” The visible sign is a silvery or golden coloration.

Applicability: Any monster with a physical attack other than direct magical damage.

Attack Modifications: Attack has no damage type – it directly injures HP, bypassing all DR but the Armor spell (*Spells*, p. 63). This qualifies as an attack by magic, a magic item, or a magical creature, where relevant (e.g., the Pentagram spell, or slaying as-Sharak and toxifiers). ● Against attacks that allow resistance rolls, Magic Resistance helps.

Adaptations: Extra DR vs. magic equal to creature's original DR score, minimum +1 DR vs. magic. • Optional changes are even higher DR (or Injury Reduction!) vs. magic, Detect (Magic), and levels of Magic Resistance if the monster doesn't cast spells or of Magery if it does.

Poison

The monster exemplifies toxicity. Former acid monsters that trade acid for venom are common but not the only option. A sickly green shade usually betrays this modification.

Applicability: Any monster with a physical attack other than poison/toxic.

Attack Modifications: Change damage type to *toxic*. • This change is most logical for follow-ups and gases – but fantasy knows no logic, and the supernatural embodiment of poison might function like any other attack that's affected by DR! • Against attacks that allow resistance rolls, Resistant to Poison helps.

Adaptations: Nothing fixed, but optional changes are high levels of Resistant – up to Immunity – to Disease and Poison, plus “slimy” traits like Limited Camouflage (Swamp) and levels of Slippery.

HYBRIDS

A time-tested way to turn monsters into more monsters is to combine two or more of them. This is less like modification and more like inventing a whole new creature.

The quick-and-dirty way to handle this is to add one monster's attacks and “definitive” traits (good and bad) to another. For conflicting traits, drop the ones you like least. For attributes, simply average unless a high score is one of the creatures' definitive traits – in that case, keep it.

When actually gluing together parts of different bodies, average only ST, DX, HT, HP, FP, and Speed. Use the IQ, Will, and Per of the head, and the Move of the part that provides the legs, wings, or whatever. Each body part has the DR of its monster of origin. Drop attacks and traits associated with body parts that are no longer present.

Unholy

The entity is so evil that its mere touch, gaze, breath, etc. does harm. This is common among former poison creatures, things with modifiers from *Crank Up the Evil* (pp. 4-5), and Demon- and Undead-class monsters – but in all cases, the being qualifies as “truly evil.” Unholy fiends are typically grayish or blackish.

Applicability: Any monster with a physical attack other than direct unholy damage.

Attack Modifications: Attack has no damage type – it directly injures HP, bypassing all DR but the Protection from Evil spell (*Spells*, p. 64). Some creatures of Good have Vulnerability (Unholy), and this attack definitely counts. • Against attacks that allow resistance rolls, Resist Evil helps.

Adaptations: Levels of Resist Good equal to *twice* creature's DR score, minimum one level. • Optional changes are Detect

(Good), levels of Power Investiture (Unholy) if the monster casts evil clerical spells, and possibly Vulnerability (Holy x2).

EXPERT MONSTERS

Not all modifications affect a monster's physical makeup or fundamental nature – some come closer to learned abilities. All these changes are possible only for sapient (IQ 6+) beings. Cannot Learn *doesn't* prevent them, as a creature could start out with such knowledge.

Myrmidon

The creature is an expert fighter! Construct-class monsters are often built this way, Undead-class ones might have become masters while alive, and Faerie- and Mundane-class ones may have gained the knowledge the hard way. Those aren't the only options, but Animal-, Plant-, and Slime-class creatures just about never meet the criteria (IQ 6+ and weapon use).

Applicability: Any monster that wields a weapon.

Modifications: Raise weapon skill by two or to DX+2, whichever is better. • Add *one* of Combat Reflexes (for +1 to all active defenses) – or Enhanced Parry 1 (+1 to Parry), Extra Attack 1, or Weapon Master (+2 *per die* to damage) with its weapon. • Multiple applications are possible, each granting another +2 to skill and one additional trait. • In most cases, myrmidons have better-quality weapons and armor than their peers.

Priest

Tribes of Mundane-class monsters often boast shamans, Undead-class entities might have been clerics in life (Evil ones *becoming* undead using their powers), and Demon-, Divine Servitor-, and Spirit-class beings may *be* the clerics of Hell, Heaven, the Spirit World, etc. Even Constructs could be temple guardians with priestly powers!

Applicability: Any IQ 6+ monster.

Modifications: Raise IQ to 10 or add +1 to IQ, whichever is better. • Add Power Investiture 1 (Elder) for Elder Things; Power Investiture 1 (Unholy) for *most* monsters, especially “truly evil” ones; and either Power Investiture 1 (Druidic) or ordinary clerical Power Investiture 1 for creatures that aren't irredeemably evil, depending on whether they're primitive wilderness-dwellers or sophisticated enough to have legions, if not empires. • If FP are given as “N/A,” add an Energy Reserve equal to the *higher* of HT or HP. • Multiple applications are possible, each adding another +1 to IQ and Power Investiture (maximum +6). • Remove any Magic Resistance! • Add spells at IQ + Power Investiture level. A number of spells equal to that total is fair. For Power Investiture (Elder) and (Unholy), see the lists below.

Elder Spells

Not all of these are useful *against delvers* – but adventurers who somehow manage to control monsters might have spells cast for them. Sense Good and Protection from Good work like Sense Evil and Protection from Evil, but affect angels, clerics, holy warriors, etc.

PI 1: Armor, Coolness, Darkness, Death Vision, Debility, Decay, Detect Magic, Dull (Sense), Extinguish Fire, Fear, Find Weakness, Frailty, Night Vision, No-Smell, Noise, Recover Energy, Seek Gate, Sense Good, Sense Life, Shield, Silence, and Simple Illusion.

PI 2: Blackout, Blur, Complex Illusion, Dark Vision, Deflect Energy, Dullness, Fog, Garble, Hide Path, Hide Thoughts, Hush, Nauseate, Panic, Protection from Good, Resist Cold, Resist Fire, Resist Lightning, Resist Sound, Scry Gate, Strike Blind, Strike Deaf, Strike Dumb, Stun, Terror, and Weaken.

PI 3: Affect Spirits, Astral Vision, Cold, Conceal, Control Gate, Destroy Air, Destroy Water, Foolishness, Freeze, Hide, Icy Weapon, Mage-Stealth, Magic Resistance, Mystic Mist, Perfect Illusion, Repel Spirits, Retch, See Invisible, See Secrets, Shatter, Sickness, Strengthen Will, Weaken Will, and Wither Plant.

PI 4: Astral Block, Banish, Blink, Curse, Daze, Death-touch, Dehydrate, Dispel Magic, Frostbite, Phantom, Rive, and Wither Limb.

PI 5: Beast Possession, Entrap Spirit, Invisibility, Mass Daze, Phase, and Soul Rider.

PI 6: Ethereal Body, Possession, and Sanctuary.

Unholy Spells

The comments on Elder spells apply here as well.

PI 1: Armor, Aura, Beast-Rouser, Coolness, Darkness, Death Vision, Debility, Decay, Detect Magic, Detect Poison, Fear, Final Rest, Frailty, Night Vision, Recover Energy, Sense Good, Sense Life, Sense Spirit, Shield, Silence, Spasm, Stench, Thunderclap, and Watchdog.

PI 2: Blackout, Clumsiness, Command, Compel Truth, Dark Vision, Great Voice, Pain, Panic, Persuasion, Poison Food, Protection from Good, Repel Animal, Resist Acid, Resist Cold, Resist Disease, Resist Fire, Resist Lightning, Resist Pain, Resist Poison, Seeker, Strike Blind, Strike Deaf, Strike Dumb, Summon Spirit, Terror, Truthsayer, Turn Spirit, and Turn Zombie.

PI 3: Affect Spirits, Astral Vision, Command Spirit, Destroy Air, Destroy Water, Dispel Possession, Foolishness, Icy Weapon, Magic Resistance, Paralyze Limb, Repel Spirits, See Secrets, Sensitize, Silver Tongue, Strengthen Will, Suspended Animation, Weaken Will, and Wither Plant.

PI 4: Agonize, Astral Block, Banish, Beast Possession, Curse, Deathtouch, Dehydrate, Dispel Magic, Flesh to Stone, Frostbite, Gift of Letters, Gift of Tongues, Total Paralysis, Vigil, and Wither Limb.

PI 5: Earthquake, Entrap Spirit, Pentagram, and Remove Curse.

PI 6: Entombment and Possession.

Wizard

Other intelligent creatures wield wizardly magic. This is most common for Demon-, Elemental-, Faerie-, Mundane-, Spirit-, and Undead-class monsters – demonic tutelage is one (ill-advised) way to learn magic, while some greater undead use wizardry to get that way. A Construct-class being might cast spells known to its wizardly creator, and some Divine Servitor- and Elder Thing-class ones deign to use mortal magic.

Applicability: Any IQ 6+ monster.

Modifications: Raise IQ to 10 or add +1 to IQ, whichever is better. ● Add Magery 1. ● If FP are given as “N/A,” add an Energy Reserve equal to the *higher* of HT or HP. ● Multiple applications are possible, each adding another +1 to IQ and Magery (maximum +6). ● Remove any Magic Resistance! ● Add spells at IQ + Magery level. Possibilities are endless – but Demon-, Spirit-, and Undead-class monsters typically know at least *some* Necromantic spells, most Elemental-class ones stick with their element (Air, Earth, Fire, or Water spells), and Faerie-class ones favor Illusion and Mind Control spells.

The calling of “wizard” is about understanding and working within the laws governing the outwardly chaotic Art.

For instance, “That which magic begets can beget magic.” Wizardry can summon spirits, reanimate the dead, animate the unliving, and grant the semblance of wits to illusions, so it follows that many of the entities it calls, feeds, and creates can perform wizardry.

– Uncle Seamus, Wizard

THAT’S JUST WRONG

Fantasy monsters aren’t known for making sense, but some make even less sense than usual. Alchemical runoff, critical spell failures, glowing ore deposits, uncanny rays from dimensional portals, and the presence of Elder Things can all *change* creatures in bizarre ways.

Each of these modifications alters the subject enough to give -2 to rolls to identify flaws; see *Exploiting Weaknesses (Monsters)*, pp. 4-5). The GM who wants to up the ante can add Terror (*Monster*, p. 12) to a creature with any of these changes!

Accelerated

The monster is sped up in time – usually a result of Elder Thing involvement.

Applicability: Any monster.

Modifications: Add Altered Time Rate and Enhanced Time Sense. ● Enhanced Time Sense includes Combat Reflexes; monsters with Combat Reflexes are upgraded to this, but for those without, remember to add +1 to active defenses. ● Accelerated beings often affect their immediate environment with Lifebane.

Convoluting

Another possibility when Elder Things affect a monster is that it ends up insanely . . . bendy. At its least weird, this modification means bones and exoskeletons are rubbery and all limbs behave like tentacles, but it’s possible the creature can reach *through* itself or even warp space around itself.

Applicability: Any monster.

Modifications: Add Double-Jointed (+5 to Climbing, Escape, and attempts to break free), Extra-Flexible, and levels of Slippery equal to HT/2 (round up). • The monster's internal structure gets weird to accommodate this: Referring to *Unliving, Homogeneous, and Diffuse Targets* (*Exploits*, p. 55), a being with none of Unliving, Homogeneous, or Diffuse uses the rules under *Unliving*, one that's Unliving uses *Homogeneous*, and one that's Homogeneous uses *Diffuse*. However it's changed, a creature described as "living" remains alive, and one that's wounded as if Diffuse can still slam, be slammed, grapple, and be grappled (though Double-Jointed and Slippery make that tricky).

Mutant

The commonest changes are to numbers of body parts. Arm, head, and leg counts can vary – possibly two or all three at once! Some monsters sprout wings.

Applicability: Any monster that has the appropriate body parts – see below.

Modifications (Arms): If the creature has arms, tentacles, prehensile tails, wings, etc., add at least one more as an Extra Arm. True arms *usually* come in pairs, but optionally, roll 1d for the number. • Each *pair* of Extra Arms adds an Extra Attack, minimum one. Additional attacks use the added body parts, which typically means punches, claws, wing buffets, or melee weapon strikes, though grapples are valid (each arm after the first two gives +2 to grapple or break free). • Monsters that use weapons wield one extra weapon per Extra Attack.

Modifications (Heads): If the creature has any heads, add at least one Extra Head. Optionally, roll 1d, divide by two, and round up for the number. • Each Extra Head adds one Extra Attack, which can be used for attacks originating from the head: bite, breath weapon, horn gore, gaze, etc. • Heads are *heavy*, so each Extra Head adds +1 or +10% to ST (drop fractions), whichever is *larger*, raising damage to match; see *Revising Damage* (p. 6). • Also add Peripheral Vision – or 360° Vision if the creature has Double-Jointed or Extra-Flexible.

Modifications (Legs): If the creature has any legs, add at least one *pair* of Extra Legs, making it harder to stop the monster by crippling legs. Optionally, roll 1d, divide by two, and round up for the number of pairs. • Add Enhanced Move (Ground): When sprinting (*Exploits*, p. 33), *double* Move; e.g., Move 6 becomes Move 6/12, allowing sprints at Move 12.

Modifications (Wings): If the creature doesn't fly, add Flight (Winged), which gives Air Move equal to twice Speed (e.g., Speed 5.50 gives Air Move 11). Wings need not be bird- or bat-like – a mutant water elemental might have huge bubbles! – but no matter what they look like, they can be crippled like arms.

Phased

The monster blinks in and out of existence – a sign of Elder Thing influence, a Gate magic disaster, or being ghostly.

Applicability: Any monster.

Modifications: If the monster takes a Move or All-Out Defense (Increased Dodge) maneuver instead of attacking, it can opt to move insubstantially in *any* direction – even up, as if flying – and pass through *any* object at its listed Move. It cannot affect the real world while doing so. To affect it, use Affect Spirits (*Spells*, p. 59) or Ghost Weapon (*Exploits*, p. 79). • While substantial, it can defend once per turn with the equivalent of the Phase spell (*Spells*, p. 34) at skill level equal to its DX, at no FP cost. • Optionally, the thing's innards aren't entirely in this dimension, adding Injury Reduction 2 or more.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sean Punch set out to become a particle physicist in 1985 and ended up as *GURPS* Line Editor in 1995. He has written or developed some 150 *GURPS* releases, revised the game into its fourth edition (2004), and contributed regularly to *Pyramid*. Lead creator of the *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy* series, he designed the *Dungeon Fantasy Roleplaying Game*, released in 2017. Sean has been a gamer since 1979, but devotes most of his spare time to Argentine tango.

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MORE MYTHIC & MAGICAL MONSTERS

BY PETER V. DELL'ORTO

Is there such a thing as too many monsters to choose from? The *Dungeon Fantasy Roleplaying Game* contains an entire volume of dangerous monsters for delvers to confront. Here are more monsters, ranging from ordinary giant mundane creatures to creatures straight out of ancient myths.

CERBERUS

A cerberus (plural: cerberoi) is a three-headed dog with a mane of cobras and a dragon's tail. It's capable of killing *spirits* and thus is popular as a guardian. They're patient, unsleeping, and dangerous. They are named after *the* Cerberus – see below. Cerberoi can attack anything directly in front with bites from all three heads (and from the snakes, as well!), or with two heads if the target is to their front-left or front-right. They can also attack three different foes, and *every* foe attacked by a bite is also attacked by its snake mane!

ST: 24	HP: 24	Speed: 6.00
DX: 12	Will: 12	Move: 10
IQ: 6	Per: 15	Weight: 1,200 lbs.
HT: 12	FP: 12	SM: +1 (2 hexes)
Dodge: 10	Parry: N/A	DR: 4

Bite (17) (x3): 2d+2 cutting. Affects insubstantial. Reach C, 1.

Snake Bites (17) (x3): 1 HP + follow-up 1d-2 toxic if a HT roll is failed; if it succeeds the victim takes only 1 HP of toxic injury. Affects insubstantial. Reach C.

Traits: Combat Reflexes; Discriminatory Smell; Doesn't Sleep; Extra Attack 5; Extra Head 2; Higher Purpose 1 (Slay Spirits); Quadruped; See Invisible; Unfazeable.

Skills: Brawling-17; Stealth-14; Tracking-18.

Class: Dire Animal.

Notes: Unaffected by Animal spells because it's a weird hybrid. Some tales tell of Cerberoi letting living heroes pass their station unmolested if all three heads are fed, but these are unsubstantiated. They *never* let insubstantial or invisible beings by unopposed!

*Many monsters
are unique creatures
of myth, toned down
and made legion.*

The Cerberus guards the gates of the spirit-world, keeping the spirits of the dead from escaping and would-be rescuers from going in. It's nearly identical to the above, with ST 50, bites that do 5d+6 cutting, and snake bites that do 1d-3 impaling and have a follow-up that is *irresistible* (Immunity to Poison still prevents damage) and does 1d toxic per bite. Also add Immunity to Disease, Immunity to Poison, Regeneration (2 HP/second), Terror, Unkillable, and raise DR to 6.

COLCHIS BULL

Colchis bulls are immense, fire-breathing bronze bulls. They're usually encountered in pairs, but single beasts and larger herds are possible. They're encountered on badly scorched farmlands or deep within dungeons or caverns. Their origin is much argued – magical experimental, punishment (or just a lethal joke) of the gods, or perfectly normal bulls warped by alchemically tainted grazing land. Whatever their origin, they are ill-tempered, easy to provoke, and hard to calm down. They are somewhat slow, but not clumsy, and surprisingly accurate with their horns. They are dangerous and easily provoked. It's not clear how they reproduce – again, blame wizards or the gods when they appear!

ST: 28	HP: 28	Speed: 5.75
DX: 10	Will: 13	Move: 5/10
IQ: 3	Per: 10	
HT: 13	FP: 13	SM: +2
Dodge: 8	Parry: N/A	DR: 7; see also Notes

Bite (14): 3d-1 crushing. Reach C.

Fire Breath (16): Can breathe a 1-yard-wide × 10-yard-long cone of fire, doing 4d-1 burning damage. Costs 1 FP per use.

Gore (14): 3d+2 impaling. Reach C-1. Treat as weapon, not as body part, to parry.

Slam (16): 3d impaling at Move 1-2, 3d+3 at Move 3-4, 3d+6 at Move 5-6, 3d+9 at Move 7-9, 3d+12 at Move 10.

Trample (16): 3d+2 crushing. Reach C.

Traits: Acute Taste and Smell 6; Bad Temper (9); Berserk (12); DR 14 vs. corrosion only; DR 14 vs. crushing only; Enhanced Move 1 (Ground Move 10); Loner (12); Magic Resistance 5; Quadruped; Wild Animal.

Skills: Brawling-14; Innate Attack (Breath)-16; Sumo Wrestling-16.

Class: Dire Animal.

Notes: Animal spells work normally, if Magic Resistance can be overcome. Standard versions of this creature have DR 21 vs. corrosion or crushing only, plus Face and Skull have DR 12 (26 vs. crushing). Too stupid to negotiate.

A LOT OF BULL

The colchis bull has many variations, most of them called by name evoking their appearance and attack rather than a proper name. Generally encountered with other colchis bulls of the same type, but evil wizards and angry gods may turn a variety on delvers at the same time.

Iron Bull: The iron bull breathes petrifying gas. When provoked, it turns victims to stone and then tips them over with its horns. Sometimes referred to as “gorgons” for reasons unclear to anyone. Vulnerable to corrosive attacks – remove DR 14 vs. corrosion only. Change Fire Breath to **Stone Breath:** A two-yard-radius area effect directly in front of the gorgon’s head. Everyone within is exposed to a magical contact agent; resisted by HT-4 – Magic Resistance adds +1 per level. Very large creatures add the difference between their SM and the SM of the gorgon (SM +2). Failure means the victim is turned to stone per the spell *Flesh to Stone* (*Spells*, p. 27). The effect is permanent until countered with *Stone to Flesh*. Costs 1 FP per use.

Rock Bull: Scaled in stone, and has DR 28 vs. corrosion only. Breathe is one of fire, petrifying gas, or poison gas (use the stats for poison from a medium dragon, *Monsters*, p. 23)

Storm Bull: Scaled in bronze like the colchis bull, but it breathes lightning – damage is unchanged but metal armor only provides DR 1. Add DR 14 vs. lightning only.

GHOUL

These undead corpse-eaters are gray, white, or even purple-skinned; sometimes “swamp ghouls” have mostly greenish skin. They are found in cemeteries, lost tombs, forbidden wildernesses, dire fens, and similar places – either by themselves or accompanied by necromantic wizardly overlords. Their touch is chilling and can paralyze victims – a physical attack accentuated by fear! Victims slain by ghouls are usually eaten – but if a corpse is left mostly intact, it will rise as a ghoul at sunset of the following day. Ghouls sometimes do this to replenish their numbers, or if forced by their evil masters.

ST: 18	HP: 18	Speed: 6.25
DX: 12	Will: 15	Move: 6
IQ: 9	Per: 12	
HT: 13	FP: 13	SM: 0
Dodge: 9	Parry: 10 (claw)	DR: 0

Bite (14): 1d+1 cutting + follow-up Paralyzing Touch. Reach C.

Claws (14): 1d+2 cutting + follow-up Paralyzing Touch. Reach C.

Paralyzing Touch (HT): Victims touched by the ghoul or who touch a ghoul lose 1d FP. This ignores all DR! In addition, the victim must make a HT roll at -1 per FP lost from this specific touch. Failure means paralysis (see *Exploits*, p. 66) for one minute plus one per point failure, or until FP are fully restored, whichever is longer. Success means there is no effect besides FP loss or any injury inflicted by a claw. Fearlessness adds its level to the resistance roll, and Unfazeable provides immunity. Cowardice gives its Fright Check penalty (-1 to -4) to the roll.

Traits: Doesn’t Breathe; Doesn’t Eat or Drink; Gluttony (12); High Pain Threshold; Immunity to Metabolic Hazards; No Blood; Infectious Attack (Victim must die); Silence 2; Temperature Tolerance 10; Unliving; Unnatural.

Skills: Brawling-14; Stealth-14 (18 vs. Hearing when motionless, 14 vs. Hearing when moving).

Class: Undead.

Notes: Unwilling to negotiate except to bargain for corpses, but sometimes found serving necromancers as part of some foul bargain with The Devil (either by the ghouls, or the necromancer!) Doesn’t Eat or Drink means the ghouls don’t need to eat, but they still like to eat corpses, and Gluttony means they’ll often do so even when they should not. They die at -1 × HP thanks to Unnatural. Truly evil.

GIANT BEETLE

Some beetles get pretty big – others get *gigantic*. These are the latter. Many other varieties of giant beetles exist; these are just a couple of the more common.

Big Beetle

A 3’-long giant beetle with large eyes, thick chitin, and slicing mandibles. They are scavengers but will attack living beings if they encounter them. While not berserkers, they use All-Out Attack (Determined) or All-Out Attack (Strong) against foes they have trouble hitting or harming, respectively. They aren’t very accurate or tough, but they move fast. Commonly found in jungles, swamps, deep forests, and underground. They come singly or in bunches of 10-20 beetles. Bombardier (poison-gas-spraying) variations are easily provoked to “self-defense.”

ST: 12	HP: 12	Speed: 5.50
DX: 11	Will: 10	Move: 8
IQ: 1	Per: 10	
HT: 11	FP: 11	SM: 0
Dodge: 8	Parry: N/A	DR: 5

Mandibles (13): 1d+1 cutting. Reach C.

Traits: Extra Legs (Six Legs); Nictitating Membrane 5; Peripheral Vision (Easy to Hit); Reduced Consumption 1 (Cast Iron Stomach); Striking Strength 3 (Bite Only); Temperature Tolerance 3; Wild Animal.

Skills: Brawling-13; Climbing-13.

Class: Animal.

Notes: Animal spells work normally. Can be distracted by food, but too stupid to negotiate! Eyes are only -6 to hit. For poison-spraying bombardier beetles, remove Striking ST and reduce bite damage to 1d-2 cutting, but add Bad Temper (9) and Poison Gas (HT-5) – victims in a 3-yard radius centered on the beetle who fail a HT-5 roll suffer nausea (*Exploits*, p. 65) for one minute *after* leaving the cloud; failure by 5+ also inflicts 1d-2 toxic damage. Poison-gas cloud persists for one minute and costs 1 FP per use.

Humongous Beetle

This beetle is almost 15' long and 9' wide, and has a massive plate of chitin topped with a horn on its head. They are stubborn, aggressive, and single-minded – they'll confront anything in their path and refuse to budge if in something else's way.

ST: 40 **HP:** 40 **Speed:** 5.50
DX: 9 **Will:** 9 **Move:** 4
IQ: 2 **Per:** 9
HT: 13 **FP:** 13 **SM:** +3
Dodge: 8 **Parry:** N/A **DR:** 6; see also Notes

Bite (11): 4d+4 crushing. Reach C.

Horn (11): 4d+5 crushing. Reach C-2. Treat as weapon, not as body part, to parry.

Trample (11): 4d+1 crushing. Reach C.

Traits: Bad Temper (9); Nictitating Membrane 6; Peripheral Vision (Easy to Hit); Reduced Consumption 1 (Cast Iron Stomach); Stubbornness; Wild Animal.

Skills: Brawling-11.

Class: Giant Animal.

Notes: Animal spells work normally. Too stupid to negotiate, but will stop to eat food (fruit or fungus) if enough is offered – at least 10 lbs. of food! Face and Skull has DR 12. Eyes are only -3 (including SM) to hit.

GIANT CENTIPEDE

Giant lethal centipedes can be found in dungeons, in foul swamps, nesting in abandoned buildings, and under especially large rocks.

Big Centipede

A 1'-long, very aggressive centipede. They come in a variety of colors and leg/body types, but their statistics are identical. They are usually encountered alone when lurking under rocks or chests, behind furniture, and so on. Sometimes they gather in packs of 2d centipedes. They're generally too weak to bother armored delvers, unless they scurry up to unarmored locations, such as the face . . .

ST: 3 **HP:** 3 **Speed:** 6.25
DX: 13 **Will:** 9 **Move:** 6
IQ: 1 **Per:** 9
HT: 12 **FP:** 12 **SM:** -4
Dodge: 9 **Parry:** N/A **DR:** 1

Bite (15): 1d-3 piercing + 1d-3 toxic, or 1 HP with a successful HT roll. Reach C. Anyone who loses more than HP/2 to cumulative toxic damage is paralyzed until fully healed. Failure by 5+ or critical failure paralyzes the victim *immediately*, regardless of total lost HP!

Traits: Bad Temper (9); Extra Legs (Too Many); Infravision; Striking ST 4 (ST 7); Wild Animal.

Skills: Brawling-14; Stealth-14.

Class: Giant Animal.

Notes: Animal spells work normally. Too stupid to negotiate. Legs are easy to cripple (1 HP), but they have too many to productively attack!

Humongous Centipede

This monstrosity reaches lengths of up to 25', measuring 3' wide and 1' tall. They are always hungry and attack on sight. Their venom is especially virulent, and can paralyze or kill victims in relatively short order. They are loners, usually living in deep woods, jungles, caves, and underground tunnels. They are sometimes found with a nest of 2d+4 young centipedes – use the stats for big centipedes, above.

ST: 21 **HP:** 21 **Speed:** 6.25
DX: 13 **Will:** 10 **Move:** 6
IQ: 1 **Per:** 10
HT: 12 **FP:** 12 **SM:** +3 (6 hexes)
Dodge: 9 **Parry:** N/A **DR:** 2

Bite (15): 2d+1 + 1d toxic, or 1 HP with a successful HT-6 roll. Reach C. Anyone who loses more than HP/2 to cumulative toxic damage is paralyzed until fully healed. Failure by 5+ or critical failure paralyzes the victim *immediately*, regardless of total lost HP!

Traits: Extra Legs (Too Many); Horizontal; No Manipulators; Wild Animal.

Skills: Brawling-14.

Class: Giant Animal.

Notes: Animal spells affect them normally. Too stupid to negotiate.

GIANT FROG

Giant frogs inhabit swamps, marshes, and ponds. They are omnivorous and depend on a sticky tongue to grab prey to eat. All of the versions described here are the same variety of frog, in different sizes – as they age, they keep growing. Giant *killer* frogs are weird mutants, originally bred by wizards and strange swamp-dwelling cultists of dubious morals and less certain sanity. They lack the sticky tongue and have sharp teeth instead.

Giant toads are almost identical – remove the sticky tongue attack, Amphibious, and Dependency, and raise DR by 1. They can be found in drier areas and are the more common variety encountered in dungeons and underground caverns.

Big Frog

A dog-sized giant frog. Found singly or in small numbers, generally – but huge *killer* frogs are found in packs numbering as many as 20-30 or more.

ST: 10 **HP:** 10 **Speed:** 6.25
DX: 13 **Will:** 10 **Move:** 6
IQ: 2 **Per:** 12
HT: 12 **FP:** 12 **SM:** -1
Dodge: 9 **Parry:** N/A **DR:** 0

Bite (14): 1d-2 crushing. Counts as a grapple. Followed by a Constriction Attack, which is a free action. Reach C.

Sticky Tongue (14): Anyone hit is stuck to the tongue regardless of whether the attack penetrates DR. Effective ST for grappling is 12. Reach C-1. Inevitably followed by the frog dragging in the victim, biting it, and then using its Constriction Attack.

Traits: Amphibious; Constriction Attack (Follow-Up, Bite); Dependency (Water; Very Common; Hourly); Quadruped; Super Jump (12 yards); Wild Animal.

Skills: Brawling-14; Jumping-14; Stealth-14.

Class: Giant Animal.

Notes: Animal spells affect them normally. Too stupid to negotiate, but can be distracted with food – or food-like objects tossed near them. *Killer* big frogs are dire animals instead of giant animals, and lack the sticky tongue and Constriction Attack, but add Bad Temper (12); Bloodlust (9); and bite damage becomes cutting; killer frogs can *worry* at a foe they've successfully bitten, inflicting biting damage every second as a free action.

Huge Frog

A horse-sized giant frog. Otherwise identical to big frogs.

ST: 18 **HP:** 18 **Speed:** 6.00
DX: 12 **Will:** 10 **Move:** 6
IQ: 2 **Per:** 12
HT: 12 **FP:** 12 **SM:** +1
Dodge: 9 **Parry:** N/A **DR:** 1

Bite (14): 1d+2 crushing. Counts as a grapple. Followed by a Constriction Attack, which is a free action. Reach C.

Sticky Tongue (14): Anyone hit is stuck to the tongue regardless of whether the attack penetrates DR. Treat this as a ST 12 grapple. Reach C-3. Inevitably followed by the frog dragging in the victim, biting it, and then using its Constriction Attack.

Traits: Amphibious; Constriction Attack (Follow-Up, Bite); Dependency (Water; Very Common; Hourly); Quadruped; Super Jump (12 yards); Wild Animal.

Skills: Brawling-14; Jumping-14; Stealth-14.

Class: Giant Animal.

Notes: Animal spells affect them normally. Too stupid to negotiate, but can be distracted with food – or food-like objects tossed near them. *Killer* huge frogs are dire animals instead of giant animals, and lack the sticky tongue and Constriction Attack, but add Bad Temper (12), Bloodlust (12), and bite damage becomes cutting. Killer frogs will bite and release, over and over, until they've killed a foe. A frog-sized (and frog-rigged) saddle is possible – frogmen and weird swamp-dwelling, tentacle-faced, Elder Thing-worshipping sub-humans might ride them as mounts using Animal Handling (Giant Frogs). Some frogs are even larger – simply scale up ST, HP, and damage.

HYDRA

Hydra are reptilian, dragon-like creatures with many heads. Their bites are venomous, their blood is toxic, and they are cannot die unless every head has been sliced off. But when one head is cut off of a hydra, *two* spring to take its place! That is, unless the neck is cauterized right away. They're blatantly magical monsters and are given to attacking humans (and elves, dwarves, orcs, and so on) on sight. They're regarded as evil menaces, quite reasonably. They mostly remain hidden in remote lairs in forbidding wildernesses or deep underground.

Hydra normally top out at twice their original number of heads . . . but exceptions do occur, resulting in hydra with 13, 15, or even more heads. A hydra has anything from five or more heads when first encountered (roll 2d+3 if random determination is desired). These stats describe a *small* hydra. Larger, dragon-sized ones (up to SM+4 or *more*) exist as well!

ST: 20 **HP:** 20 **Speed:** 6.25
DX: 12 **Will:** 13 **Move:** 6
IQ: 2 **Per:** 12 **Weight:** 800 lbs.
HT: 13 **FP:** 13 **SM:** +1 (3 hexes)
Dodge: 9 **Parry:** N/A **DR:** 3 (5 on heads)

Bite (15) (x5 or more): 2d impaling. Reach C-2.

Toxic Blood (Resisted by HT-2, plus DR): Blood causes 1d toxic damage on contact. When hit by a cutting, impaling, or piercing attack, roll 3d (3d-2 if cutting). If the roll is less than the damage inflicted, venomous blood splashes onto the attacker (if within 1 yards, or 2 yards if roll is 5 or less). If already wounded, anyone within 2 yards may get splashed with blood on a 3 or less on 3d; +1 for every 3 HP suffered.

Traits: Bad Temper (9); Dark Vision; Extra Attack 4 (or more); Extra Head (see Notes); Quadruped; Regeneration (Heads only, special variant – see notes); Regrowth (Heads only; Doubling); Supernatural Durability; Wild Animal.

Skills: Brawling-15.

Class: Dire Animal.

Notes: Immune to Animal spells. Not intelligent enough to negotiate. Has a number of Extra Attacks equal to one less than its total heads – and if more heads grow, each gets Extra Attack. Takes 7 HP to cripple a head, which causes it to shrivel up and die. In one second, *two* heads will start to sprout; in five seconds, the heads are mature and ready to fight. If 7 HP of flame damage is done to the wound, it will cauterize, killing both heads, and no new heads will grow. If all heads are destroyed, the hydra dies. If not, it can also be slain by being taken to -200 HP! Hydra blood can be used to make elixirs of regeneration, but it's also toxic (1 HP, resisted by HT-2). Up to (1d + number of heads) pints can be harvested; each pint sells for \$200.

SHAMBLETHORN

A large “plant man” made of twisted roots studded with *long* thorns and spikes and covered with globs of muck, moss, and leaves sufficient to fill in the “flesh” on the skeleton-like root frame. They lurk in swamps, or near subterranean lakes and pools, and ambush their prey.

They attack by clubbing their foes until they can close and grapple and squeeze foes into their muck-and-moss bodies to suffocate them or bleed them out on their thorns.

They are omnivorous, absorbing the nutrition from flesh through small feeder roots. They prefer fresh meat although they can get by for a time on fresh water.

Shamblethorns are fearless, aggressive, and generally must be hacked into pieces to destroy. They are vulnerable to dehydration, but their natural wetness protects them against fire. Lightning just seems to energize them!

ST: 24 **HP:** 24 **Speed:** 6.25
DX: 12 **Will:** 10 **Move:** 6
IQ: 8 **Per:** 10
HT: 13 **FP:** 13 **SM:** +1
Dodge: 9 **Parry:** 10 (Brawling) **DR:** 3

Clubbing Limbs (15): 2d+4 crushing. Reach C, 1.

Grapple (15): Apply SM difference to attack rolls (+1 vs. SM 0 humans). Effective ST 26 for grappling due to Wrestling. Followed by 1d impaling from thorns and by Suffocating Squeeze. Reach C.

Suffocating Squeeze: Roll a Quick Contest of the shamblethorn's effective ST 26 vs. the victims ST or HT; damage is 1 point of impaling per margin of victory by the shamblethorn. In addition, if the victim is SM 0 or smaller, the victim also begins to suffocate, per *Exploits*, p. 70, and loses 1 FP per second automatically. In addition, the victim takes an additional 1d impaling from thorns automatically every turn. While squeezing, it cannot mount any other attacks, but it *can* walk around with its victim (and usually will!) to avoid staying close to other foes.

Thorns: 1d impaling. Reach C. Automatically attacks everyone in the shamblethorn's hex as a free action.

Traits: Chameleon 4 (Within plant-filled settings only); Detect Life; DR 30 vs. lightning only (with absorption: every 2 damage prevented by DR adds +1 HP for 1d hours); Hard to Subdue 2; Homogeneous; Immunity to Mind Control; Injury Reduction 10 vs. fire only; Mute; Plant; Regeneration (2 HP/Hour, in moist conditions only); Regrowth (see below); Silence 1; Unfazeable; Vulnerability (Dehydration attacks, x2 effect); Weakness (Wither Plant causes 3d injury per casting).

Skills: Brawling-15; Stealth-12 (13 vs. Hearing, 14 when not moving; 16 vs. Sight in swamps, 20 when not moving); Wrestling-15.

Class: Plant.

Notes: Plant spells don't work, and it's *immune* to mind control. Their "limbs" are just extended roots, and the shamblethorn can extrude new limbs at will. Crippled or dismembered limbs can be replaced in one second as a free action. Clever enough to work together, or to use other swamp-dwellers to their advantage, but unwilling (perhaps unable) to negotiate.

WYVERN

A wyvern is a dragon-like beast with a serpentine body, wings, only two legs, and a long poison-tipped barbed tail.

Like dragons, they are dangerous diurnal predators; unlike dragons they're unintelligent and (usually) have no breath weapon. They are often found in remote wilderness areas or in vast caverns where they have room to fly. They aren't especially aggressive but regard delvers as just another food item. Wyverns like to attack from above with their tail until a victim falls; they then grapple their fallen prey and carry it off to eat. Against armored foes too tough to hurt with their claws, teeth, or tail, they will stay way – if forced to fight, they will slam.

Rumors of wyverns that breathe fire and shoot their tail spikes are, unfortunately, true. Those variants are quite rare – and are often mistaken for true dragons!

ST: 20 **HP:** 20 **Speed:** 6.50
DX: 14 **Will:** 10 **Move:** 3 (Ground)/19 (Air)
IQ: 5 **Per:** 12
HT: 12 **FP:** 12 **SM:** +3
Dodge: 9 **Parry:** N/A **DR:** 3

Bite (16): 2d+1 cutting + follow-up 1d toxic poison (10 hourly cycles, resisted by HT-2). Anyone injured by poison is at -4 DX until all HP lost to poison are healed. Reach C.

Claws (16): 2d cutting. Reach C, 1.

Slam (16): 2d-3 crushing at Move 1-2; 2d-1 crushing at Move 3-4; 2d+1 at Move 5-6; 2d+3 at Move 7-9; 2d+5 at Move 10-14; 2d+7 at 15-19. Reach C.

Tail Spike (16): 1d+2 impaling + follow-up 1d toxic plus -4 DX (cyclic, 10 hourly cycles), resisted by HT-2. DX penalty lasts until all HP lost to toxic damage are healed. Reach C-2. Treat as weapons, not as body part.

Traits: Flight (Winged); Immunity to Poison; Nictitating Membrane 3; No Fine Manipulators; Wild Animal.

Skills: Brawling-16; Innate Attack-16.

Class: Dire Animal.

Notes: Affected normally by animal spells. Can be distracted by *living* or recently living food – not preserved rations! Some wyverns shoot their tail spike (which magically replaces itself after firing) – Acc 0, Range 20/40. Some wyverns have breath weapons – add Flame Breath – a 1-yard-wide × 10-yard-long cone, doing 2d+2 burning; this costs 2 FP per usage.

*Bah! Look
at tail. Not
real dragon.
– Miao Miao,
Swashbuckler*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Peter V. Dell'Orto was raised in New Jersey. He started roleplaying in 1981, with *Dungeons & Dragons*, and has played *GURPS* since *Man to Man*. He has been active as a *GURPS* playtester, editor, and contributing author since 1996. Peter is the author of numerous *GURPS* articles for *Pyramid* magazine; author or co-author of several *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy* supplements, including *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 12: Ninja*, *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy Denizens: Barbarians*, and *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy Monsters 3: Born of Myth & Magic*, *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy Monsters 1*, and *GURPS Martial Arts*. Peter has run the same hack-and-slash *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy* game for over five years and more than 80 sessions mostly using one town and one megadungeon. You can read about it on his blog *Dungeon Fantastic* at dungeonfantastic.blogspot.com.

Special thanks to Christopher Rice.

Any adventure you can imagine . . .



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EIDETIC MEMORY

HYDRA ISLAND

BY DAVID L. PULVER

Hydra Island is an adventure that is suitable for a party of several beginning adventurers, or a couple of highly experienced delvers.

The party is approached by a representative of the local baron to apprehend a fugitive from justice hiding in an underground cave complex located in an island in the heart of a dismal swamp. In other words, this is a bounty hunt inside of a dungeon. The party can go in and clean out the entire place, or do a bit of detective work: “Well, Honorable Lizard Man, we aren’t after you, but have you seen this guy?” Political details (e.g., the name of the local baron) are left vague to better fit into any *Dungeon Fantasy* setting.

*This villain sullies the very institution
of knighthood! I'd bring such scum
before the baron for the honor, though
my companions insist on coin.*

– Sir Yvor Gryffyn, Knight

BACKSTABBING BLACKGUARD

While staying at a local inn or tavern, the party is approached by four strangers: a well-dressed if overweight man in his 50s in half-plate armor, accompanied by a pair of men-at-arms in chainmail wearing the livery of the local baron. Limping behind them is a muscular young woman in a barbaric costume of leathers, wolf fur, and gold ornaments, her arm in a sling and blood-stained bandages wrapped around her head. She has long braided blond hair and is dressed in a black hooded cloak, partially covering her face, but bruises are visible. Her shadowed eyes are sad, her expression brooding. An axe hangs from her belt; she walks with the help of a cane.

After some pleasantries and perhaps an offer to buy the party drinks or a meal, the older man introduces himself as Sheriff Bardolph, a retainer of the local baron; the injured

woman he calls “the shield-maiden Seledreth Wolfsinger, a highland warrior, traveling in these lands as an emissary from her clan.”

Bardolph explains that, hearing of the party’s reputations (or being impressed by their martial appearance,) he seeks aid to apprehend a fugitive from his lord’s justice. He can offer a rich reward: 200 silver coins (\$4,000)! The bounty is for the capture of one Sir Sacnoth (and at this name, the shield-maiden spits on the ground), a hedge-knight and sell-sword of ill-repute.

“He killed my brother,” snarls the injured shield-maiden, who had previously been silent. “By treachery! He must pay the axe-price!” After this interjection, Bardolph relates what happened.

The crime took place three days ago at the tiny hamlet of Marshgate, located near a dismal swamp a few miles away. The adventurer Sir Sacnoth, his squire, and four henchmen were gathered in the common room of the Wyvern’s Nest, the village’s combination inn and general store, drinking and purchasing supplies, apparently for an expedition. However, at that point Sacnoth’s men noticed two other travelers – highland clanfolk, the lady Seledreth here, and her brother Vadric, who had stopped for the night at the inn.

Sacnoth and his men began crudely mocking the highlanders’ foreign dress and speech, until the hillman Vadric drew his blade. He was about to give his challenge (announcing his ancestry) when Sacnoth’s squire dishonorably stabbed him in the back, and as he was reeling, Sir Sacnoth cut him down with a treacherous blow! Seledreth drew her axe and charged into the fray, but outnumbered five to one, she only wounded one of the knight’s men before she too was cut down – albeit injured rather than slain.

Witnesses said the knight tossed a few coins – “to clean up the foreign trash” – and he and his men exited laughing, helping out their injured comrade. Shortly after that, they reportedly visited the wharfs, loaded a trio of boats with several days worth of supplies, and departed down river. A barmaid recalled overhearing Sacnoth’s men talking about an expedition to the caverns underneath One Tree Island, a monster-infested complex said to be located in the heart of the nearby Marrowmarsh swamp.

Meanwhile, the innkeeper called for a healer, who treated Seledreth's wounds and saved her life. A few hours later, she regained consciousness, and she revealed her own identity and that of her murdered companion: he was Vardric ap Vardwulf, a warrior-bard who was the second son of the chief of the highland clan. She was his half-sister.

A generation ago, the highland clans had raided these lands, but a fragile peace now prevails. This murder threatens that accord. Vardwulf is sure to be angered unless the coward knight who slew his son is swiftly apprehended.

The wounded shield-maiden interjects: "Your sheriff swears his lord will pay wergeld for my kinsman Vardric, but I tell you truly, this will not be enough for Vardwulf my father, who is proud and quick to anger! This dog Sacnoth was your baron's knight, his sworn man! Honor requires this backstabber be brought back to answer for his crimes, or Vardwulf the Mighty will surely call out the clans!"

"And that," says Sheriff Bardolph, "is why we seek your help, my good adventurers. We need to settle this quickly. For this fugitive is said to be an adventurer too. Sacnoth likely does not realize who the highland folk he assaulted were. He is supposed to be heading for the warrens under One Tree Island. It is possible he will return, and we could arrest him then – but what if he is killed by monsters? Or survives, to take his loot elsewhere? He, or his body, must be brought back before the treaty between highland clans and the barony is damaged!"

"I have authorized the largest reward I can make available on short notice: If the false knight Sir Sacnoth can be captured, then 100 silver pieces (\$2,000) will be paid, plus another 10 silver pieces (\$200) for each of his henchmen, along with whatever treasure or gear the outlaw has on him. Moreover, time is most urgent: I will double the reward to 200 silver pieces if he you bring him back within five days."

"Or bring his head," says the shield-maiden, grinning wolfishly. "My father the chief will prefer this backstabbing

dog is dragged back on a leash, so we may see him tried and watch him die for his treachery. But just his head, that is not bad also. I must bear my brother's body back, but do this thing and you will have the gratitude of the clans – rather than our wrath!"

"Ahem," says the sheriff. "Yes, should you bring him back dead rather than alive, we will pay 3/4 of the reward, provided his corpse is recognizable. And, of course, you are welcome to any treasure you find in the caves yourselves. The marsh is infested with lizard men, and the band on One Tree Island – perhaps a dozen or so strong – have been killing traders and marshfolk for some years; they may have a goodly pile of ill-gotten loot. I'm sure the local merchants will be grateful if their scourge can be ended."

ACCEPTING THE QUEST

If the party accepts, Bardolph can provide directions to the swamp and One Tree Island, where Sacnoth is believed to be headed.

Marshgate, the tiny hamlet where the murder took place, is two hour's walk or an hour's ride away. The Marrowmarsh is adjacent to the hamlet, and One Tree Island lies about five miles into the swamp, accessible either by taking the Old Swamp Road (heavily overgrown) and striking across the swamp for half a mile, or alternatively, by taking boats and following the river as it widens into the marsh.

Bargaining: Hard-nosed delvers may bargain with the sheriff. He'd go up to 50% higher, although he can't pay in advance. But he'll think better of them (and may later help them in other ways) if they accept his offer.

Refusing: Bardolph is disappointed if the party doesn't accept. Seledreth will shake her head at the cowardice of lowlanders, spit on the floor, and limp off after him, in search of other heroes, or claiming she will return with her clan's warriors for vengeance. The GM should feel free to later relate tales of angry barbarian raids and cross-border fighting . . .

Should they refuse the commission, the PCs might still wish to explore the swamp caverns at a later date. The GM may wish to replace Sacnoth with another encounter.

RUMORS

Successful use of Carousing, Current Affairs, or Research skill can find some or all of these rumors.

- The Marrowmarsh swamp is infested with alligators, water snakes, giant frogs, and swarms of mosquitoes. A small band of cannibalistic lizard men are based at One Tree Island, in the heart of the swamp, often menacing human traders, fishermen, and hunters. The local merchant's association will pay a bounty of \$20 for each lizard man tail.

- A century ago, One Tree Island was known as Great Oak Island. It held a grove of swamp oaks, the center of a druidic cult. But evil infested the swamp, and all but one of the trees sickened and died. The island became known as One Tree Island.

THE WANTED MAN

The party gets a description of the fugitive, Sir Sacnoth: 5'11" tall, age 32, black curly hair and mustache, piercing green eyes, a long nose, but not ill-favored, and a hook-shaped scar below his left eye. His arms (on his shield) are a black cockatrice on green field. Some rumors:

- He was knighted on the battlefield by the baron after fighting orcish raiders, but he and his half-dozen men have been suspected of assaults, banditry, poaching, and horse-stealing.
- He claims to be a dungeon adventurer, but it wouldn't surprise anyone if he's one of those rogue traders who sell weapons or liquor to the swamp monsters.

SELEDRETH AS AN ADVENTURER

If the party has a cleric who can restore Seledreth to full health and the GM feels the group needs some help, the shield-maiden offers to accompany them (use a standard barbarian template) instead of just urging them on.

It was overrun by lizard men; a small band are said to still live in the caves under the island.

- In the last year alone, a score of merchants and hunters have gone missing in the Marrowmarsh, probably eaten by the lizard men, as the bodies are missing.

- One possible reason the lizard men are more aggressive in recent months is that unscrupulous traders may have been selling them steel weapons and liquor in exchange for alligator hides and loot.

Those who visit the inn in the village near the swamp or get critical successes on rolls to gather information can pick up more details (see *The Wyvern's Nest*, below).

False Rumors

For critical failures on rolls to seek information:

- The ghosts of all who died in the swamp haunt One Tree Island at night. These will-of-the-wisps heave led people to their doom.

- A perversion of the ancient druid cult is still practiced by degenerate human marshfolk who attend ceremonies in the swamp. It's them, rather than the lizard men, who have been wiping out travelers!

- There's a growing demand for slaves in a neighboring country. Agents of foreign slavers have been trying to get poor folk to sell their sons and daughters for a few coppers. Maybe some of the disappearances in the swamp aren't lizard men, but slavers!

- The hill clans have sent emissaries to stir up the lizard men of the Marrowmarsh, and are planning on jointly invading the barony.

JOURNEY TO ONE TREE ISLAND

The Marrowmarsh is 80 square miles of bug-and-snake-infested overgrown wetlands. Marshgate is a poor village of perhaps 100 people, many living in buildings built on stilts at the edge of the wetlands. The largest building is the Wyvern's Nest, an inn that caters to travelers and hunters. The place also sells fishing, trapping, and boating supplies.

The adjacent Marrowmere River widens into the swamp itself. A poorly maintained and overgrown road, Old Swamp Road, also passes through the swamp; it's a shortcut that a few daring travelers sometimes take. Either route can reach the island.

The Wyvern's Nest

This wooden building is built on thick posts near the edge of the swamp, accessed in the front by a flight of rickety steps that lead to a wide porch. The structure is lightly fortified, with arrow slits and thick iron-bound doors. A sign over the doors shows a small dragon-like creature poking its head out of a nest. Another sign advertises for those few souls blessed with literacy: "Bait-Beer-Beds-Boats & Frog Legs." Behind the inn is a dock with a couple of boats and a stables.

The inn's common room is not very lively, but most mornings or supper times are graced by three to five regulars or guests drinking, eating, or gossiping. The inn mostly serves traders and trappers, such as One Eyed Sal, a trapper and gator hunter known for her floppy hat, longbow, and necklace

of gator teeth. The pleasant smell of frying fish and roasting meat wafts through from the kitchen.

The inn keeper, Tom Wader, is a slender, scowling man with bad teeth, a pockmarked face, and long scraggly hair. His young wife and barmaid Meg has a timid smile on her face and a baby on her hip.

If the PCs wish, they can hire a guide, though the island is easy enough to find.

Wader's inn serves beer (a bit watery), fried frog (well spiced), alligator eggs (expensive but good), and various fowl and fish dishes, flavored with marsh grasses. Local hunters bring occasional game, such as the giant swamp rat-on-a-stick. A few Carousing rolls can confirm the sheriff's story (the inn keeper and patrons witnessed the fight) and turn up some extra details. (The GM may wish to reserve one or two of these tidbits for folks that the adventurers meet as they travel through the swamp.)

- One Tree Island is a tiny swamp island recognizable by a single large tree. There are said to be caves below the island.

- Sir Sacnoth's backstabbing squire's name is Jachs Nosebiter, a thin, weasel-faced fellow with scruffy yellow hair. The other four men who accompany him are local ruffians and poachers of no great account.

- Wyverns nest in the swamp, hunting alligators, snakes, and rats; that's what got the inn its name – one flew overhead when it was being built. A few big ones are sometimes seen gliding overhead. Occasionally they attack boats . . .

- The lizard men on the island have an unholy temple in which their shamans breed monsters and worship foul gods with human sacrifices.

- Hideous hissing noises and great croaking sounds have been heard near the island.

- Local legend says that over a century ago, before the lizard men and monsters infested the swamp, a beautiful dryad inhabited the largest swamp oak on the island. She took a great druid as her lover.

- Sir Sacnoth never brings back much treasure or lizard-man tails from his expeditions to the swamp, but always seems well-off when he spends time at the local inns.

- There's a fad for alligator leather among the wealthy in the barony. Traders in the nearest large town will pay \$100 each for alligator hides, so hunters often enter the marsh despite the lizard men, mosquitoes, gators, and the like.

TRAVEL IN THE SWAMP

Old Swamp Road is heavily overgrown. Conditions are hot and humid, with earthy, rotting vegetation smells. Trying to move through the swamp on foot is hideously slow: a verdant maze of twisted tree trunks, palm fronds, squelching mud, writhing vines, pools of stagnant water, and ceaseless harassment by mosquitoes and leeches. The bushes are filled with insects of all kinds, many of them unpleasant: brightly colored stinging caterpillars, slithering centipedes, beetles, and hideous flying cockroaches.

The best way to travel (unless flying) is punting a flat-bottomed boat down the Marrowmere downstream from the hamlet. That river spreads out on all sides, widening into a swamp that spreads for miles upon miles, a green morass of marshland, willow-bushes, sycamore, and cypress, divided by a maze of narrow channels and islands.

Cormorants line the river banks, and storks stand fishing in the shallow waters. Water snakes are everywhere. Marsh birds of all sorts fill the air with their cries. Now and then, some larger creature howls. There is a constant croaking of frogs, and periodic splashes as various creatures – mostly swamp rats – enter into the water. Now and then, large shapes of considerable bulk – probably alligators – can be seen swimming through the dark, murky waters. Most of the water is only 2' to 4' deep, however, so even without boats, the PCs who cross by land can wade over to the island.

Finding One Tree island is fairly straightforward, as it rises above the swamp. There's no need to make a detailed map of the area unless the GM wishes to have the PCs explore the entire region. If they're heading for One Tree Island, assume it's about two hours' trip by boat or a day's journey if they follow the road and cut across country.

Swamp Encounters

If the party spend a lengthy period of time traveling through, exploring, or encamped in the swamp, the GM can check for random encounters. (Each day or fraction thereof, a 9 or less on 3d indicates an encounter. Roll 2d on the table below to find out what the group meets.) Alternatively, the GM can spruce up the trip by just picking one or more encounters.

2d	Encounter
2	Lizard men (3d; <i>Monsters</i> , p. 41)
3	Wyvern (p. 15; see below)
4	Marsh folk (1-2; see below)
5	Lizard men (2d)
6	Swamp alligator (1-2; below)
7	Swarm of mosquitoes (<i>Monsters</i> , p. 54)
8	Swarm of rats (<i>Monsters</i> , p. 54, but water rats)
9	Swarm of snakes (<i>Monsters</i> , p. 54)
10	Big frogs (1d frogs; p. 13)
11	Giant constrictor snake, aquatic (<i>Monsters</i> , p. 31)
12	Dinomen (2d) (<i>Monsters</i> , p. 20)

Lizard Men: A party of lizard men, hunting game (which can include humans) or other prey. They will attack a party that seems weak; otherwise the hunters elude them. There is a 50% chance they have 1d giant snake skins or alligator hides with them (10 lbs., \$100 each).

Marsh Folk: These are one or two human marsh-dwelling peasants, possibly just teenagers, who live on the edge of the swamp. They are in a flat-bottomed skiff or afoot, hunting alligators, swamp rats, or marsh fowl for skins or food, or risking trade with the lizard men. They wield slings, spears, and knives. They won't attack adventurers, but are a possible source of more rumors (see *The Wyvern's Nest*, p. 19, and *False Rumors*, p. 19, for ideas).

Wyvern: Several of these creatures live in the swamp. Some nest on One Tree Island. If the PCs are moving through the swamp on foot, the wyvern just fly overhead. If they are on a boat in the river, one may swoop down to investigate, and possibly attack.

Swamp Alligator

The swamp is full of gators, some hungry enough to attack. They also build nests of mounded dirt ashore for eggs, and are aggressive in defending them.

ST: 37 **HP:** 37 **Speed:** 7.00
DX: 13 **Will:** 10 **Move:** 4 (Water Move 8)
IQ: 4 **Per:** 13
HT: 14 **FP:** 14 **SM:** +2
Dodge: 11 **Parry:** N/A **DR:** 3

Bite (13): 4d-1 cutting + follow-up grapple. Reach 2.

Grapple: Anyone bitten is grappled (as two-handed grapple for breaking free). After grappling it can bite each turn without an attack roll, or attempt a Quick Contest of ST to pull its victim underwater.

Tail Whip (13): 4d+4 crushing. Reach C-3 (rear), C-2 (either side), or C (front).

Traits: Amphibious; Bad Sight (Nearsighted); Cold-Blooded (50°); Combat Reflexes; Extra Attack 1 (bite and whip); Nictitating Membrane 2; Quadruped; Vibration Sense (Water); Wild Animal.

Skills: Swimming-16.

Class: Animal.

Notes: Eyes and vitals only DR 2; usually only underwater foes can target vitals. Vision is -4 in full daylight.

ONE TREE ISLAND

This small, roughly circular island (about 60 by 80 yards) rises unexpectedly out of a watery part of the swamp. It's about 15 yards from the nearest land; the water around it is 3' to 4' deep.

The island juts only a couple of feet above the waterline, but is dryer and much rockier than the surrounding terrain. Low-lying, scrawny bushes and marsh grass cover the island at waist height. There is just one full-sized tree: a single great swamp oak sprawls on the island's north side.

Cave of Standing Stones

On the northeastern side of the island a steep bank rises from the marsh. Two large standing stones, each about 6' high, flank a cave mouth 5' wide and 7' high. Carved into the stone on one boulder is a crude image of a frog, and on the other boulder an equally crude image of a snake with three heads. This cave slopes downward, entering the caverns at location 1 on the map (p. 25).

Alligator Nests

Near the shore on the southwest side of the island four conical piles of dirt a few feet high rise out of the vegetation (alligator nests, each holding an egg). 1d-2 alligators (above) lurk in the water off the south island. Disturbing the nesting ground enrages them!

The Swamp Oak

Standing on the north side of the island, the tree is a giant of its kind, 90' tall and 10' wide. Most leaves are spotted or dead, its trunk blotched with some fungal parasite.

The Hollow: A hollow space around the base of the tree trunk opens in a sink hole. By climbing the roots of the trees, a delver can descend 20' to the cavern below, entering the caverns at location 14 on the map (p. 25).

The Nest: If the party examines the tree's upper branches, a successful Vision roll may spot a very large (several feet across) nest some 50' up in the branches. It is composed of large branches and twigs bound together. It's a **wyvern** (p. 25) nest. One is present with three wyvern eggs (1/2 lb., \$500 each). It will usually only attack if disturbed, but might swoop down on the heroes or lizard men if there's a fight on the island below! Reaching the nest requires Climbing rolls or capabilities such as flight. Inside are several bloody gobbets of fresh lizard man, the bones of a couple of swamp rats, and a shiny trinket a lizard man was wearing when snatched off his riding frog: a gold amulet shaped like a beetle (0.1 lb., \$500).

THE SWAMP CAVES

There are three distinct factions on the island.

Vooahek: This band of lizard men (and some dinomen allies) have dwelt in the swamp for three generations, hunting frogs, rats, and alligators. Sometimes they trade with humans for weapons and trinkets in exchange for alligator and snake skins. Occasionally they kill travelers or raid merchant caravans for meat, loot, and sacrifices. Most lair in other parts of the swamp, but One Tree Island is a shrine to two local deities, Grandfather Hydra and Mother Frog. The lizard men sacrifice to the gods' sacred beasts, among them a multi-head serpent (p. 24) that they consider an avatar of Grandfather Hydra. They are ruled by their shaman, the Frog Mother (p. 23).

Swamp Dryad's Grave: Under the roots of a diseased swamp oak is a demonic spirit who is a corrupt shadow of a once-powerful dryad. Guarding her tomb is the twisted remnant of her lover, a mutant plant-thing known as Shamblethorn. He is served by a pack of ghouls who are the corrupt undead remnants of the druids. The Vooahek fear to enter this part of the complex.

Sir Sacnoth and His Men: These are visiting the Vooahek lizard men, not to raid the dungeon, but rather to win them over as mercenary allies for a planned slave raid.

The caves also shelter many growing, creeping, and crawling things . . .

CAVE ENCOUNTERS

Each numbered chamber marked on the cavern map (p. 25) is described below. Unless noted, they are dark, damp limestone caves with dripping water, wet slimy surfaces, and plenty of stalagmites and stalactites. The caves are cool and clammy compared to the swamp.

Any room inhabited by lizard men, dinomen, or guests not noted as being lit can be assumed to have some phosphorescent fungus on the walls, providing moonlight-equivalent light (-4 to Vision and vision-related rolls). Other chambers are dark.

1. Guard Cave

Three **lizard men** (*Monsters*, p. 41) stand guard, halberds ready, partly concealed by a patch of three human-sized giant mushrooms.

They have a leashed trained **big frog** (p. 13) next to them, which they will release as a messenger in the event of the attack; it will hop off racing to alert the warriors at 5.

The mushrooms are a rare and delicious type. Roll vs. Naturalist to identify their value (10 lbs. each, \$150) to gourmet cooks.

UNDERGROUND ENCOUNTER TABLE

Check normally for encounters when traveling underground (e.g., 9 or less on 3d each hour, or whenever the party make a lot of noise).

2d	Encounter
2	Crushroom (<i>Monsters</i> , p. 19)
3	Big centipedes (1d; p. 13)
4	Big beetle (p. 12).
5	Swarm of snakes (<i>Monsters</i> , p. 54)
6	Big frog (p. 13)
7	Lizard men (1d; <i>Monsters</i> , p. 41)
8	Giant swamp rats (1d)*
9	Swamp alligator (p. 20)
10	Swarm of rats (<i>Monsters</i> , p. 54)
11	Ooze (<i>Monsters</i> , p. 44)
12	Swarm of centipedes (<i>Monsters</i> , p. 54)

* Giant rat with webbed feet (as *Monsters*, p. 30, plus Amphibious and Swimming-15).

Animals usually attack intruders. Lizard men will fight unless outnumbered, otherwise retreat to alert other lizard men and prepare defenses against intruders.

2. Crushroom Garden

A garden of eight human-sized giant mushrooms (as in location 1). Two **crushrooms** (*Monsters*, p. 19) stand concealed amid the giant mushrooms. If the second crushroom is cut open, the squished remains of a recently swallowed victim are found in its stomach along with a bone whistle (neg., \$100) carved with images of frogs. The victim was an unfortunate dinoman who was given the whistle by Frog Mother. While exploring the complex, he took a wrong turn and was ambushed by a crushroom. If the whistle is blown in the presence of the giant frogs, they will not attack the blower for 2d rounds.

3. Dinomen's Cave

This cave is unusually smelly, with fish heads, bones, and rotted frog guts scattered on the floor. A mound of bug-infested moss makes a messy nest in one corner.

Grunting and hissing at each other are the denizens: five 4' or 5' small, scaly humanoids with short tails and reptilian heads with bigger jaws than ordinary lizard men, armed with hatchets and clubs, with a leader carrying a short sword. They are dinomen (*Monsters*, p. 20), one of which is an IQ 8 leader, S'tarak.

They are pilgrims who worship the same gods as the lizard men and sometimes work as scouts for them. They recently helped kill a group of human marshfolk. However, they were peeved when they didn't get a bigger share of the human flesh or trinkets as a "just reward." And when a couple of them decided to sneak off and try to steal some better food, they got lost and one was eaten by a crushroom! If they get a really good offer, they'd consider changing sides. Otherwise they'll fight intruders.

They know an armored human and his men recently appeared and were taken to see Frog Mother, but not what happened to him. Why hasn't he been sacrificed? Very odd.

4. Stagnant Pool

A pool of water in this cave is covered by greenish pond scum. It is infested by four **leaping leeches** (see *Monsters*, p. 40). In the bottom of the pool is the skeletal arm of a lizard man wearing an old druid relic: a copper ring engraved with leaf shapes (neg., \$200).

5. Chamber of the Warriors

This cave is the quarters for some of the lizard men. Currently, seven **lizard-man** warriors (*Monsters*, p. 41) are here, resting or talking, seated on their haunches or leaning against stalagmites. Some are passing around a beetle-shell bowl (2 lbs., \$50) and drinking looted wine from it, or munching on bloody haunches of raw alligator meat and swamp rat. Unless alerted, their halberds are leaning against walls or stalagmites next to them; one has a sword strapped to his back.

If anyone can speak lizard man and can stealthily eavesdrop, the lizard men are complaining they haven't had man-flesh lately:

"Why is the Frog Mother talking with these humans, instead of letting us kill and eat them?" However, their leader, a bigger lizard man, armed with a great sword rather than a halberd, admonishes them: "Quiet, my egg-kin! The Frog Mother is wise! If we treat with this man, he will get us more man-flesh, blood and liquor, weapons of steel . . ."

Yyhlaah'stak the Frog Master

The big lizard man is the band's second-in-command. He wears ornate heavy leather armor made from alligator hide. He has an usually long tongue for a reptile man and a taste for flying insects. He can leap great distances. He knows about everything in the caverns.

ST: 13	HP: 14	Speed: 6.25
DX: 13	Will: 12	Move: 6
IQ: 10	Per: 10	
HT: 12	FP: 12	SM: 0
Dodge: 10	Parry: 11	DR: 4

Bite (15): 1d cutting. Any hit counts as a grapple, even if it doesn't penetrate DR. This allows the lizard to worry – roll damage each turn as a free action! Reach C.

Clawed Kick (13): 1d+1 cutting. Reach C-1.

Fine Greatsword (15): 2d+3 cutting or 1d+3 impaling. Reach 1-2.

Tail Strike (13): 1d+2 crushing, Reach 1.

Traits: Combat Reflexes; Disturbing Voice; Nictitating Membrane 2; Odious Racial Habit (Eats other sapient beings; -3 to reactions); Peripheral Vision; Temperature Tolerance 3 (Heat); Terrain Adaptation (Swamp).

Skills: Brawling-15; Jumping-13; Leadership-11; Polearm-14; Riding (Frogs)-13; Stealth-12; Swimming-13; Tactics-9; Two-Handed Sword-15.

Class: Mundane.

Notes: He has a greatsword (7 lbs., \$900) and wears ornate heavy leather armor (DR 2, 36 lbs., \$900) made of alligator hide. A belt pouch holds 30 copper and 7 silver pieces. On a string around his neck is a black stone amulet carved in the likeness of a frog (2 oz., \$200). While worn, its wearer has Animal Empathy (Amphibians Only) and Super Jump (8 yards) but suffers Quirk (Unconsciously eats flies) and Unnatural Feature (Long sticky tongue).

6. Skinning Chamber

A big rock table used for skinning is surrounded by five lizard people scrapping alligator hides and repairing snake-skin armor with their claws and bone needles. Unlike the other lizard men, they aren't wearing armor or adornments. Most of the tribe's noncombatants live in settlements elsewhere in the swamp, raising their young, but some live at the island shrine, performing housekeeping and crafting duties.

Use normal lizard men statistics (see *Monsters*, p. 41) but only DX 10 (so effective combat skills are one less). They lack weapons (fighting with teeth, claws, and tails) and wear no armor (so are DR 2).

On the table are three damaged suits of lizard men's standard ornate snakeskin armor (see *Monsters*, p. 41) but worth only \$150 per suit because they need repairs. There are also a half-dozen bone needles (1 oz., \$5 each) and two good alligator hides (10 lbs., \$100 each) and a very fine giant-snake skin (20 lbs., \$300). In a corner, in a pile of warm ashes, are two mottled green and brown eggs (1/2 lb. each). These are lizard-man eggs that may hatch in a few days.

The cavern is brightly lit with a 6' pole tipped with a glowing severed human head (Continual Light spell, equivalent to sunlight; six days left to go before it dims).

7. Spawning Pool

A murky, shallow pool (up to 4' deep) dominates this rocky chamber. Seven **big frogs** (p. 13) the size of dogs are lurking here, accompanied by a **lizard man** (*Monsters*, p. 41); the assistant frog-keeper. If trouble is happening in the caverns and he is alerted, he will "unleash the frogs!" and urge them toward any fighting.

The chamber is illuminated by a Continual Light spell (eight days duration remaining), equivalent to torchlight, which has been cast upon a collar worn by a normal-sized frog. The frog-keeper has this frog on a leash.

8. Frog Mother's Audience Chamber

Seated on an elevated throne-like rock covered with stuffed snakeskin cushions (2 lbs., \$200) is a grossly fat lizard woman (**Frog Mother**) wearing an ornate feathered headdress and holding a glowing skull-tipped staff. She is drinking whiskey (brought by Sir Sacnoth) from a cup made of a human skull (0.25 lb., \$50 to collectors).

Flanking her are two **huge frogs** (p. 14). These are killer frogs (see Notes) who have been conditioned to obey her. They are fed captives to keep them fierce!

Before her is an armored human, dressed in mail, talking with her; he also has a human skull cup in his hand, though seems a bit less enthusiastic about drinking.

Frog Mother

She is the shaman of the lizard men. She has green and black scales, and is very fat. Her only garments are a leather belt with a gold buckle and a beautiful feathered headdress (which also protects her skull). She carries a heavy wooden staff tipped with a big frog skull, and a bag of sacred items and fetishes.

ST: 12 **HP:** 15 **Speed:** 4.00
DX: 11 **Will:** 15 **Move:** 5
IQ: 13 **Per:** 13
HT: 9 **FP:** 10 **SM:** 0
Dodge: 8 **Parry:** 12 (staff) **DR:** 2 (skull total 5)

Bite (13): 1d-1 cutting. Any hit counts as a grapple, even if it doesn't penetrate DR. This allows the lizard to worry – roll damage each turn as a free action! Reach C.

Clawed Kick (11): 1d cutting. Reach C-1.

Quarterstaff (14): 1d+4 crushing. Reach 1-2.

Tail Strike (11): 1d+1 crushing, Reach 1.

Traits: Disturbing Voice; Nictitating Membrane 2; Odious Racial Habit (Eats other sapient beings; -3 to reactions); Peripheral Vision; Power Investiture 2; Temperature Tolerance 3 (Heat); Terrain Adaptation (Swamp); Very Fat.

Skills: Animal Handling-16; Brawling-13; Diplomacy-11; Hidden Lore (Nature Spirits)-12; Naturalist-14; Leadership-12; Religious Ritual-14; Staff-14; Stealth-11.

Spells: Armor-15; Command-15; Compel Truth-15; Detect Magic-15; Final Rest-15; Major Healing-15; Minor Healing-15; Reptile Control-15; Relieve Sickness-15; Resist Disease-15; Resist Poison-15; Shield-15; Turn Spirit-15.

Class: Mundane.

Notes: In combat, she may protect herself with an Armor spell and cast spells such as Armor, Command, Minor or Major Healing, and Shield to assist warriors and pets, while fighting physically only in an emergency. She weighs 350 lbs. Her frog-skull staff is ornate (4 lbs., \$1,500), stores 10 energy points, and is a magic staff (**Spells**, p. 9). Note that she can use Reptile Control (normally a druidic spell) as a result of her frog-goddess. Her feathered headdress is snakeskin bonnet decorated with the plumage of many different marsh birds (1 lb., \$250). The leather belt with a gold buckle (1 lb., \$800) was taken from a fat human merchant she ate. Her fetish bag contains a bird's claw, a human eyeball, a hydra's fang (\$50), baby lizard-man skull, a shard of the egg she hatched from, and a copper coin (\$1).

Sir Sacnoth

The man standing before Frog Mother is Sir Sacnoth, object of the party's quest. He and his men are here to propose a joint venture with the lizard men to rally the

scattered lizard-men tribes to raid the human villages (like Marshgate) for slaves. Half the slaves will be kept by Sacnoth; the other half the lizard men can eat or sacrifice. Sacnoth has contacts with foreign slave merchants or thieves' guilds who will provide the lizard men with strong liquor and more metal armor and weapons for their warriors in exchange for the attack.

It's up to the GM whether Sacnoth knows the barbarian highlander he slew was the son of a chief. It's possibly he doesn't know there's a large bounty on his head. (If the GM wants to be more devious, he *does* know it: He heard a young hill-folk noble was at the inn, and set things up in the hopes of creating trouble with the hill clans, so that the baron will be watching the border instead of guarding the marshland villages!)

Sacnoth knows about the hydra, but not Shamblethorn, the ghouls, or the toxifier except that the lower caves contain monsters even the lizard men fear; he stays away!

ST: 13 **HP:** 13 **Speed:** 6.25
DX: 13 **Will:** 12 **Move:** 5
IQ: 11 **Per:** 13
HT: 12 **FP:** 10 **SM:** 0
Dodge: 10 **Parry:** 12 **DR:** 4/2

Greatsword (16): 2d+2 cutting or 1d+3 impaling. Reach 1-2.

Long Knife (16): 2d-2 cutting or 1d impaling. Reach C,1.

Traits: Callous; Combat Reflexes; Greed (9).

Skills: Axe/Mace-16; Boating-12; Brawling-15; Diplomacy-10; Fast-Draw (Knife)-14; Holdout-13; Interrogation-11; Intimidation-13; Leadership-10; Merchant-13; Naturalist-10; Riding-12; Shield-15; Smuggling-10; Streetwise-12; Survival (Swampland)-12; Swimming-13; Tracking-12.

Class: Mundane.

Notes: Sacnoth wields a greatsword. He wears chainmail (DR 2 vs. crushing, 4 vs. everything else). He also has a long knife concealed on his person. His belt pouch contains four copper, 17 silver, and two gold coins.

Stray Squire

For a self-contained adventure, Jachs (Sacnoth's backstabbing squire) is also in location 9; use the guard stats but with +2 IQ, Will, and Per. Otherwise, he's off negotiating slave sales contracts, and is likely to later attempt to free his master and/or plot vengeance against the party!

9. Guest Cave

This cavern is occupied by four armed humans in leather armor, squatting on the floor around a rocky outcrop they're using a table. Beside them is a lantern. They're eating trail rations and playing a dice game, betting coppers while talking nervously about what they'll do with the profit they make, whether their boss will let them keep any of the slaves, and complaining about the "stinking swamp." If surprised, their weapons are sheathed and they're sitting on their shields. The shields bear the cockatrice arms of Sir Sacnoth.

They are his men, biding time while their master negotiates with Frog Mother. Sacnoth's men respect and fear him enough to stay loyal, but if he falls or is captured, they'd turn against the lizard men (who they fear) to save their lives.

ST: 12 **HP:** 12 **Speed:** 5.50
DX: 11 **Will:** 10 **Move:** 4
IQ: 10 **Per:** 10
HT: 11 **FP:** 10 **SM:** 0
Dodge: 7 **Parry:** 9 **DR:** 2

Broadsword (12): 1d+3 cutting or 1d+1 impaling. Reach 1.
Shield Bash (12): 1d-1 crushing. Reach C,1.

Traits: Bully; Greed (12).

Skills: Boating-11; Broadsword-12; Survival (Swampland)-10; Swimming-11.

Class: Mundane.

Notes: They wear full suits of heavy leather armor, and are equipped with broadswords and medium shields. Each person has a pouch with 1d silver and 3d copper pieces.

10. Sacrifice Cave

The floor is covered with scores of cracked and gnawed human, animal, and lizard-man bones, the skeletons of Grandfather Hydra's many victims. Near the front of the cave is a large obelisk, a bit larger than a person. It is stained with blood. There are iron rings driven into the rock – it's used for securing sacrifices.

Any especially good fighters captured get the honor of being driven into the cave to face the hydra. Unarmed.

11. Hydra Lair

Resting within the cave is a giant multi-head serpent. The monster is a seven-headed **hydra** (p. 14). The lizard men worship him as Grandfather Hydra, and consider him the god-guardian of their island. It is a great honor to bring prisoners as sacrifices for him. He's rather elderly and somewhat tame: In return for regular feeding, he doesn't eat the lizard men and stays in the cave, but if there's a big commotion, he may come wandering out to see what's up.

Grandfather Hydra has a sneaky habit of having some of its heads sleep while the other heads stay awake. If he notices intruders in the outer cave, he'll bestir and slither out to deal with them. Grandfather Hydra gets along reasonably well with the Frog Mother (p. 23), who he knows often brings him tasty snacks.

There are dozens more skeletons (human, lizard, and frog) in this part of the cave. Also present are four torn sacks with 730 coppers, 130 silver pieces, and seven gold pieces – bags of looted human treasure flung to the hydra as sacrifices by the superstitious lizard men.

12. Sloping Passage

The passage slopes downward toward location 13.

13. Rubbish Dump

Foul-smelling junk; fish, rat, and alligator bones; and a broken barge pole are scattered around the room. In the middle of this mess is a brackish pool 7' wide, with dark

water. A few sickly tree roots dangle from the cracks and holes in the ceiling.

Crouched in the dump are three foul, greenish-skinned humanoids, gnawing on lizard-man bones. These are a small pack of swamp **ghouls** (see *Ghoul*, p. 12). They are all who remain of the swamp-druid cult that once worshiped the dryad.

A search may discover a **swarm of rats** (*Monsters*, p. 54) hiding from the ghouls, an ancient wooden scythe with a golden handle (ornate, 4 lbs., \$150), and a carved flute in the shape of a serpent (neg., \$200 as jewelry) that allows its user to cast Reptile Control (Power 15; mage or bard only).

14. Tree Roots

Some of the thick, sickly roots of the swamp oak dangle down into this chamber. By day, a small circle of light is visible here from the shaft leading up to the hollow at the base of the tree (see *The Swamp Oak*, pp. 20-21). The floor is wet and earthy, with a rotten smell.

15. Lair of Shamblethorn

Seated amidst the dangling tree roots (and hiding using its Chameleon trait) is a monstrous humanoid shape formed of warped thorn-covered roots and globs of leaves, moss, and muck. This is a **shamblethorn** (p. 14), who is the warped remnant of the druid lover of the diseased oak tree's dryad. It is given a wide berth by the lizard men, who consider it a boogieman ("be good, youngling, or Shamblethorn eats you . . .").

Shamblethorn sometimes steals into the caverns to devour one of them, but most of its prey are swamp rats and fungi. It is very territorial and will attack anyone disturbing its lair, although it prefers to strike from surprise. It does not speak or breathe, but makes horrid "glop . . . drip . . . slurp . . . gargle" sounds when it is active.

16. Dryad's Grave

More thick tree roots dangle down from the ceiling. Like the great oak tree, the roots are covered with unhealthy umber-colored patches. In fact, this is **brown, slippery mold** (see *Monsters*, p. 43).

A beautiful woman with nut-brown skin and green leafy hair apparently sleeps on the wooden slab. This is illusion. Once, the giant swamp oak whose roots dangle down into this chamber was the home of a powerful dryad. However, the tree-spirit was corrupted by the dark rites of the frog-priests who took up residence in the caverns of the island. When touched or otherwise disturbed, the "woman" melts into a demonic shape, a greenish cloud of toxic vapors. It is a **toxifier** (*Monsters*, p. 56).

If both the toxifier and shamblethorn are destroyed, a sudden sense of "peace" and smell of acorns wafts through the chamber. Where the dark spirit was slain, a small acorn will be found. If it is planted and tended, a new swamp oak will grow, one that will eventually manifest a dryad or other tree spirit.

17. Beetle Grotto

Rooting about in this chamber is a nest of five **big beetles** (p. 12). These are bombardier beetles, capable of spewing poison gas when annoyed. (There once was more of them, but several were captured recently and fed to the hydra.)

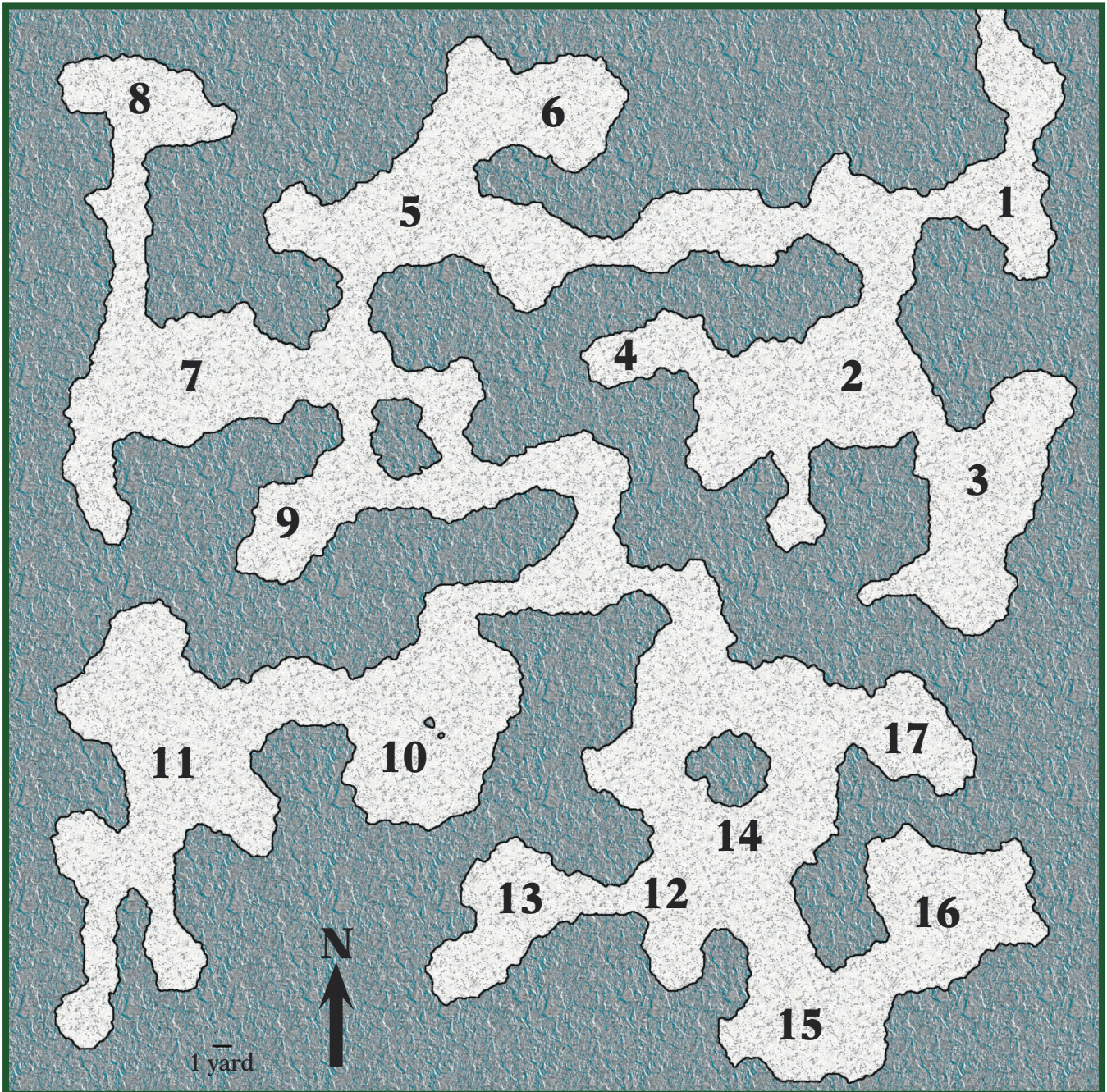
Dead beetles are valued for their horn and shells, which can be turned into bowls and spear or halberd blades.

BONUS CHARACTER POINTS

In general, award five points per session if the PCs are doing a good job of cleaning out the lizard men and other intelligent monsters, plus another five points for capturing alive (or four points for slaying) Sir Sacnoth within the five-day time limit. Add two bonus points if they kill the toxifier and plant the acorn somewhere fertile and safe. The GM may award additional bonus character points as seems fair.

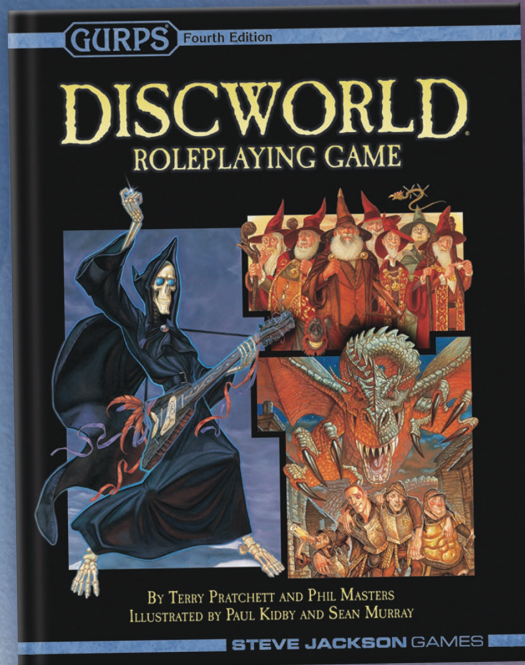
ABOUT THE COLUMNIST

David L. Pulver is a Canadian freelance author. An avid science-fiction fan, he began roleplaying in junior high with the newly released *Basic Dungeons & Dragons*. Upon graduating from university, he decided to become a game designer. Since then, David has written over 70 roleplaying game books, and he has worked as a staff writer, editor, and line developer for Steve Jackson Games and Guardians of Order. He is best known for creating *Transhuman Space*, co-authoring the *Big Eyes, Small Mouth* anime RPG, and writing countless *GURPS* books, including the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition*, *GURPS Ultra-Tech*, and the *GURPS Spaceships* series.



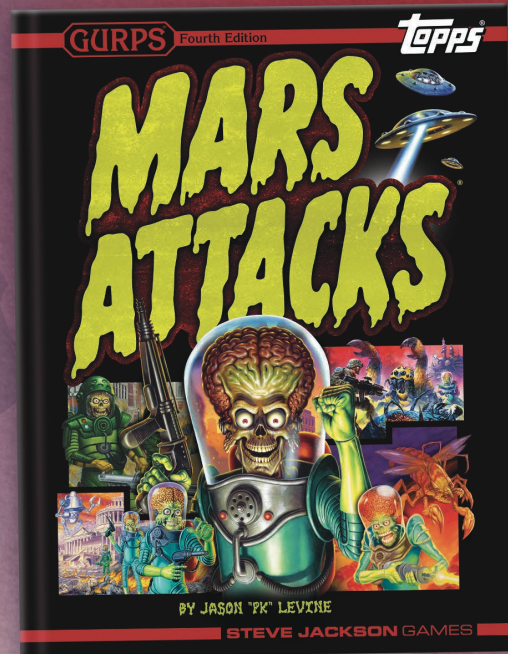
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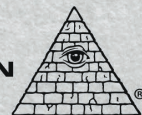
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THE HAND OF THE DEMON

BY CHRISTOPHER R. RICE

It was time again for him to rise, thought the demon as he stared at a small, raucous group of men and women. One was dressed in wizard robes; another, a hulking, brutish-faced monster, wore the furs and leathers of a Northman. They had a halfling and elf with them. The demon knew he could play upon their greed for wealth and glory easily enough, but he paused when a woman dressed in white and wearing a hauberk brought several tankards to the table. That one was filled with holy power – whether she was a warrior or a priest didn't matter. They might be able to sense him. Instead, the demon went to the bar and purchased a drink, careful to keep his stump where his hand used to be hidden.

"I'll buy the next one," the demon said behind a false human face, giving a poisonous smile to the man sitting beside him.

"Thanks, buddy!" the man said clapping him on the back.

"Tell me – have you ever heard of the tale of Sir Brandt the Brave and the Hand of the Demon?" the demon said sipping his tankard.

"I rightly have not. Is this one of the Old Stories?" asked his drinking companion.

"It is. I'm somewhat of a raconteur in my home . . ." the demon said, smiling as the simple man listened to him tell his story. The demon spun a yard of the mysterious ruins, made of

obsidian and basalt, that appeared at twilight and vanished with the dawn, a few gemstones still glimmering amid the pits where others had been stolen – and with stairs descending to hallways marked with infernal glyphs.

When the demon was finished, the man's eyes glittered with avarice. "Now, it may seem like just a story, but I think it's real. I saw the ruins of black stone just outside of town this morning. Imagine what riches could be found for the man brave enough to enter the ruins and best the Devil?"

"Aye . . ." said the other. "You'll excuse me, friend? I need to get back to my companions. Thank you for the drink and the story." The man left, and the demon smiled. Out of the corner of his eye, he watched as the man retold the story he'd just spun. Finishing his ale, he paid his tab and left into the night. If this batch didn't succeed, he'd simply find another. There were plenty of greedy mortals out there, after all . . .

This detailed set of adventure frames provides new things for adventurers to find, combat, outwit, or explore, as well as a mini-mythology for a GM to introduce to an ongoing **Dungeon Fantasy Roleplaying Game** campaign. It can also be used piecemeal by GMs looking for new encounter scenarios, monsters, traps, or magical items.

THE DEVIL YOU KNOW

The Devil was the first to turn away from the Good, but he wasn't the *only* one. Hell is filled with legions of tormented souls, demons, and their kin. The first to side with the arrogant Devil became Princes of Hell. Along with their master, they have tormented the living since the beginning of creation. This article deals with one particular demon prince: Malthas. Malthas was the first Prince to join the Devil; he was outmatched only by the Devil himself. In a bid for still more influence, Malthas created six magical rings that each amplified his abilities. Each ring added power in equal measure to Malthas' native talents.

Using his new might, he bespelled his fortress, the Castle of Black Spires, with interdimensional magics that allowed him to rip free of his confinement in Hell – without being summoned, compelled, or ordered by his master to go forth.

He became so powerful that he was a match for the Devil himself. But the Devil being, well, *the Devil*, let it be known what his insubordinate second-in-command was up to and

even *helped* a brave group of intrepid adventurers enter the Castle of Black Spires.

There the questers fought Malthas' minions until they came to the Prince of Hell himself. In the ensuing battle, a brave knight cut off Malthas' hand, removing it, rings, and the power that came with them.

Without the demon's power, the castle crumbled, and pieces of it – whole rooms and subsections – became unmoored in time and space, disappearing and reappearing in far-flung places at certain intervals.

The adventurers did their best to destroy the foul hand of Malthas, but found it was easier said than done. The fell power that protected the severed hand *also* warded the magical rings – they seemed indestructible. The victors possessed the rings, but could not destroy the hand itself. So long as the hand remained, Malthas was not truly banished from the corporeal realm.

WHAT IS AND ISN'T HERE

If using this article in bits and pieces, ignore this section. Otherwise, read on. Each mini-adventure is broken up into the following sections:

- The scenario itself.
- A description of the usual sort of terrain where the chunk of the Castle of Black Spires tends to manifest.
- The monsters that tend to be there.
- Any unique hazards that are present.

At the GM's discretion, other monsters or adventurers may have become trapped or set up other hazards in the ruins over the years.

The powerful ritual that keeps Malthas out of his castle, as well as preserving the transient nature of each castle section, renders the monsters within each spire functionally immortal. When one of the rings is removed from a location, the warding in that place weakens and Malthas may enter. Since Malthas is still recovering from that long ago battle, he prefers to manipulate proxies to recover his rings with minimal effort on his part.

Campaigns with high-level PCs who are mopping the floor with the existing guardians might instead have the PCs be confronted with the Prince of Hell himself, come to reclaim his prize.

What isn't in this adventure frame is how the delvers learn of the original legend, the nature of the ruins, or how they find the next one. The GM will have to decide how this works, but a few ideas might be pure luck, will of the gods, maps, special compasses, rumors, and so forth. If a delver already has one of the six rings (or perhaps the sword that severed Malthas' hand or his *actual* hand reconstituted by demonic magics), then the GM may decide that the rings *call* to one another (or other items call to the ruins), allowing those with at least one ring or item to use **Pathfinder (Spells, p. 44)** for the sole purpose of finding the closest ruin. Another option for discovering the enhanced ruins may include monsters raiding areas near the site. This allows the PCs to follow a trail of breadcrumbs (perhaps literally, in the case of the Kitchen and Great Hall ruin!) to the each location.

The brave heroes consulted with an oracle. The oracle spoke: "Take the rings back to the place where they began, burn the hand in the fires of Heaven, spread the ashes over black stone." For years the adventurers pursued whispered tales of "buildings of black stone" appearing where there was no such structure before. In time, they found them, and inside each, they hid one of Malthas' rings. They left Malthas' original traps and guardians, but they put powerful spells on the rings to keep the monsters in and ward the demon prince away.

With the rings secured in the ever-mobile remains of the Castle, the heroes burned the demonic hand and spread its ashes over the stationary runs. They thought that was the end.

They were wrong.

Malthas had not been truly killed. Wounded, yes, and forced to bide his time, but not killed. Malthas couldn't take the rings back himself – the powerful warding magics used made it impossible for him (or any demon) to enter. Centuries later – when he was ready – he began spreading rumors of great treasures and glory to be found within rooms and towers of black stone.

Malthas was *almost* as clever as his old master, as well as being *almost* as powerful. He played on adventurers' foibles

and passions, their greed, and their lust for glory. Thus others did his dirty work for him.

Every 2d years on the first rising of the waxing crescent moon in the last harvest month, the first black-stone ruin appears *somewhere* on the earth. It remains for three days, then disappears when the next ruin appears nearby – a day's hard travel. This ruin persists for three days until it too disappears. This continues until – finally – the sixth ruin appears. The ruins then vanish after three days, waiting for another several years.

Changes in Stone

The entrance to each ruin appears in a particular type of location, described in each section, though the ruins never appear in any place where there's too much traffic. This entrance temporarily replaces whatever was there, and changes the material around it to the characteristic black stone of Malthas' castle. When the ruins disappear, everything reverts back to the way it was before the incursion.

THE FIRST RUIN: THE KITCHEN AND GREAT HALL

Typical Location of Manifestation: The entrance to this ruin is usually inside of an underground dungeon, the remains of a castle or other large building, or (rarely) inside of a city near an entrance to the sewers or local catacombs.

Malthas' kitchen is a huge 60' by 90' room with 15' vaulted ceilings. Multiple ovens, stoves, pantries, and hearths line walls that seem more grown than built. The center of the room is dominated by several massive tables bearing various cooking paraphernalia (flour sifters, knives, trenchers, etc.). Minding the ovens and preparing food are goblins (**Monsters, p. 33**), with several hobgoblins (**Monsters, p. 34**) acting as servants. They carry platters of food through a large set of doors that lead to the great hall, and return with empty trays and dishes for goblin scullery servants to clean. The creatures are wrapped up in their tasks and have -3 to all rolls to notice anything that doesn't relate to what they're doing. Moreover, should the PCs try to blend in (this requires either an **Acting** roll at +4 or **IQ** roll) the goblin-kin will mostly ignore them – *unless* they interfere with the seemingly endless loop of cooking and consumption.

If the adventurers go through the doors, they find a mostly empty massive hall easily as big as the kitchen they came from (60' by 90' room with 30' ceilings), but only a single occupant – a massive demon. The delvers can roll against **Occultism** at -3 or **Hidden Lore (Demons)**. Success reveals it is a glurch (p. 29), a demon of hunger and gluttony. It's currently too occupied with eating (make a roll vs. its **Perception** at -5) to notice anything but the food. Should the PCs attack it, try to take its food, or otherwise directly disturb it, it *will* attack. It will be aided by any hobgoblins in the room (roll 1d if unsure).

Unless the PCs bar the door to the Great Hall – which they can by merely shutting the door and slipping a nearby plank of timber over the door handles – more hobgoblins (1d-1) will enter in the next round. After at least three rounds of combat, goblins will join the fray at the same rate, armed with kitchen knives and pot-lid shields.

The PCs may make a **Perception** or **Observation** roll to notice the human-sized Ring of Famine the glurch is using for a (comparatively tiny) earring. They can attempt to acquire the ring it by stealth or by force with the usual consequences. Destruction of the glurch causes all remaining goblins and hobgoblins to flee to the nearby areas outside the ruin. As the only actual *exit* is the one the PCs came in from, a small horde of goblin-kin will pour forth in a panic (or perhaps exultation that they are free from service?). While they will not stop to attack anyone nearby, they may become a future issue once they get their bearings in their new surroundings.

It's also possible the PCs simply loot the kitchen and flee! If so any dead goblins or hobgoblins return to life the next day – this persists until the ring is taken from the glurch.

Monsters

In addition to the goblins and hobgoblins, the glurch must be fought and killed or tricked to take its treasure from it.

Glurch

These *huge*, bloated demons are the sinful embodiment of hunger, gluttony, and wanton excess. The average glurch is well over 20' tall, but their enormous pendulous stomachs cause them to stoop. Their heads seem too small for their body, but have an overly large mouth filled with rows upon rows of sharp teeth, strewn with bits of flesh and food. Its bite is terrible and it can chew a delver in half, given time.

Unlike demons of old (*Monsters*, p. 20) who are their kin, glurch can be destroyed by any method – it's just that given their massive HP and immunity to damage to neck, skull, or vitals, it takes a *long* time. Their ability to consume a sapient being's flesh, *even in combat*, and regain lost HP makes killing them even trickier.

Glurch who fail a HT roll to survive are banished back to Hell. As they depart, they explode in a cloud of stomach acid and viscera that covers all those nearby.

Glurch are drawn to places of famine, decadence, or where beasts are slaughtered for food (e.g., abattoirs).

ST: 30	HP: 40	Speed: 5.00
DX: 12	Will: 12	Move: 4
IQ: 10	Per: 12	
HT: 12	FP: 12	SM: +3
Dodge: 9	Parry: 12	DR: 9

Bite (16): 3d+3 cutting. Reach C-2. Additionally, a glurch may extend its jaw like an egg-eating snake; it gains Cannot Speak, but its bite does 3d+6 impaling at Reach C-3, while others have an additional +1 to attack this hit location. Optionally, a glurch may attempt to grapple its victim with its jaw instead of biting and letting go; it may then attempt to swallow or worry the target in subsequent rounds (see below). Treat as a weapon, not a body part.

“Breath Weapon”: As per the Stench spell (*Spells*, p. 17) affecting an area of 5 yards around the glurch as a free action.

Claw (16): 2d+1 cutting. Reach C-1.

Consume: Whenever the glurch eats meat, every 5 HP (from living subjects) or 2 lbs. of meat consumed gives them back 1 HP.

Death Blast: On dying, produces a 6d corrosion explosion (just like an Explosive Fireball spell, except doing corrosion damage instead of burning damage; see *Spells*, p. 29), and everyone within 10 yards is hit with a 3d cutting attack from flying bone shards (those who can see the explosion get a Dodge roll).

Swallow Whole: A glurch may attempt to swallow any being it's grappled via bite. Doing this takes an Attack maneuver and requires a contest of its ST vs. the better of the victim's DX, Judo, or ST. If the victim wins or ties, he escapes, but takes *half* bite damage in the attempt – unless he won by 5+ or rolled a critical success. Otherwise, he's been *swallowed* and takes 1d-2 corrosion damage per 1d-2 seconds (minimum of 1 second) until freed. This requires striking at the glurch's gut and doing at least 10 points of damage in a single hit with a cutting weapon to free the poor trapped soul. Those who've been swallowed can make attack rolls with Reach C weapons, but are at -4 for such close quarters!

RING OF FAMINE

This is a plain band of common brass. Its only decorations, on the outer surface, are the runes for “hunger” and “famine,” in both Ancient and Demonic. When the ring is worn by someone who's aware of its nature, the wearer can use it to cast *any* spell of the Food College (*Spells*, pp. 32-33) as well as the following: Dehydrate, Drunkenness, Frailty, Hold Breath, Nauseate, Resist Acid, Retch, Sickness, Sleep, and Stench.

If the user is not normally a magic-user, all such spells are cast as if the user had a skill of 20. For those who can cast spells, skill is the *better* of 20 or IQ plus 4 plus spellcasting talent (e.g., Magery). Those who are Overweight (*Adventurers*, p. 64) before wearing the ring gain a bonus to casting rolls equal to the bonus they receive against knockback.

While wearing the ring, the user acquires Gluttony (12), DR 4, Resistant to Poison 5, and Resistant to Disease 5. This comes at a cost: Every 1d+1 weeks, the wielder must make an HT roll at -3 (-6 if he's used *any* of its spells). Failure results in the wielder gaining weight: Skinny people (*Adventurers*, p. 66) gain normal weight, normal-weight people become Overweight, Overweight people become Fat, and Fat people become Very Fat (+5 to Swimming, +3 ST vs. knockback, -3 to Disguise and Shadowing, +75% width, and HT cannot exceed 13). There is no further effect on Very Fat users. Furthermore, Overweight people suffer -1 to Move scores, Fat people suffer -2, and Very Fat people suffer -3. If the ring is taken off, this extra weight disappears at the same rate that it appeared. If the HT roll to resist this effect was failed by 3 or more or resulted in critical failure, it's *permanent*. (Treat Very Fat as a -5-point disadvantage.)

The ring is worth \$100,000 to the right person, and weighs 0.1 lb. It holds 55 FP if used as a power item.

Worry: Glurch can worry a target after biting them. This counts as an attack, but it *always* hits – roll biting damage each turn!

Traits: Appearance (Monstrous); Bloodlust (12); Callous; Combat Reflexes; Detect (Life); Doesn't Breathe; Doesn't Eat or Drink; Doesn't Sleep; Dread (Holy objects; 5 yards); High Pain Threshold; Gluttony (6); Immunity to Disease; Immunity to Poison; Indomitable; Infravision; Lifebane; No Blood; No Brain; No Neck; Sadism (12); Temperature Tolerance 10 (Heat); Universal Digestion.

Skills: Axe/Mace-16; Brawling-16; Wrestling-16.

Class: Demon.

Notes: Effective ST for grappling is 32 due to Wrestling skill. Its claw attack is much weaker than normal due to its comparatively shorter arms.

Hazard

Should the PCs eat any food from the kitchen or the Great Hall, the following applies.

Bewitched Food

This delightful-looking food is of a magical, faerie, or otherwise otherworldly nature. One bite can reduce the eater to a food-crazed mindless being. The goblins, hobgoblins, and glurch who inhabit the ruins are not affected by this trap.

Detect: Per-based **Thaumatology**, **Naturalist**, or **Survival** at -3 – or **Perception** + **Magery** for mages if the food is faerie in origin or **Perception** + **Holiness** for clerics, if the food is demonic in origin – both at -4. Rolls against **Hidden Lore (Demon)** or **Hidden Lore (Faerie)** may also be

made, depending on the origin of the food. Make a follow-up roll using one of the above methods to determine *what* the food does.

Disarm: No.

Avoid: Automatic. Don't eat the food!

Save: Make a roll against **Will** and note the margin if the roll is failed. Failure *also* requires a **HT** roll to resist eating more than is healthy. Those with Gluttony suffer a penalty relative to their self-control number: -1 for a self-control number of 15, -2 for 12, -3 for 9, and -4 for 6.

Effects: Failure on the **Will** roll means the eater temporarily becomes entranced by food. Roll 1d to determine how this manifests: 1-3, Obsession (Cooking); 4-6 Gluttony. Failing by 5 or more results in the delver gaining *both*. If the delver cannot somehow satisfy the craving, he gains **Bad Temper** as well! All self-control numbers are considered to be 12. Those who already have either disadvantage have their self-control numbers worsened by a step (e.g., from 12 to 9). This lasts for 2d hours. Failure on the **HT** roll results in the delver *overindulging* in food to the point that they must make further **HT** every hour (at a cumulative -1 per instance of failure), or suffer 1d-4 *injury* (minimum of 1 point) as they eat too much!

Shots: 3d meals' worth.

Rearm: No.

Steal: Yes. Each bewitched meal is worth \$300 to thieves' guilds and other shady people.

Treasure

In addition to what the goblins and hobgoblins are carrying (GM's call) and the Ring of Famine (p. 29), *each* goblin or hobgoblin has 1dx6 silver pieces. Additionally, the kitchen can be raided for various cooking utensils, flatware, plates, cups, etc., worth 1d x 1d x 5 gold pieces total and weighing the same amount, in pounds, as its value in gold pieces.

RING OF ENVY

This is a silver band, set with a thumbnail-sized emerald and etched with the runes for "envy" and "spite" in both Ancient and Demonic. When worn by someone who is aware of its nature the wearer can use it to cast *any* spell of the Communication and Empathy College (**Spells**, pp. 32-33) as well as the following: Command, Fascinate, and Weaken Will.

If the user is not normally a magic-user, all such spells are cast as if the user had a skill of 20. For those who can cast spells, skill is the *better* of 20 or IQ plus 4 plus spellcasting talent (e.g., Magery). Those who have Jealousy or Paranoia (**Adventurers**, pp. 61, 64) before wearing the ring receive +1 to their rolls – those who have both get +2!

While wearing the ring, the user gains Charisma 3, Honest Face, and Voice. This comes at a cost: every 1d+1 weeks, the wielder must make a Will roll at -3 (-6 if he's used *any* of its spells). Failure means the character becomes increasingly paranoid and envious of others; those with neither Jealousy nor Paranoid gain one (GM's choice), while those with one gain the other. If the wearer has both, then the reaction penalty from them increases by another -1 (total, not per disadvantage). Once the ring is removed, these disadvantages disappear at the same rate they appeared – unless the Will roll was failed by 5 or more or resulted in critical failure, in which case, it's *permanent*.

The ring is worth \$100,000 to the right person, and weighs 0.1 lb. It holds 55 FP if used as a power item.

THE SECOND RUIN: THE ART GALLERY

Typical Location of Manifestation: The entrance to this ruin can appear anywhere, but is often inside a castle (inhabited or otherwise).

Malthas' art gallery was the envy of all the inhabitants of Hell (which was likely the entire point). This long, 60' by 10' twisting hallway has 12' vaulted ceilings with numerous portraits, still-lives, landscapes, etc. along the walls. An odd greenish mist flows unnaturally along the floor.

Entering the hallway triggers a roll against the pictures' magical nature (p. 31). Additionally, delvers with **Occultism** or **Hidden Lore (Demons)** can make a Per-based roll at -5. Success means they know the mist is not what it seems, while success by 3 or more reveals it to be 1d *miasmist* (creatures of poisonous mist that induce jealousy and paranoia to those who breathe in vapors).

RING OF SLOTH

This band of copper with a small black opal is etched with the runes for “sloth” and “apathy,” in both Ancient and Demonic on the outer surface. When worn by someone who is aware of its nature, the wearer can use it to cast any of the following spells: Awaken, Debility, Dull (Sense), Dullness, Flesh to Stone, Forgetfulness, Healing Slumber, Mass Sleep, Paralyze Limb, Relieve Paralysis, Sleep, Slow, Total Paralysis, Weaken Will, and Wither Limb.

If the user is not normally a magic-user, all such spells are cast as if the user had a skill of 20. For those who can cast spells, skill is the *better* of 20 or IQ plus 4 plus spell-casting talent (e.g., Magery). Those who had Laziness (*Adventurers*, p. 62) before wearing the ring gain +1 to their rolls.

While wearing the ring, the user receives a special aura and access to the martial-artist skill Immovable Stance (*Adventurers*, p. 32) at skill 20. Everyone within two yards

of the wearer must roll a Quick Contest of HT against the bearer’s Will+3. This aura works automatically, for as long as the ring is worn, but *known* allies can be excluded from its effects at any time, so long as the bearer is conscious. If the wearer wins, each point of victory reduces the victim’s Dodge score by -1 and Move by -2 (up to -4 to Dodge or -8 to Move). This effect lasts for a minute.

This comes at a cost. Every 1d+1 weeks, the wielder must make an HT roll at -3 (-6 if he’s used *any* of its spells). Failure means the person gains Laziness; those who already have this disadvantage reduce their Basic Move by 1 instead (to a minimum of one). Once the ring is removed, these disadvantages disappear at the same rate they appeared – unless the HT roll was failed by 5 or more or resulted in critical failure, in which case, it’s *permanent*.

The ring is worth \$100,000 to the right person, and weighs 0.1 lb. It holds 55 FP if used as a power item.

Should the PCs manage to make their way past the miasmist and the insidious magic of the Hall of Paintings (below), a ring of silver, set with a huge emerald, rests on a stone pedestal at the midpoint of the hallway (see the *Ring of Envy*, p. 30).

Monsters

Miasmist (also called “mist monsters” by adventurers with simple tastes) use the stats for toxifiers (*Monsters*, p. 56). When someone takes damage from their attack, he gains the Jealousy disadvantage (*Adventurers*, p. 61) instead of the toxifier’s nausea side effect. Additionally, the target must make a Will roll at -1 per 2 points of damage rolled. Failure means the target gains Paranoia (*Adventurers*, p. 64) for *hours* equal to the margin of failure (minimum of 1 hour). Finally, miasmist may choose to do no *actual* damage with their attack; roll as if for damage and *double* the result for the purposes of side effects, such as gaining Jealousy or Paranoia.

Hazard

Entering the gallery triggers the following trap.

Hall of Paintings

An innocuous 60’ stretch of hallway with numerous beautifully painted depictions of wilderness scenes, people, and animals. They are in fact bespelled to enthrall any who gaze upon them. Victims who fall prey to the trap will blissfully stare at whichever image caught their eye, losing track of time and where they are.

Detect: Per-based **Thaumatology**, or **Perception + Magery** for mages.

Disarm: **Dispel Magic** (a single portrait resists at skill 20).

Avoid: Don’t look at the pretty pictures! Requires a Will-4 every 20’ to not look; those with Curious must roll every 10’! Blindfolding a subject allows him to walk down the hallway unscathed (though this could lead to other problems if he’s being chased).

Save: No.

Effects: Resist **Fascinate** (**Spells**, p. 54) at level 20 or stand motionless until an outside force breaks your visual contact with the painting.

Shots: Infinite.

Rearm, Steal: No – the paintings are mystically bound to the wall.

Treasure

Not all the paintings in the hallway are magical – should the PCs take the time to check, they can pry loose 3d pictures in their frames. Of course, trying to check each picture to see if it comes off *will* risk looking at the dangerous ones . . . Pilfered paintings will bring a profit of up to 400 silver pieces to a typical buyer. If the adventurers know of *arcane* art enthusiasts, who’ll believe the paintings came from a demon’s art gallery, they could get much, much more. Hopefully no one will be disappointed that these are the *mundane* images.

The Ring of Envy rests on a stone pedestal at the middle of the gallery.

THE THIRD RUIN: THE WINE CELLAR

Typical Location of Manifestation: The entrance to this ruin always appears aboveground, typically in the open, with a cellar door. The door opens onto stone stairs, descending into the large underground room.

Malthas’ wine cellar was said to contain innumerable vintages from multiple dimensions, times, and places, along with rare potions and elixirs that he stashed for a rainy day. Entering the cellar is always done via stone stairs that lead down into the dark to a broad door. The huge square room beyond that door is over 100’ by 100’ and has 9’ ceilings. Breaking up the vastness are rows upon rows of wine racks, filled with dusty bottles. Here, *dolboki* (p. 32) make their home, guarding their long-absent master’s property.

Once the PCs enter, the GM should make a roll against the dolboki's **Perception** of 12. This is only opposed if the adventurers specifically said they were using **Stealth**; otherwise the dolboki only need to succeed to know someone is there. If this results in a battle, the dolboki do their best to make use of the Evil Runes scattered about the room along with any other traps they've set (see **Exploits**, p. 70-71, for a few ideas). Failing that, they defend themselves with clubs or surprise adventurers with garrotes.

Monsters

If the traps fail to do away with the intruders, the dolboki might resort to more personal violence.

Dolbok

Dolboki are similar to bugbears (**Monsters**, p. 17), but even trickier.

ST: 14	HP: 14	Speed: 6.50
DX: 14	Will: 10	Move: 6
IQ: 10	Per: 12	
HT: 12	FP: 12	SM: 0
Dodge: 10	Parry: 12	DR: 0

Bite or Claw (16): 1d cutting. Reach C.

Garrote (18): Must first attack the neck (-5) at reach C. Then roll a Quick Contest: the bugbear's effective ST 17 vs. the better of the victim's ST or HT. Damage equals the margin of victory; multiply damage that penetrates DR by $\times 1.5$ (for the neck) to find injury. See **Garrotes (Exploits, p. 39)**.

Knobbed Club (16): 2d+1 crushing. Reach 1.

Traits: Chameleon 2; Combat Reflexes; Cowardice (12); Doesn't Breathe; Doesn't Eat or Drink; Doesn't Sleep; Dread (Holy objects; 5 yards); Dark Vision; Hard to Kill 2; Immunity to Disease; Immunity to Poison; Indomitable; Laziness; No Blood; No Brain; No Neck; Silence 2; Temperature Tolerance 10 (Heat).

Skills: Axe/Mace-16; Brawling-16; Garrote-18; Stealth-16 (18 vs. Hearing or Vision if moving, 20 if motionless); Tactics-14; Traps-14; Wrestling-16.

Class: Demon.

Notes: Dolboki *love* setting traps for the unwary – it does all the work for them! Effective ST for grappling is 16 due to Wrestling skill. Carries a cheap knobbed club (\$8) and a rope garrote (\$2). Much like their bugbear cousins, dolboki spleens are worth \$100 each as ingredients in various potions. If consumed raw and fresh, make a HT roll to keep it down: Success gives +1d to Camouflage, Stealth, and Trap skills for one hour; failure means you can't eat it; and critical failure causes retching (**Exploits**, p. 66) for 2d seconds and then -1 to all attributes for 10 minutes.

Hazard

The wine racks are covered with Evil Runes, etched into the wood. Simply being near them results in a roll to resist their effects.

Evil Runes of Apathy

These Evil Runes cause any who are near them to grow listless and apathetic.

Detect: Per-based **Thaumatology**, or **Perception + Magery** for mages. A follow-up IQ-based **Thaumatology** roll reveals what the runes do.

Disarm: No.

Avoid: No.

Save: A roll against **HT** and a second roll against **Will**.

Effects: Failure on the Will roll results in the subject gaining **Laziness (Adventurers, p. 62)** for *days* equal to the margin of failure, while failure on the HT roll results in the subject losing 3d FP. Lost FP, from *any* source, cannot be regained within 3' of the Evil Runes!

Shots: Infinite.

Rearm, Steal: No.

*I love me some tasty wine – really I do!
But bottles sitting on cursed racks in a place full
of monsters and traps? Poison comes readily
to mind.*

– Hap Badapple, Thief

Treasure

The Ring of Sloth (p. 31) is on the neck of one of the wine bottles and requires a **Search** roll (plus **Acute Vision**) to spot. Don't forget to take darkness penalties into account! Other than the ring, delvers might plunder some of Malthas' strange wines and distilled spirits. Each vintage is produced from an unusual substance: dissolved stardust, lotus nectar, fermented demon's blood, etc. The drinks have no immediate supernatural properties, but might be a valuable alchemical ingredient or a treatment for specific magical afflictions. Thus, each bottle is worth \$20 – but to the right buyer, it's worth up to 1d+1 times *more*. An **Alchemy** roll while searching the cellar also reveals 3d random potions of the GM's choosing.

THE FOURTH RUIN: THE ARMOURY

Typical Location of Manifestation: The entrance to this ruin only appears in or near a battlefield, as a set of black marble columns leading to a large spiral staircase that goes downward and into the armoury itself.

Malthas' armoury was once packed with insidious weapons of all kinds. Over the centuries, it has been looted repeatedly, resulting in only the dregs remaining, abandoned and lying helter-skelter amid the denuded racks and cases.

This oblong, roughly 20' by 20' room with an 8'-tall ceiling is walled and roofed in polished brick. Occasionally there are chipped or blackened places where some weapon was tested, or missed another target during a fight. The guards here are demons of old (**Monsters**, p. 20); upon the PCs' intrusion into the room, they manifest at their appointed positions as chosen by the GM, as fresh for this fight as they've been for any other throughout the centuries. There are no tricks or traps here – just a straight-up fight with (1d *plus* one per PC) demons, along with their leader, who wears the Ring of Fury (p. 33), further enhancing his combat abilities.

Monsters

There are numerous demons of old (*Monsters*, p. 20) within the armoury.

Hazard

None.

Treasure

The primary treasure is the Ring of Fury, but delvers can make rolls against **Search** or *Per*-based **Armoury** to locate suitable armor, shields, and weapons for salvage or use. Critical success or success by 5 or more results in an item with modifier appropriate for its kind (e.g., a weapon has one of the modifiers listed on *Adventurers*, p. 106). A roll of a natural 3 results in a magical weapon.

Why is the Ring of Fury still around when everything else has been looted? Some options include: prior intruders were routed by the demons, grabbing things randomly and fleeing; victorious adventurers saw the demonic runes on the ring and refused to touch it; the fatal attack on the guards' leader caused it to perish in an inaccessible area; or the ring's side effects were so troubling that the wearer sought out the ruins and *threw the ring back in*. The GM can suggest any of these if protagonists ask why *they're* the ones who found the ring. Alternatively, perhaps the PCs went hunting for this ruin because of tales from adventurers who didn't have time to stay and look for the Best Treasure™, since they had to get the unconscious priest back to town before she bled out.

THE FIFTH RUIN: THE COUNTING ROOM

Typical Location of Manifestation: The entrance to this ruin is a dull black door, always vertical, opening outward (and thus with its hinges exposed). It's usually set in a wall like any other door, but *can* manifest on any suitably large flat surface, such as square columns, or the foundation for a monument. The door is always locked (-5 to rolls to open it with **Lockpicking**; the door has **DR 15** and **HP 39**, while the hinges have **DR 9** and **HP 18**) and may be trapped if the GM wishes. Furthermore, actually spotting the door requires an **Observation** or **Search** roll at -5, due to a mild enchantment to hide it from notice. **Perception + Magery** may also be substituted, if better, for those that have it.

Malthas' counting "room" is actually a series of three rooms (each 20' by 20') that connect to one another via short hallways (corridor size of 6' by 6'). The first room is filled with musty books, broken abacuses, worn quills, and other damaged writing and records-keeping equipment. The second room is filled with empty chests and boxes for coin and other valuables. The first and second rooms have clearly been picked over by prior adventurers, and some of the second room's containers have been smashed. Whatever's left is in poor condition.

The door to the third room is locked, much like the entrance (see above), and will require similar treatment. The

RING OF FURY

This is a plain band of iron; it's only decoration, on the outer surface, are the runes for "fury" and "wrath," in both Ancient and Demonic. When worn by someone who is aware of its nature, the wearer can use it to cast any of the following spells: **Armor**, **Balance**, **Bravery**, **Grace**, **Great Haste**, **Haste**, **Iron Arm**, **Might**, **Missile Shield**, **Reflexes**, **Shield**, and **Vigor**.

If the user is not normally a magic-user, all such spells are cast as if the user had a skill of 20. For those who can cast spells, skill is the *better* of 20 or IQ plus 4 plus spellcasting talent (e.g., **Magery**). Those who have **Bloodlust**, **Bad Temper**, or **Berserk** (*Adventurers*, p. 57) before wearing the ring gain +1 to their rolls – those who have two get +2, while those who have all three receive +3!

While wearing the ring, the user acquires +3 ST, +1 DX, +2 HT, +1 HP, and High Pain Threshold. This comes at a cost: every 1d+1 weeks, the wielder must make a Will roll at -3 (-6 if he's used *any* of its spells). Failure means the person acquires **Bad Temper** (12) or **Bloodlust** (12); those who already have one gain the other, while those who have both gain **Berserk** (12) instead! Once the ring is removed, these disadvantages disappear at the same rate they appeared – unless the Will roll was failed by 5 or more, or was a critical failure, in which case, it's *permanent*.

The ring is worth \$100,000 to the right person, and weighs 0.1 lb. It holds 55 FP if used as a power item.

third room itself is filled with piles of coins, gems, golden statues, and similar valuable treasure – but this is a trap! The treasure is bewitched (see p. 34) and is *also* inhabited by goldipox (below).

Finding the Ring of Greed (p. 34) in the piles of glittery treasure requires a **Search** roll at -10 or **Perception** roll at -15, and spending at least one minute looking. This all but guarantees that delvers *must* take extra time (**Exploits**, p. 6), and one group of goldipox may swarm while they're doing it – especially if the PCs are pocketing any of the treasure! As soon as the ring is found, the remaining goldipox form into swarms to attack.

Monsters

The goldipox are crawling all over the piles of treasure and are only a danger when they can surprise a target or when they swarm.

Goldipox

Goldipox are tiny demonic beings who can barely enter our world. They cannot possess the living, but instead possess valuables like coins, jewels, and similar objects. From this, they form a somewhat humanoid body of living treasure to plague others. A single goldipox is not much trouble, even to townsfolk, but when they swarm, they are extremely dangerous. Their infectious bite can transform their victim into a gold statue. Such petrified beings count as bewitched treasure of demonic origin.

Goldipox are drawn to places of great wealth, treasure, or greed.

ST: 1 **HP:** 2 **Speed:** 6.00
DX: 12 **Will:** 12 **Move:** 6
IQ: 8 **Per:** 12
HT: 12 **FP:** 12 **SM:** -10
Dodge: 10 **Parry:** N/A **DR:** 4

Bite, Claw, or Sting (12): 1d-7 impaling. Reach C. Additionally, if *any* damage penetrates DR, the target must make an HT roll at +2. Failure results in the damaged limb being paralyzed for seconds equal to the margin of failure (minimum 1 second). Attacks to the torso cause the target to begin to cough as his lungs weaken. This results in -3 to DX, -1 to IQ, and the subject cannot use Stealth for the duration. The effects of multiple attacks are cumulative! If the target gets to 0 DX, he becomes a gold statue; hopefully his companions can disenchant him later . . . Stone to Flesh (*Spells*, p. 29) fixes this.

Traits: Appearance (Monstrous); Callous; Camouflage 4 (Piles of gold or similar treasure only); Clinging; Combat Reflexes; Dark Vision; Doesn't Breathe; Doesn't Eat or Drink; Doesn't Sleep; Dread (Holy objects; 5 yards); Greed (6); High Pain Threshold; Immunity to Disease; Immunity to Poison; Indomitable; No Blood; No Brain; No Neck; Sadism (12); Silence 4; Temperature Tolerance 10 (Heat).

Skills: Brawling-12; Stealth-12 (16 vs. Hearing if moving, 20 if motionless; 16 vs. Vision if in treasure pile and moving, 20 if in treasure pile and motionless).

Class: Demon.

Notes: Willing to negotiate for loot, but rarely keep any promises. Make a reaction roll at -4 to see if they abide by the deal negotiated. Add -2 if the offer is under \$50, -1 for \$50 up to \$100, 0 for \$100 up to \$500, +1 for \$500 up to \$1,000, +2 for \$1,000 up to \$5,000, +3 for \$5,000 up to \$10,000, or +4 for \$10,000 or more. Add a further +2 if it's a magical item or enchanted. On a Very Good or better reaction, they keep their word. They taint any treasure they're around for longer than a year (see *Bewitched*

Treasure, below). Goldpox swarms use the rules from *Monsters* (p. 54): Move 6G; Damage 1d impaling (with the normal effects for their bite resulting in a HT roll at -3 instead of HT at +2); and HP 15.

Hazard

Should the adventurers take any of the treasure, use the following.

Bewitched Treasure

This enticing looking pile of valuables (gold, gems, gold and gems, etc.) is of a magical, faerie, or otherwise otherworldly nature. Taking it can cause the possessor to become obsessed with hoarding wealth.

Detect: As for *Bewitched Food* (p. 30).

Disarm: No.

Avoid: Automatic. Don't touch the treasure.

Save: Make a roll against **Will** and note the margin if the roll is failed. Those with Greed or Miserliness suffer a penalty based on their self-control number: -1 for a self-control number of 15, -2 for 12, -3 for 9, and -4 for 6. If a delver has *both*, then he suffers both penalties!

Effects: Failure on the **Will** roll means the taker temporarily becomes obsessed with treasure and collecting it. Roll 1d to determine how this manifests: 1-3, Greed; 4-6 Miserliness. Failure by 5 or more on this roll results in the delver gaining *both*. If the delver cannot somehow satisfy the craving, he gains **Bad Temper** as well! All self-control numbers are considered to be 12. Those who already have either disadvantage have their self-control numbers worsened by a step (e.g., from 12 to 9). This lasts for 2d hours.

Shots: Infinite.

Rearm: No.

Steal: Yes. But most such treasure is actually fool's gold or low-grade copper, worth at most \$10 per pound of the stuff. **Remove Curse** gets rid of the dangerous effect of the tainted treasure.

RING OF GREED

This gorgeously gaudy band of gold drips with jewels, and is etched with both the Ancient and Demonic runes for "greed" and "wealth" on the outer surface. When worn by someone who is aware of its nature, the wearer can use it to cast any of the following spells: Analyze Magic, Create Earth, Detect Magic, Earth to Stone (this spell can also temporarily turn base metal into precious metal for 3 energy per cubic *inch*), Hinder, Illusion Shell, Know Illusion, Lockmaster, Locksmith, Magelock, Seeker (only to locate valuable objects), and Steelwraith.

If the user is not normally a magic-user, all such spells are cast as if the user had a skill of 20. For those who can cast spells, skill is the *better* of 20 or IQ plus 4 plus spellcasting talent (e.g., Magery). Those who had Greed or Miserliness (*Adventurers*, pp. 60, 63) before wearing the ring gain +1 to their rolls – those who have both get +2!

While wearing the ring, the user receives +4 to Search, Merchant, and reaction rolls vs. merchants. Additionally,

he can roll vs. IQ at +5, instead of the normal skill roll, when *Getting a Good Price* (*Exploits*, p. 16) or *Identifying the Good Stuff* (*Exploits*, p. 24). The wearer is always considered to be Wealthy when selling loot (or Very Wealthy if he is already considered Wealthy)!

This comes at a cost. Every 1d+1 weeks, the wielder must make a Will roll at -3 (-6 if he's used *any* of its spells). Failure means the person gains Greed (12) or Miserliness (12); those who already have one acquires the other – those who have both lower the self-control number to 9 for each! This continues until the wearer has both Greed and Miserliness at (6). Once the ring is removed, these disadvantages disappear at the same rate they appeared – unless the Will roll was failed by 5 or more, or resulted in critical failure, in which case, it's *permanent*.

The ring is worth \$100,000 to the right person, and weighs 0.1 lb. It holds 55 FP if used as a power item.

RING OF LUST

This is a plain band of rose-hued platinum; its only decorations, on the outer surface, are the runes for “lust” and “need,” in both Ancient and Demonic. When worn by someone who is aware of its nature, the wearer can use it to cast any spell of the Mind Control College (*Spells*, pp. 53-56) as well as the following: Hide Thoughts, Mind-Sending, Persuasion, and Sense Emotion.

For those who can cast spells, skill is either 20 or IQ plus 4 plus spellcasting talent (e.g., Magery), whichever is better. Those who already have Lecherousness gain a bonus to rolls equal to the absolute value of the resistance penalty (*Adventurers*, p. 62) listed for Sex Appeal or supernatural seduction.

While wearing the ring, the user acquires Appearance (Beautiful or Handsome), Charisma 2, and Voice. Those who already have Appearance (Beautiful or

Handsome) gain the next level; while those who already have Appearance (Very Beautiful or Handsome) or Voice gain an additional two levels of Charisma (this is cumulative if both conditions are true!).

This comes at a cost. Every 1d+1 weeks, the wielder must make a Will roll at -3 (-6 if he’s used *any* of its spells). Failure means the person gains Lecherousness (12) (*Adventurers*, p. 62); those who already have that trait lower the self-control number by 3! This continues until the wearer has Lecherousness at (6). Once the ring is removed, these disadvantages disappear at the same rate they appeared – unless the Will roll was failed by 5 or more, or resulted in critical failure, in which case, it’s *permanent*.

The ring is worth \$100,000 to the right person, and weighs 0.1 lb. It holds 55 FP if used as a power item.

Treasure

The delvers can choose to take the piles of bewitched treasure (p. 34) if they wish but this could be a dangerous proposition.

If – and *only* if – the GM wishes to introduce complications or a source of information, some of the other golden statues may be disenchanting into living beings! These could be adventurers themselves (who might be able to explain the ruins if needed), attractive folk who were kidnapped by the demon prince to become statues, opportunistic thieves who were better at lockpicking than fighting goldpox, etc. If the GM wants to keep things simple, then the other statues are just objects.

Furthermore, the Ring of Greed (p. 34) is hidden among the piles.

THE SIXTH RUIN: THE GARDENS OF TWILIGHT

Typical Location of Manifestation: The entrance to this ruin appears where its inhabitants can lure victims to their deaths, especially open places near villages, towns, or other similar places. Rarely, it manifests near ruined cities, or in nominally deserted locations – such as in the path of traveling adventurers. The garden is contained within the confines of a large 10'-high wall with a black, elaborately decorated, thick, iron gate that keeps its inhabitants inside.

Malthas’ gardens house beautiful and exotic flora from all across the world and other dimensions. His gardens are said to be tended by mysterious beauties who’d lure the unwary off for dalliance and come back alone . . . with their companions never to be seen again. The gardens themselves are extravagant, easily covering a circle of lush greenery over 150’ in radius. Carefully manicured hedges; bushes of all shapes, colors, and sizes; and gazebos break up the lines of the garden. In some places, the earth beneath various flora seems of a reddish hue and gives a faint odor of copper.

The grounds (and gazebos) are in perpetual twilight and dimly lit by magical globes; their colors constantly shift

through blue, green, yellow, and red, and back again. The effect, combined with the perfumes of the night-blooming flowers, is surreal and likely to prompt inappropriate comments from anyone with Lecherousness.

Assorted “mysterious beauties” wander the paths, recline on the cushioned gazebo benches, and are *delighted* to chat with anyone who approaches them peaceably. They introduce themselves with various floral names (Rose, Violet, Rowan, Cassava, Windflower, Nightshade . . .), and often suggest dalliances. (They are, obviously, succubi and incubi; see below.) Their leader calls herself Lily, and wears the Ring of Lust (above) – which only she can remove from her infernally beautiful finger.

The adventurers must convince her to remove it, either by threats, trickery, or bargaining (e.g., a night with the most attractive or healthy of them – which might result in a new disadvantage for the participating delvers – or rare flowering plants). Attacks by delvers draw the ire of all the demons in the garden, who use the exotic flora to their advantage.

Lily herself can use the Ring of Lust’s spells, as well as her own succubus powers (see the *Notes* section of the stat block, p. 36), casting them all at level 18.

Adventurers who are defeated by the succubi will be taken alive if possible, even having their wounds staunch – in order to feed some of the plants that have a need for fresh meat.

Monsters

The various otherworldly plants in the garden can be represented by using the statistics for fungus (*Monsters*, pp. 28-29). Use the following status for the succubi.

Succubus

Succubi are beautiful demons sent to entice humanity with their bewitching charms. They appear as whatever their beholder finds most attractive (no one knows if they even *have* true forms), and seek to entice their prey and drain their life force. When succubi appear to someone more inclined toward men, they look male, and are termed *incubi*.

Certain disreputable schools of demonology debate whether incubi and succubi are actually different sexes, opportunistic manifestations of the same demons, or applied according to the demon's preferred targets.

Succubi are drawn to places of lust: brothels, debauched parties, and similar locales.

ST: 12 **HP:** 12 **Speed:** 7.00
DX: 14 **Will:** 14 **Move:** 7
IQ: 12 **Per:** 14
HT: 14 **FP:** 14 **SM:** 0
Dodge: 11 **Parry:** N/A **DR:** 2 (Tough Skin)

Bite or Claw (12): 1d-1 cutting. Reach C.

Loyalty (16 vs. Will): As per the spell (*Spells*, p. 55), but requiring only a second and 3 FP to cast, and *no* FP cost to maintain.

Lifedrain: Merely touching the target (ignore DR!) is enough to drain 1d HP from him, with every 3 HP healing the succubus for 1 HP. Physical contact against skin (such as a grapple) increases this to 1d+2 HP, while full body contact (such as being *pinned*, *Exploits*, p. 41) increases this to 1d+4 HP! Additionally, the target must make the lower of a Will or HT roll or suffer ecstasy (*Exploits*, p. 66) for seconds equal to the margin of failure; this roll takes a penalty of -1 per 2 points of damage.

Traits: Appearance (Very Beautiful); Callous; Charisma 3; Combat Reflexes; Dark Vision; Detect (Life); Doesn't Breathe; Doesn't Eat or Drink; Doesn't Sleep; Double-Jointed; Dread (Holy objects; 5 yards); High Pain Threshold; Immunity to Disease; Immunity to Poison; Indomitable (Not against Sex Appeal); Lecherousness (6); No Blood; No Brain; No Neck; Temperature Tolerance 10 (Heat); Voice.

Skills: Brawling-14; Fast-Talk-14; Sex Appeal-12 (18 vs. those who are attracted to the form the demon currently is in); Stealth-14; Wrestling-14.

Class: Demon.

Notes: While succubi are happy to *seduce*, they are usually *unwilling* to negotiate – make a reaction roll at -4. On a Very Good or better reaction, a succubus will negotiate with the delver who has the highest appearance. Truly evil. For spellcasting leaders, raise IQ to 14+, add Power Investiture (Hellish), and give them a few spells at IQ + Power Investiture level; appropriate choices are Charm, Command, Daze, Fascinate, Foolishness, Forgetfulness, Mass Daze, Mass Sleep, Sleep, and Weaken Will.

Hazard

None.

Treasure

The only treasure here is the Ring of Lust, though odd species of plants may count. Finding a buyer might be difficult, and the vegetation may not survive being uprooted without a good gardener's swift attention.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Christopher R. Rice has delved the depths of the Black Spires to return with this dire information for his fellow adventurers. From Portsmouth, Virginia, he's spinning words and whimsy into gold. Of course, if he's not writing about *GURPS*, he's blogging about it. Visit his site "Ravens N' Pennies" (www.ravenspennies.com) for more *GURPS* goodies. He's the co-author of *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 19: Incantation Magic* and *Dungeon Fantasy Roleplaying Game: Traps*. He wishes to thank L.A., his own personal muse, as well as the rest of his gaming group (the Headhunters); Beth "Archangel" McCoy, the "Sith Editrix"; Brett Tamahori; Douglas Cole; Euan Hastie; Emily "Bruno" Smirle; and Christopher "Ternas" Dorr for being most excellent sounding boards. Additionally, special thanks to Allen F. Schell, Kyle Norton, and Timothy "Humabout" Ponce for assistance in naming demons.

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RANDOM THOUGHT TABLE

IF NOT YOU, THEN WHO?

BY STEVEN MARSH, *PYRAMID* EDITOR

One of the themes of the *Dungeon Fantasy Roleplaying Game* is the idea that the heroes are the only ones equipped to resolve an issue. In other words, if the Village Elder comes up to the heroes and says, "Please help us; we have a problem with giant worms in our sewers," the PCs don't immediately say, "Of course we'll help! Wait here while we go and find some more competent champions to resolve your situation."

In the real world, if I were wandering around town with my friends and I discovered that the Orb of the Unending was set to explode in a few hours, I'd go alert the authorities. At the very least, it wouldn't cross my mind that I was somehow uniquely placed or qualified to tackle the problem. Yet armor-clad heroes stumble onto situations all the time where they're expected to go up against whatever they uncovered. In fact, it's generally considered bad form to go running for help!

We know why this is from a game-design standpoint; the players didn't sign up for the *Cowardly Ill-Equipped Schlubs Who Run at the First Sign of Danger Roleplaying Game*. No! They signed up for some slaying and looting, and slaying and looting is what they shall do!

But how does that work in the game world? Obviously we shouldn't poke too much at the real-world underpinnings of a world where a dozen orcs in subterranean rooms frequently wait patiently to die in battle, but having some ideas can help us come up with more enjoyable adventures.

THE HEROES ARE IT

It could be that the heroes simply *are* the ones best equipped to deal with whatever situations they find. Maybe if the heroes return to town, they'll discover the most they can muster is a batch of poorly trained town guards.

This is one of the easiest to consider, but it raises questions. If the heroes are clearly superior to everyone else in town, then what's keeping them from ransacking every hamlet they come across? "These magic items cost way too much; burn down Peaceville!"

Of course, it could be that the town guard is more than capable of repelling any rambunctious would-be looters, but those abilities just don't translate to dungeon delving. In the *Dungeon Fantasy RPG*, group tactics enable weaker guards

to gang up on stronger opponents, but most dungeons don't allow for militias of dozens of folks to rampage through to tactical advantage.

THE FATES HAVE SMILED ON US

Perhaps it's a cosmological assumption that heroes will tackle the problems they're presented. In other words, maybe the cosmos smiles on would-be heroes, and doesn't present any obstacle that they don't have at least a reasonable chance of overcoming. This puts a nice lampshade on a default assumption of many games, which is that the gods (a.k.a. "the GM") won't give the heroes (or their players) an utterly unwinnable situation.

This blessing of fate would only apply to actual adventuring professions, of course. Farmers who stumble across a fragment of the Amulet of Antireality are expected to turn it over to their local adventurers' guild to let *real* heroes deal with it.

Alternatively, perhaps this blessing of fate is a *cultural* assumption, with enough cherry-picked anecdotal evidence to bolster the assumption. This wouldn't have any effect on the campaign, except it gives the GM a bit more leeway to provide varying challenges . . . including encounters where the GM wildly misjudges the abilities of the heroes or the capabilities of the monsters.

Regardless, in a setting where the gods take the occasional interest in mortal affairs, a default assumption that those gods *want* the heroes to tackle problems offered to them will go a long way toward making it happen.

THIS IS WHAT WE SIGNED UP FOR

Maybe the heroes are part of an adventuring guild or other professional organization that assumes a certain amount of aggressiveness in its members at tackling problems that they find. Maybe – instead of being tempted to foist off their problems on others – the heroes will have the opposite situation.

Because of their guild affiliation and its quota requirements, they are obligated to pursue any and all adventures that come their way (including some that may be too difficult for them).

THE CLOCK IS TICKING . . .

Dungeon Fantasy RPG campaigns are all decidedly low-tech, which means that most travel and communication options are limited; even teleportation magic is rare-to-non-existent. Thus – even if there are super-cool heroes in nearby kingdoms waiting in taverns to pick up the PCs’ slack – it may not be possible to recruit them before it’s too late to resolve a time-sensitive problem.

In this case, the heroes should:

- Be aware of the exact timetable. (“It’s two evenings before moonrise gives birth to the werewolf gorgons . . . not enough time to get help.”)
- Be aware of other heroes – maybe of myth or legend – who’ve dropped the ball on resolving problems in a timely fashion.
- Be *made* aware of the pressing timetable for some missions by having a failure or two in their belt notches.

“WHY DON’T YOU DO IT, DUMBLEDORE?”

A related problem is the challenge of having mentors and mission-givers – who are, by their nature, usually going to be more competent than the heroes – without the PCs being tempted to wonder why those superior people aren’t taking care of it themselves. That could easily fill another column, but, as a few ideas:

- The mentors have enough physical or mental problems (probably brought about by a life of adventuring) that it’s not feasible for them to join an adventure unless it’d be *really* cool for them to do so.
- The mentors are busy keeping the world from falling apart despite the mission the heroes are tempted by. Bureaucracies, important but boring intrigues, and upkeep can all chew up large chunks of time for the more-powerful associates, leaving little room in the schedule for mundane adventuring.
- The mentors are too valuable to risk on mundane quests. After all, *someone* has to train the next generation of heroes if the current batch manages to get themselves killed. (“Whoops; did I say that out loud? Never mind. Off to the dungeon with you!”)

YOU GOT PROBLEMS? WE GOT PROBLEMS, TOO!

In a busy-enough world, better-equipped heroes may well live in nearby areas who could handle a significant problem the PCs come across. But the trouble may be, those far-off heroes might be dealing with their *own* issues.

In that case, those heroes are too busy to help the PCs with their challenge. “Oh, you’re trying to keep the Death Phoenix from being released and destroying the kingdom? That’s nice.

We’ve got a fortnight to track down the last three Keys of Revival, or else the barriers between the four elemental planes disintegrate and all reality unravels. So forgive me if I’m not super-concerned about prospective smoldering lawns in King Lewis’ domain.”

This has the downside of making the world seem a bit less special. If the heroes are saving the realm, but there are a dozen other teams doing their own heroics, what makes the PCs extraordinary? In a world that’s fast-paced and interesting enough, the players may well not *care* that their adventures aren’t – strictly speaking – unique. (Other folks having a blast at Disney World doesn’t diminish my own experiences there.)

However, such a framework *does* open up a really intriguing possibility of inverting the formula. Imagine if the heroes are presented with a map leading to adventure from a well-meaning barkeep; as they’re mulling over the option, *another* adventuring team approaches the heroes with an offer: They’ve encountered rumors of a strange temple they think is going to end poorly for them, and they want the PCs to tackle the problem in their stead. Now the players have an interesting choice: Do they go for the barkeep’s offer, or take the “mystery box” of the adventurers’ offer?

PUT IT ALL TOGETHER AND IT SPELLS . . .

Besides the necessity of the game – which basically says, “Hey, if you don’t investigate the clues I dangle in front of you, your gaming night is going to consist of barroom carousing and random encounters” – the truth of the matter is that a combination of all of these is what keeps the heroes from foisting off their problems on others. A strong theme of self-reliance runs through most fantasy realms, there’s not enough time to gather others for most adventures, and – even if you *could* – they’ve probably got their own problems.

Still, by having an idea of what the larger context of the world dictates for adventurers, you can have a ready-made answer for smart-aleck players who wonder why they don’t just go hire different adventurers. And thinking about the matter can provide some new gaming hooks to put twists on old adventures. Maybe a batch of town guards thought they could handle the latest problem, and now *they* need rescuing from the dungeon. Perhaps the heroes are in a race against time, but they know they’re missing a vital piece of information, and now they need to track down other famous adventurers and convince those people to reveal what they know or join the quest. The possibilities are endless . . . much like the *Dungeon Fantasy RPG* set itself.

ABOUT THE EDITOR

Steven Marsh is a freelance writer and editor. He has contributed to roleplaying game releases from Green Ronin, West End Games, White Wolf, Hogshead Publishing, and others. He has been editing *Pyramid* for over 10 years; during that time, he has won four Origins awards. He lives in Indiana with his wife, Nikola Vrtis, and their son.

DESIGNER'S NOTES

HOW TO BE A GURPS GM

BY WARREN "MOOK" WILSON

The *GURPS* supplement *How to Be a GURPS GM* was released as a PDF in August 2014 and will soon be available in print. But where did this thing come from?

"Frustration and unemployment" is the short answer.

I have been a huge fan of *GURPS* since the second edition. It has been my go-to game for a couple of decades now. But from the beginning, there has been a lingering misperception that it is difficult to learn or overly complex, a misperception I happily dispel whenever possible. One fine day in 2009, finding myself unemployed and blessed with abundant free time, I was replying online to a random gamer's questions about *GURPS*, the same questions I had addressed so many times before, and suddenly thought, "Someone should write a book showing how easy it can be to learn and play *GURPS*," quickly followed by, "Hey, I'm a someone!"

So I sent a query email to Steve Jackson Games, and . . . they didn't hate the idea. In fact, after a few exchanges, they thought it might pair nicely with another project they had in mind, and asked if I would be willing to go through all of Sean "Dr. Kromm" Punch's posts on the SJ Games forums and include the most illuminating ones as part of it. (When offered the chance to dive into every single post the line editor of your favorite RPG system has ever made, there's really only one answer.)

After a writing sample, an outline, and a contract, I slowly hammered out a manuscript. The raw spreadsheet of Kromm's forum posts contained just over 8,000 entries! I pared those down by half, then half again, on and on until ultimately arriving at the top 50 that I thought were the most useful and helpful. There was an outline – then another, and another, and another. Lots of discussions, corrections, rewrites, and emails back-and-forth. At long last, one glorious day, I submitted my "final" manuscript.

The book itself is intended to illustrate how a new GM (or player) can effectively use the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition* to learn the system and create their own adventures. I have always found it much easier to learn by example, so it was important that each chapter of explanations be followed by a chapter showing how to put those explanations into practice. Two chapters discuss preparations before the game, two discuss creating the game, and three discuss actually running

the game (three because there is a separate chapter devoted to combat and all its wonderful options).

Chapter 1, "Preparing for Adventure," gives a brief overview of the parts of the *Basic Set* and the major entries in the *GURPS* line, and how all that material is a resource for making choices for your game about things like genre, style, power level, and player characters. Chapter 2 introduces a hypothetical gaming group of four friends embarking on their first *GURPS* adventure, and shows an example of how the GM guides them through the choices from the first chapter to craft exactly the kind of adventure and characters they want.

Chapter 3, "Creating the Adventure," discusses the choices necessary to set up an adventure, breaking the process down into encounters, NPCs, and settings (with a suggestion on how to structure those things in a clear, easy-to-use format). Chapter 4 follows Marcus, our hypothetical GM, as he uses the previous chapter to create his first adventure.

Chapter 5, "Running the Adventure," gives some tips (for before, during, and after the game) about taking that adventure you've created and GMing it for the players. Chapter 6 specifically addresses *GURPS* combat: how to tweak its deadliness, which rules to include or exclude to get the balance of speed vs. realism you're looking for, a look at how numerous character traits (skills, advantages, disadvantages) affect combat, and more. Chapter 7 then provides a detailed example of putting those two chapters into practice.

The cherry on top is a much-expanded version of the *Campaign Planning Form* from the *Basic Set*, providing plenty of room for the GM to record all the choices that go into the game in one convenient place.

I think *How to Be a GURPS GM* makes an excellent companion piece for those who might find the extensive options of the *Basic Set* – the very things that make *GURPS* such a wonderful toolkit and foundation for any game – a bit daunting. The community response has been amazing, and I'm thrilled that my work was chosen both as an add-on for the *Dungeon Fantasy Roleplaying Game* Kickstarter and for release as a physical, print-on-demand book.

If you're feeling overwhelmed by the freedom and sheer number of choices *GURPS* offers, think of *How to Be a GURPS GM* as a handy road map to adventure!

ABOUT *GURPS*

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of *GURPS* players. We can be reached by email: info@sjgames.com. Our address is SJ Games, P.O. Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Resources include:

New supplements and adventures. *GURPS* continues to grow – see what’s new at gurps.sjgames.com.

Warehouse 23. Our online store offers *GURPS* print items, plus PDFs of our books, supplements, adventures, play aids, and support . . . including exclusive material available only on Warehouse 23! Just head over to warehouse23.com.

Internet. To discuss *GURPS* with our staff and your fellow gamers, visit our forums at forums.sjgames.com. You can also join us at facebook.com/sjgames or twitter.com/sjgames. Share your campaign teaser in 140 characters or fewer with #GURPSHook on Twitter.

Or explore that hashtag for ideas to add to your own game! The *Pyramid* web page is pyramid.sjgames.com.

Gamer and Store Finder (gamerfinder.sjgames.com): Connect with other people and places playing our games. Add yourself to our database so they can find you as well!

Bibliographies. Bibliographies are a great resource for finding more of what you love! We’ve added them to many *GURPS* book web pages with links to help you find the next perfect element for your game.

Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Errata pages for *GURPS* releases are available at sjgames.com/errata/gurps.

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.

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