



MUNCHKIN® COLLECTIBLE CARD GAME

SUPPORTING CAST

Well-Meaning Nuisances

for *GURPS*

by Michele Armellini

Any GM worth his salt can easily come up with wicked, dastardly villains, or faithful, reliable allies. Treacherous traitors are a third option. These characters are perfect for a cinematic adventure; but in a more realistic setting, things would be different. They'd resemble more . . . well, real life. Not all the opponents the heroes have to face will be irredeemably evil; not all friendly guys are either steady as rocks or double-crossing scum. Some shady characters will be just muddling through with their own more or less objectionable goals, some bona-fide friendly types might be more liabilities than assets, and other people are just as well-intentioned as the heroes, or even more so . . . but they are pests.

These well-meaning nuisances make for interesting roleplaying opportunities, since the PCs can't just smash them to smithereens, nor can they recruit them as solid allies. The party will need to find other solutions: negotiating and coming to terms with them, compromising and bargaining, explaining and convincing; or, failing these attempts, making them harmless somehow, sidestepping them, or fooling them.

If everything else fails, and depending on what is at stake, the orders and priorities the PCs have, and what the "real villain" is up to, it may well be that the heroes will have to employ stronger measures against these pests. But even then, this will lead to intriguing roleplay situations, unpredictable consequences in the campaign, and possibly on-going, stormy relationships.

If the adventurers are diplomatic, patient and clever, this kind of NPCs might even offer some minor help, from time to time. They can provide comic relief, secondary sub-plots, and occasional diversions. Here are a few *GURPS* samples of well-intentioned nuisances, which can be adapted to different settings.

Jim Short, The Eager Would-Be Apprentice

TL3, 5 points

The PCs are well-known in their home city. Jim is a great admirer, and he longs to become an apprentice, either of the whole party or specifically of one of the members.

Jim's initial application will probably come at an awkward moment. He'll be so excited to be face to face with his idols that he won't come through as a suitable hireling. In case the players should be interested in him anyway, the GM can just keep things moving, so they'll put him aside and forget about him.

But Jim is obsessed. The adventurers will find him waiting for them at their front door, following them around, and repeating his request. They'll probably turn him down again. In this case, Jim will become Dead Broke, he'll acquire a Social Stigma -1 (homeless), and he'll beg in the streets more often than he already has been doing, because, unbeknown to the PCs, he's run away from home. The heroes will see him, progressively more bedraggled, as he shamefully panhandles (note that he's Pitiable). Sooner or later, his habit of following his heroes around will cause some serious inconvenience.

Using the Character: If the PCs finally decide he'll be less of a liability if they hire him, his social standing will change. His Wealth will become Struggling or Average, and he'll replace the Social Stigma with a (non-dangerous) Duty to the party. Of course he'll cause other kinds of problems, because he's somewhat klutzy (his Quirk should be treated as a weaker form of the Disadvantage), in the kitchen he's a disaster waiting to happen, and he'll always insist on following the heroes on their missions and "learning the stuff." On the plus side, his father is a blacksmith and farrier, and he has some training in that craft; this also means he can be useful around the party's horses, if any. Jim is just brighter than the average, but if one of the PCs decides to really train him, rather than just using him as a servant, that will be a lot of work. Additionally, maybe a closer relationship will be established, with the character becoming Jim's Patron (and possibly acquiring a Sense of Duty towards the boy).

Note that his father is a brawny, violent bully (the reason why Jim ran away), and he's angry at having lost his apprentice. He's not Jim's Enemy . . . for the time being. But if he catches him working for the adventurers, he'll try to bring him home, willy-nilly.

Another use for Jim would be as an unwary informant on the PCs! He'd be utterly loyal to them, of course, but he really can't tell a lie . . .

If the adventurers steadfastly refuse to hire him, they see Jim sink in the city's underworld. He can't find a job with a blacksmith, because they are afraid of his father. After giving up his hope, he'll shift his need of guidance onto some gang leader or Thief Guild member, who'll have no qualms about exploiting him. Jim will learn Thief Skills, and sooner or later the party may meet him as a sour, inferior, opponent.

With a few adjustments, Jim's story can be used at other Tech Levels, too; Jim is just the TL3 equivalent of a fan boy.

Appearance: 5'2", 125 lbs, age 17, short, unkempt light brown hair, large eyes, quivering lips

Attributes: ST: 10 [0], DX 11 [10], IQ 11 [10], HT 10 [0] Speed: 5.25, Move: 5, Dodge: 5, Parry: 7 (Brawling)

Advantages: Fearlessness +1 [2]; Pitiable [5].

Disadvantages: Incompetence (Cooking) [-1]; Obsession (Becoming the adventurers' apprentice) [-5]; Poverty (Poor) [-15]; Truthfulness [-5];

Youth (17) [-2].

Quirk: Klutzy tendency [-1].

Skills: Animal Handling (Horses)-8/13 [∕12]; Area Knowledge (City)-12 [2]; Blacksmith/TL3-10 [1]; Brawling-11 [1]; Darts-11 [1]; Panhandling-13* [∕12]; Scrounging-11 [1].

Languages: English-11 [0].

* Included bonus from Pitiabile.

Mrs. Jones, The Nosy Neighbor *TL6, 25 points*

Mrs. Prudence Jones is a nosy neighbor. She's a smiling middle-aged lady, a widow; she can be gentle and helpful, especially with people who aren't secretive and freely talk about themselves. Because her preferred pastime is snooping on neighbors.

She spends a lot of time peering out of the second-floor windows of her corner house, unless she's in the garden, from where she will try talking with all passers-by. She's been here for ages, so she is in good terms with the milkman, the postman, the boy delivering newspapers, the technicians maintaining all the utilities, the maids, and so on. She collects information from all these sources and she's also very good at extracting tell-tale details from anybody.

Mrs. Jones, however, has no ulterior purposes; she's not a blackmailer, and accusing her of being something like that is a big mistake (she'll be mortally offended). She'll admit she is curious; actually, she is interested in other persons' lives because she has no life of her own to speak of. Her reward is to be up to date on all the going-ons in the neighborhood. If somebody is willing to share his own problems with her, she's really happy; with the uppity ones who keep to themselves, sooner or later she'll drop a hint that will let them understand they have no secrets for her.

Of course Mrs. Jones, while basically harmless, is a terrible nuisance as a neighbor to rough-hewn adventurers, caped vigilantes, shady cabalists and investigators dabbling with Things Man Was Not Meant To Know -- because Mrs. Jones wants to know it all!

Using the Character: Mrs. Jones is ideal with secretive characters like those mentioned above. When they move in the neighborhood, they initially get to know her kind side, but sooner or later somebody else warns them about her. It's too late: Mrs. Jones already knows they have some exciting secret for her to discover, and she'll be relentless! Of course the party's secret may be really dangerous. Mrs. Jones might become a valuable source for the opposition, be it the police or something more fearsome.

A different use might be to have Mrs. Jones as a neighbor to somebody the PCs themselves are snooping on. Thus, she becomes their source -- but of course, she'll be curious about them, too!

Note that at higher TLs, Mrs. Jones becomes increasingly effective -- and dangerous. At TL7 she might love photos, at TL8 she could be good at making videos, and she'd be really a threat if she had the skills for snooping not only in the real world but also in cyberspace (for a hi-tech Mrs. Jones, see also p. FW113).

Eventually, if the heroes cannot tolerate her knowing everything about them, and assuming they don't want to resort to violence against this charming little lady, they'll have the following alternatives. They might feel they just have to move out! Or they might elaborate some deception;

she isn't easily fooled, but if they are successful, she might become their disinformation tool. Or, finally, they might be clever enough to come up with a solution such as providing her with a life of her own: a middle-aged gentleman courting her might do the trick.

Appearance: 5'5", 150 lbs, age 47, plump, gray hair, small black eyes

Attributes: ST: 9 [-10], DX 10 [0], IQ 11 [10], HT 10 [0] Speed: 5.00, Move: 5, Dodge: 5

Advantages: Alertness +1 [5]; Contacts (Local service workers, skill 12, 12 or less, somewhat reliable) [2]; Independent Income [5]; Single-Minded [5]; Wealth (Comfortable) [10].

Disadvantages: Compulsive Behavior (Snooping on neighbors) [-5]; Curious [-10]; Light Sleeper [-5]; Reputation -2 (Busybody, neighbors) [-3].

Skills: Acting-11 [2]; Area Knowledge (neighborhood)-14 [6]; Botany/TL6-8 [$\frac{1}{2}$]; Cooking-12 [2]; Detect Lies-10 [2]; Gardening-12 [2]; Musical Instrument (Piano)-10 [2]; Naturalist-8 [$\frac{1}{2}$]; Needlecraft-10 [2]; Savoir-Faire-12 [2].

Languages: English-11 [0].

Mary Shelby, The Berserking Pacifist

TL7, 50 points

Mary was known on the campus as a smart but short-tempered student, but what the would-be rapist saw in that dark alley was a frail-looking girl hurrying towards her dorm.

Mary can't recall the event clearly, but she still remembers the bloody pool on the pavement . . . and the fact that her assailant spent three weeks in intensive care. She had discovered she could go berserk when threatened. This changed her life. She sought psychological help to get rid of that frightening flaw, to no avail. She turned to meditation, Eastern philosophies, and, finally, non-violence. She was fascinated by Gandhi's writings -- and still, when someone bothered her or when a situation became stressful, her blood boiled, and sometimes she was barely able to control herself. She felt ashamed, but she could not change the way she was. She was, and is, a Berserk.

Today, Mary is an efficient if somewhat snappy accountant, working for a large auditing firm; she's also a divorced mother (her daughter is a Dependent), as her marriage did not survive her tempers. But above all, she's a pacifist activist. Thanks to her intelligence and Charisma, she's the leader of the local chapter; her group is fond of her (and somewhat awed, too), to the point that they can be considered her Allies. As a local leader, she can count the nationwide movement as a rarely appearing Patron.

However, no matter how sincerely convinced she is that pacifism is the only true way, it's all in her mind, not in her guts. Indeed, she has no Pacifism Disadvantage, and she can harm people. Knowing all too well her own weakness, she stays away from the front lines during demonstrations, when a confrontation with the police is likely. This, however, has led to veiled criticism within the movement (not her own local group). Some day, she'll have to take to the field, and then anything might happen.

Using the Character: Mary works best at face value, in a campaign where there's a war looming or going on, and the PCs are cops, supers, or other law enforcers. If they underestimate her, they may be in for a surprise -- and after she has run amok, she'll unexpectedly offer her sincere, shame-faced apologies. If the party is a team of special soldiers, Mary's group can stage sit-ins in front of their

barracks. If she gets acquainted with the PCs, even through an accidental scrape, she'll probably try to win them over to her cause! She's not a fanatic, but she can be persistent.

Alternatively, Mary's organization sees pacifism as the means to another end, something that will bring her at cross purposes with the PC party. Another scenario might be letting a third party make use of violence, presumably against the pacifist demonstrators, and in the presence of the PCs -- Mary will react. Finally, she can serve as a true wild card in a hostage situation, especially if taken together with her daughter -- a stress factor, for sure. The heroes can either be the rescuers or fellow hostages, and they won't be able to predict this woman's behavior!

Appearance: 5'5", 130 lbs, age 34, black hair, fiery dark blue eyes

Attributes: ST: 10 [0], DX 10 [0], IQ 12 [20], HT 11 [10] Speed: 5.25, Move: 5, Dodge: 5

Advantages: Ally Group (Local group, small, 12 or less) [20]; Charisma +1 [5]; Patron (Nationwide movement, 6 or less) [5].

Disadvantages: Berserk [-15]; Dependent (Her daughter, competent, loved one, 9 or less) [-12]; Sense of Duty (To local group and movement) [-10].

Quirks: Always wears a purple scarf; Distrusts authority; Feels guilty about her mental problem [-3].

Skills: Accounting-14 [8]; Administration-13 [4]; Bard-13* [2]; Computer Operation/TL7-13 [2]; Driving (Car)/TL7-9 [1]; Leadership-14* [4]; Politics-12 [2]; Sex Appeal-10 [1]; Research-12 [2]; Philosophy (Non-violence)-11 [2]; Tactics (Non-violent demonstrations)-10 [1].

Languages: English-12 [0]; Spanish-11 [1].

* Included Bonus from Charisma.

Arthur Benson, The Conscientious Civil Servant

**TL8, 75
points**

Arthur Benson is a top bureaucrat within the city administration. His father was a rich, greedy businessman, whose demise was caused by his shady investment practices: accused of insider trading, he died of a stroke just days before his sentence. Probably in reaction to this family background, Arthur is very different. He is straight as a die, and his ideal is doing the common good and serving the community. Although wealthy, he likes his role as a scrupulous bureaucrat. He also does community work, volunteering as a teacher to disadvantaged kids. In the years, he earned a reputation as an upright citizen and a helpful official.

What nobody knows is that Arthur is a crusader in the making.

Using the Character: The exact campaign use of this nuisance will depend on the profession and role of the adventurers. Whatever they are, be they cops, private eyes, occultists, simply rich and famous, or even supers, there will be common people who are resentful, afraid, or jealous of them. Sooner or later, some unfortunate accident will take place; it might have nothing to do with the party, it just happens to involve somebody in the same category as the PCs. For instance, some super vigilante causes huge collateral damages (or a cop shoots an unarmed boy). Suddenly, the whole city wants something done to curb the arrogant abuses by supers (or by cops). The media drum up a frenzied campaign. And Arthur comes to the fore.

This is the crusade for him. His deep-felt ideals will develop into an Obsession (to be customized by the GM). He might even develop a form of Fanaticism or Intolerance. The problem is that he's utterly earnest, honest, upright; he sincerely believes the common people need help and protection, and while he maintains that the supers (or cops, or whatever) have their rights and should be allowed to do their job, he also thinks that new, strict, severe rules are necessary.

He could strive to achieve this purpose in several different ways. He might apply to be transferred to the city department that is in charge with the specific problem; for instance, a committee reviewing everything the local supers (or cops) do. He might found and become the leader of a grass-roots movement. By exploiting his connections and wealth, he might acquire some measure of control over the local radio or TV station and keep the media campaign going from there. He might find out some other blatant case and promote a well-publicized lawsuit. If the targeted class (and, in particular, the PCs) become confrontational and try to resist the increasingly burdensome measures, procedures and public scrutiny, he might even feel he has to run for mayor on a very, very focused platform! All in all, he becomes a royal pain in the neck . . . and all the while, he's just being sincere and well-intentioned.

Dealing with Arthur will require major PR efforts, social skills, negotiating, politicking, and large doses of patience and humble pie. He's got no weak spots, so circumventing him won't be easy. The heroes should probably try to beat him at his own game, i.e. garner public support, allies, testimonials and so on. If they can manage to get good press for some extraordinary feat they accomplish, that will be of great help. Arthur can be customized for any setting where public opinion and democratic local government has a role. Even at low TLs, cities often have these features to a certain extent.

Appearance: 5'10", 160 lbs, age 42, brown hair and eyes

Attributes: ST: 9 [-10], DX 10 [0], IQ 12 [20], HT 10 [0] Speed: 5.00, Move: 5, Dodge: 5

Advantages: Administrative Rank 2 [10]; Contacts (business, skill 15, 9 or less, usually reliable) [4]; Contacts (police, skill 15, 9 or less, somewhat reliable) [2]; Reputation +2 (helpful official and upstanding citizen, sometimes, many citizens) [2]; Sanctity [5]; Status 1 [0, from Wealth]; Wealth (Wealthy) [20].

Disadvantages: Bad Sight (correctable) [-10]; Honesty [-10]; Obsession (to be customized by the GM) [-10]; Workaholic [-5]. Quirk: Whatever the weather, swims in his swimming pool very early every morning [-1].

Skills: Administration-16 [10]; Area Knowledge (City)-15 [6]; Bard-13 [4]; Computer Operation/TL8-13 [2]; Diplomacy-12 [4]; Driving(Automobile)/TL8-10 [2]; Economics-11 [2]; Law-12+4 [4, bonus applies to local regulations]; Leadership-12 [2]; Politics-13 [4]; Research-12 [2]; Savoir-Faire-14 [0, from Status]; Swimming-12 [4]; Teaching-11 [1].

Languages: English-12 [0]; Spanish-11 [1].

Article publication date: May 23, 2003

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