

GURPS[®]

Fourth Edition

CREATURES OF THE NIGHT

VOL. 2



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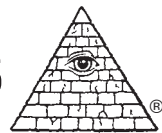
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Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition*. Page references that begin with B refer to that book, not this one.

INTRODUCTION

The creatures in this book are territorial. They defend their nests, build magic patterns on the ocean floor, and transform anyone who comes too close. They take control of the area around them, swinging from the darkness to attack intruders, or altering the weather to distract innocents from their schemes. They are easy to avoid – if you never come close to their territory.

The beasts are supplemented with over a dozen adventure ideas. These plot sketches range from simple combat encounters to brief campaigns.

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MISER TROLL

A miser troll is a small, ugly creature that stands half a foot tall. It has long fingers, stubby legs, and oily skin.

It is obsessed with controlling a major natural resource in the campaign world. In a fantasy world, this could be gold, silver, or gems; in the modern world, it might be oil, coal, or natural gas.

A mind-controlling imp that uses social conflict to hoard wealth.

The miser troll makes its nest in a secluded, high area near the resource, so it can watch its surroundings like a gargoyle. It can wait for years until a person with great social and political power comes close. Then the creature secretly deposits an egg inside the person, planting a seed that creates conflict over the resource.

The Commander and the Egg

The victim will be a head of state, a major political leader, a military commander, a billionaire, the CEO of a large corporation, or (in a medieval world) a baron, king, or guild master. This commander has wealth, connections, devoted and skilled subordinates, and the ability to hire or control armed forces.

The miser troll can sense the commander's power, and will approach quietly to make a secret attack. Its oily skin contains a contact agent that both anesthetizes the wound and seals it as the troll burrows into the commander's abdomen. The commander will feel ill, but won't know what's happening unless he notices the miser troll. The creature lays a black, golf-ball-sized egg inside the commander and then escapes as soon as possible. These events can take less than five minutes.

If complications arise (for example, if people are nearby and it cannot escape without being seen), the miser troll may have to stay inside until it can safely escape.

The wound heals immediately, leaving no trace except for a faint scar and the deposited egg. At that point, the commander gains the disadvantage Obsession (Control the natural resource) with a self-control roll of 15 or less. The self-control roll drops by 3 points every 1d days, until it reaches 6 or less.

In addition to the obsession, the egg gives the miser troll a limited telepathic link with the commander. It can see through his eyes, hear through his ears, and sense his emotions. The creature cannot, however, direct his movements, implant thoughts, or influence his body.

Shrinking Egg

The egg slowly shrinks, reducing the influence of the troll. In game terms, the commander gains a cumulative +1 to his self-control roll every week, while the troll's telepathic rolls suffer a cumulative -1 penalty. To prevent the commander from "coming to his senses," the troll must make eye contact with him, causing the egg to grow back to full size and removing these modifiers.

Fortunately, this is part of the Obsession. Each week, the commander must make a self-control roll or visit the resource . . . while he is there, the troll can make eye contact from the shadows, where the commander will be unaware of what is happening on all but a subconscious level.

After a full month with no eye contact, the egg shrinks and disappears. The commander is cured, and the troll waits for a new victim. By that time, however, a conflict should be raging, and the troll can choose a new commander to implant an egg in.

Magical or medical inspection can reveal the egg. An x-ray or Detect Curse spell will locate it automatically, and anyone knowledgeable about miser trolls will recognize the egg for what it is.

Confronting the Troll

A direct confrontation with the troll is disturbing. Its face resembles the commander's – albeit misshapen to fit the creature's small head – and its voice mimics the commander's, as well. It even uses the same vocabulary, although it slurs the words.

The miser troll is cunning and ruthless, but cowardly. In a fight, it will attack with its claws (1d-1 cutting), then retreat to safety. It can Move and Attack with surprising speed, racing in and out of the shadows (attacks will often be at -10 against it: -6 from its size and -4 from its favored shadows), and will squeal to frighten its opponents. Its slippery skin makes it almost impossible to grab.

If killed, the miser troll dissolves into a puddle of gray fluid, which evaporates within an hour, leaving no evidence that the conflict over the resource was caused by a strange little monster.

The Conflict

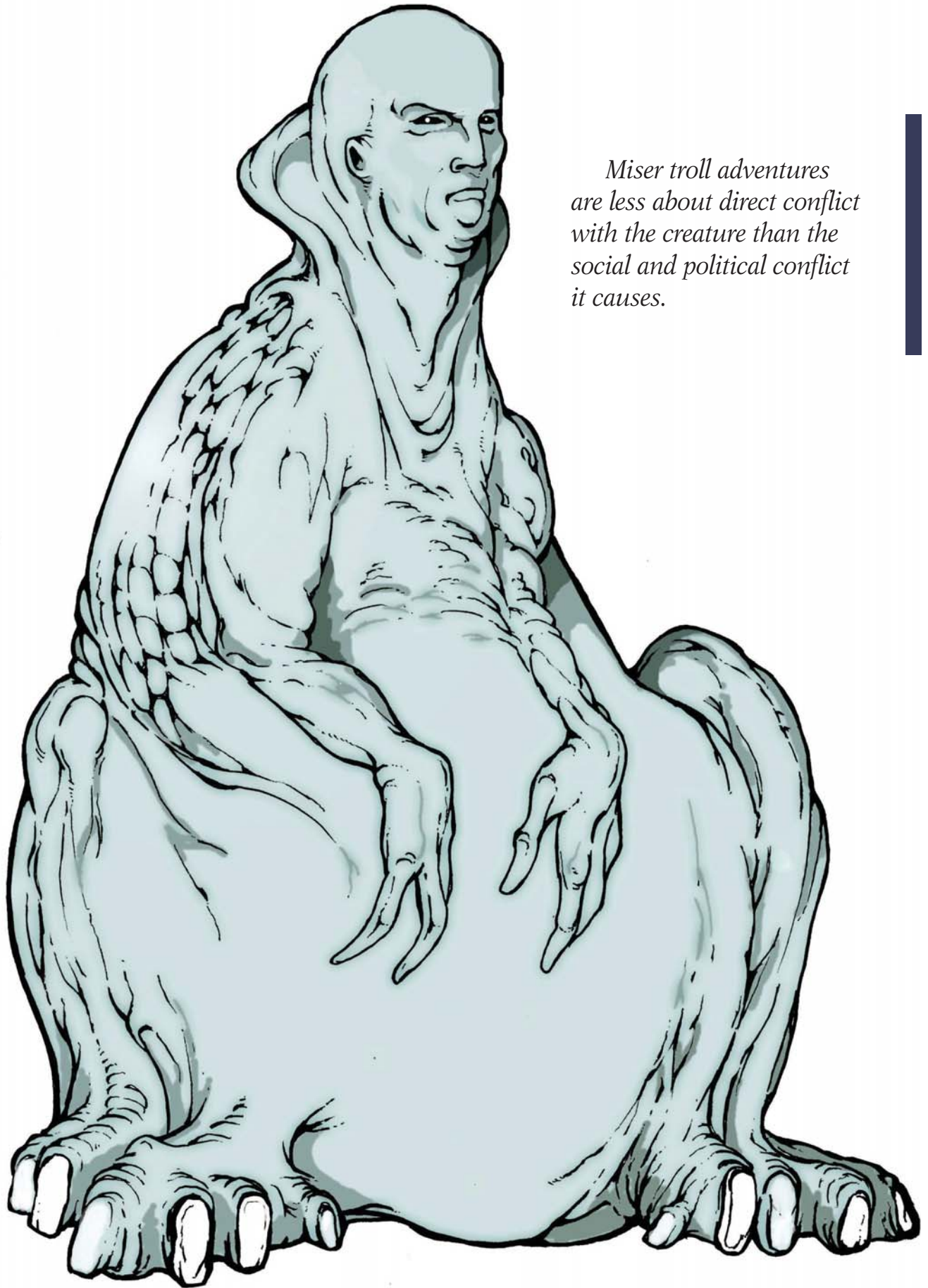
Miser troll adventures are less about direct conflict with the creature than the social and political conflict it causes. The scope of the conflict depends on the world, resource, and particular groups interested in it.

The group may begin in any social position – from complete outsiders to advisors to the king – but they should be drawn into the center of the conflict as soon as possible, whether as noble heroes who want peace or complicit henchmen of the commander.

The resource is a vital part of the economy. The economy or whole world will change if it is used up, if a mother lode is found, or if control changes hands. It should be able to lead to political upheaval, including revolution and counter-revolution. It can also be a finite resource – perhaps it is the most valuable natural treasure in the world, but it won't be around forever.

Rivals for Control

The most common tool for control is military power. This is not a subtle method, but it is effective. The commander can also use corruption, economic power, religion, or any other means at his disposal. Corruption could include family ties, blackmail, and other means of procuring peace with enemies; economic power can buy loyalty and resources; and religion can unify allies and turn enemies into subhumans.



Miser troll adventures are less about direct conflict with the creature than the social and political conflict it causes.

As the commander gains control of the resource, rival groups emerge. His success shows that control is possible. Rivals may want to topple the commander's group, take control, share control, or use the conflict to build up their own power. They may even try to destroy the resource, if they can't control it.

The GM should define the strengths and weaknesses of each group. For example, one group might have plenty of weapons, soldiers, and supply lines, but be saddled with an unimaginative boss who lacks strategic insight. Another group might be unified by a charismatic leader into a fearless, tenacious cult, while lacking money and the contacts needed to call in allies and gather useful intelligence.

One of the first goals in any conflict will be for the adventurers to determine the strengths and weaknesses of their rival groups. This requires data-gathering and the use of the Intelligence Analysis skill – see p. B201 for details on both. (If no one in the group has Intelligence Analysis, they may have to acquire an expert to keep them informed.)

After learning something about the competition, the team should be encouraged to create strategies that magnify a rival's weakness while minimizing the effect of their strength (for example, bribing away the best strategists from a group of brilliant but poor tacticians). Alternatively, they can undertake missions to try to remove the group's greatest strength (for example, destroying the key weapons depot of a group known for impressive firepower). A series of successful tactical moves should weaken a strong opponent enough to wrest control from them, or prevent a weaker opponent from ever having a chance to do the same.

Rival groups will be using the same strategies, of course! The GM should size up the strengths and weaknesses of the heroes' faction, and determine how much their rivals know. (The Propaganda skill can be used to feed rivals a red herring, but this should get progressively more difficult.) Heroes who get too comfortable might be surprised by a sudden attack upon their weakest link.

Adventures

Winterworld (Post-Apocalypse)

In a devastated city, the characters are members of a tribe that has survived the global nuclear war. The war ended, and life stabilized. The southern lands are heavily irradiated, so the tribes must stay in the north, where they have clean water and can cultivate small farms. But winters are harsh, and everyone must hide in their homes, heated by limited supplies of oil and gas. Many tribesfolk spend the warm months traveling all over the city and countryside, bringing back fuel to prepare for the icy, white winter.

The city is divided into boroughs. Each borough is united by a loose form of religion – and the city's "mayor" is not just a political leader, but a religious figurehead. The current mayor is a highly respected peacekeeper who mediates between boroughs when conflicts arise.

The past autumn, a miser troll attacked the mayor's son while they were inspecting the city's largest fuel tanks (where it had made its nest). During one of the son's increasingly frequent visits to the fuel depot, the mayor saw the troll . . . and his son tried to kill him, to prevent him from potentially hurting the son's chances at controlling the resource.

But the mayor escaped, and when he encounters the heroes, he tells them what he saw.

Meanwhile, the son tells everyone the mayor is dead, and takes on the mantle of authority . . . and starts a campaign to personally control the fuel of the city. As winter begins, a guerrilla war breaks out. The son favors a particular borough, and has promised them greater fuel supplies in return for their ruthless support of his attempt to control the heating fuel in the city.

After this set-up, let the heroes take part in the guerrilla war. In the icy streets, the weather is almost as dangerous as the enemy's bullets and grenades. They are also protectors of the mayor – if they can keep him alive and return him to power; he can stop the conflict.

The fuel tanks are protected by well-armed guards. Blowing them up would be difficult, and would lead to widespread death. They need to neutralize the mayor's son . . . and to save the city, they need to find the troll.

Take a Deep Breath (Science Fiction)

The characters are soldiers on a TL 10 moon base, owned by the military. Everyone on the base is military (possibly with a few exceptions, such as a priest, a corporate liaison, or a few aliens).

The key resource is air, manufactured in the Atmosphere Room, where several giant tanks and a power plant convert carbon dioxide. There is very little plant life (in the form of house plants) in the base.

The head of security is the miser troll's victim . . . a crazy authoritarian who scares his enemies *and* his underlings.

The party may be underlings planning a revolt, an actual rival group, spies, or some other role that encourages them to investigate ways to subvert the head of security. In the process of pursuing their other goals, they discover secret catacombs under the base . . . filled with plant life and breathable air, which the head of security has kept secret (and will try to more actively control, or even destroy, to maintain his monopoly on air).

If this conflict is enough for a lively adventure, there is no need to add more. But for an extra twist, add a tribe of Nerlochs (from *GURPS Creatures of the Night, Volume 1*) to the catacombs. Deep below the base, Anagon (the sleeping god of the Nerlochs) can be found. The head of security's first response to discovering this will be to send men down to kill it. This could be the edge the adventurers need.

Miser Troll

ST 7; **DX** 14; **IQ** 12; **HT** 12.

Will 14; **Per** 13; **Speed** 6.50; **Dodge** 9; **Move** 6.

SM -6; 1 lb.

Traits: Affliction 6 (HT-5; Blood Agent; Disadvantage, Obsession; Extended Duration, Special; Low Signature; Melee Attack, C; Onset, Special); Appearance (Hideous); Claws (Long Talons; Cutting only); Dark Vision; Detect (Leadership); Doesn't Breathe; Doesn't Eat or Drink; Doesn't Sleep; Immunity to Metabolic Hazards; Mind Reading (Accessibility, Current commander only; Emotions Only; Long Range 2; Sensory); Permeation (Flesh; Low Signature); Slippery 5; Social Stigma (Monster); Unaging.

Skills: Brawling-16; Climbing-14; Intelligence Analysis-18; Stealth-15; Strategy-13; Wrestling-16.

NAZARAAD

The nazaraad is a hybrid of a man and a bird, with human hands and taloned feet. Its feathers are the color of twilight, and its face is both predatory and wise.

A sinister creature that acts as a midwife to a summoned demon.

The creature spends weeks in a hidden location near a quiet community, preparing to impregnate a human victim. During this time, it feeds on stray pets and livestock, spies on the community to find a suitable victim, and connects with the local aerial ley lines. When all of its preparations are complete, the nazaraad visits the victim.

Gestation

The encounter takes place at night. Surrounded by illusory shadow and silence, the nazaraad envelopes its victim in its wings, and lays hands on her body as they blend together in shadow. Then it leaves, with the victim feeling dizzy. She will sleep for a full day after the encounter, and then awaken into a dream-like state.

She is pregnant with a demon – a malign and powerful being from another world – whose true form and traits are unknown until it emerges from the womb.

The gestation takes between two and four weeks (see *Adventures*, below). Throughout this time, the woman is in a dream-state, compliant to the nazaraad's instructions. To outsiders, she appears to be sleepy or temporarily autistic.

Each night, the nazaraad sends her simple instructions through the aerial ley lines it has connected to. These aerial ley lines criss-cross the area, and vibrate in silence between the rooftops, carrying the pulse of emotions to the creature, and allowing it to send telepathic instructions to its "mate."

The instructions vary. She is told to sleep in a special place, eat a particular thing, or perform a mundane act. The instructions are *very* specific and must be carried out before the following night.

The first week, these instructions are *simple*: drink fresh rainwater, sleep in the moonlight, go hungry for one full day, or walk a mile alone. The second week, they are more *unusual*: bathe in a white gown, do not speak for a full day, shave the scalp, or sleep at the foot of a tree. In the third and fourth weeks, the instructions are *strange, sometimes dangerous*: bury a personal item, steal something from a graveyard, sleep with serpents, burn a house down, or eat wild mushrooms.

The nazaraad is not limited to the ley lines, but can convey the instructions face-to-face, via the ley lines, or by speaking to her through an intermediary. The instructions cannot be written down (the words instantly disappear!) but they are easy to remember.

Although she is in a dreamy state of mind, she is capable of participating in simple conversations, and may get help from others. If she has close friends and family, they might help her carry out the instructions, even if they don't understand what is happening inside her.

Stormy Weather

Failure to perform these acts properly causes complications in the womb. *Each* missed action extends the gestation by 1d days and requires the woman to make a HT roll, at a penalty equal to the number of consecutive missed instructions. On a failure, she is wracked with moderate pain and will do anything in her power to receive and follow the next instruction, to make the pain end. On a failure by 5 or more, or any critical failure, the demon is aborted: the woman slips into a coma and may roll HT each day to recover. On a critical failure, she dies.

The weather surrounding the community reflects the progress of the birth. If it is going well, the weather is calm. If it is going badly, the weather becomes violent, chaotic, and weird. When the weather gets weird, the air is thick with supernatural phenomena: the wind swirls in confusion, tendrils of fog slither through the air, and lightning flashes without thunder.

Confronting the Creature

The nazaraad is a cunning combatant, with several special attacks. It can bite for 2d cutting damage, and give a blood-curdling shriek to cause a Fright Check. It can also cast illusions, typically to plunge an area into darkness, make itself appear to grow to enormous size, or to summon up "spirits" to distract an opponent while obscuring itself. However, the nazaraad can only cast one such illusion at a time, and must concentrate to do so. The illusion will persist until the nazaraad dispels it or casts a new one.

Disrupting the Transmissions

The aerial ley lines can be disrupted by radio waves, satellite transmissions, and other electromagnetic activity. If a radio station or large satellite dish are between the nazaraad and the woman, she cannot receive the instructions.

To represent this, apply a penalty to nazaraad's Telesend roll (-1 for a building with security guards using walkie-talkies, up to -8 for the transmission satellite of a major television network). Note that lacking instructions is not the same thing as failing to follow an instruction, and does not require the woman to make a HT roll.

For low-TL campaigns, the GM can replace electronic broadcasting with prayer or magic. A group of people who pray between the nazaraad and the pregnant woman (assuming they are in a church, speaking in unison), give similar penalties. Like the electronic transmission, the blockers do not have to know what they are doing.

Magic can be used, as well. The following spells can be tried, with a Quick Contest between the mage's skill and the nazaraad's Telesend roll: Beacon, Devitalize Air, Seek Gate, Spell Shield, Suspend Time, and Suspend Mana.

If the nazaraad is killed, the gestation ends. The creature vanishes in a thick cloud of smoke, and the woman slips into a coma for a day and then gradually recovers.

The Demon Is Born

What *is* the demon? This is up to the GM. The easiest result is a pyrotechnic birth, with wind, billowing clouds overhead, and hellfire surrounding the womb. The demon is an infernal spirit that rises up . . . and then leaves. Or immediately attacks everything nearby. People will need to run for cover as it sets the town on fire and melts flesh from bones.

The demon could also be a fully-described monster, with detailed traits and attributes. Use the template on p. 155 of **GURPS Magic** as a guide.

Regardless, the nazaraad itself vanishes after the birth. The work is done, so it leaves. Whether the woman survives the birth is also up to the GM.

Regardless, witnesses of the birth must make a Fright Check. Those who fail suffer the results on the Fright Check Table *and* forget the event – the memories begin to fade an hour after the birth, and by the end of the day, there is no recollection. Writing and other art, including recordings of spoken testimony, will remain . . . but cameras will not record the event.

Adventures

A nazaraad adventure reaches its climax when the demon is born or the birth is prevented. The adventure can *begin* with the discovery of a nazaraad building up its strength, or well after it has begun the gestation.

Many people in the community will be involved. Friends and family may come to the victim's aid – to save her, or to help her through the gestation. Locals with supernatural powers will feel the ley lines humming and the change in weather patterns, and may seek out the party.

The due date for the birth is determined by the GM. In most cases, it's best to have the birth arrive at the best possible moment for the adventure, as opposed to setting an exact day. Delayed instructions should always succeed in pushing the birth back by a day or more, however.

The heroes can fill a variety of roles – visitors, paranormal investigators, local religious figures who feel the woman is possessed, and so on. If they are members of the community, their involvement could be what transforms them from ordinary people to heroes.

The Spire (Fantasy)

The characters are castle guards who get caught between a princess, her fiancé, and her true love. The villain of the story is a wizard, Rakelash, who uses the visitation of a nazaraad to spin his evil scheme.

One night, the guards see a nazaraad fly to The Spire, the tallest tower in the area, and the home of Princess Isabel. Another guard named Frey confirms the sighting the next day (he witnessed it as well), and reveals that he is the secret lover of Isabel . . . and he is concerned, because Isabel has been blank-eyed and sleepy ever since.

Isabel is scheduled to marry Conant, a popular Count.

Conant is smart, handsome, and *obsessed* with rising in the ranks of nobility. While he isn't black-hearted, he will do whatever it takes to please the right people. Toward that end, the Count has made a secret pact with Rakelash – Conant helps with the pregnancy of the princess in exchange for a fast and permanent rise in status.

As for Rakelash . . . he knew the nazaraad was nesting in the cliffs nearby, preparing to find a suitable victim, and used a simple spell to direct the creature to Isabel. Rakelash *wants* the demon to be born. To him, its birth is a holy event, like the arrival of a prophet. But Conant is less enthusiastic. Once he sees what is happening, he has second thoughts.

At this point, the GM should provide the guards with hints or evidence of an alliance between Rakelash and Conant. They will hear the two men speaking, or find written evidence that hints at the plot.

The rest of the adventure is determined by the actions of the heroes. Frey is the GM's tool, to be used to keep the rescuers on track. When they get stuck, he can come up with a lucky break that gets the plot moving again.

They should be given a chance to learn more about the nazaraad – what it is, what it is doing, and where it can be found. They could leave the castle to confront the creature in its lair in the cliffs, or to discover that prayer and magic can block the instructions.

Conant is also useful. If he can be persuaded to turn away from Rakelash, it will be much easier to save Isabel. But he is unlikely to break his alliance with a powerful wizard just because a handful of castle guards want him to.



Nazaraad

ST 13; **DX** 12; **IQ** 11; **HT** 13.

Will 12; **Per** 15; **Speed** 6.25; **Dodge** 9; **Move** 6.

SM 0; 165 lbs.

Traits: Callous; Chameleon 4 (Accessibility, In darkness only); Duty (Bring about the birth of a new demon); Feature (Can impregnate a human woman with a demon); Flight (Magical; Small Wings; Air Move 12); Illusion (Area Effect, 16 yards; Independence; Magical); Sharp Teeth; Social Stigma (Monster); Striking ST +6 (Bite Only); Telesend (Accessibility, Mate only; Dependent on ley lines; Reliable 5); Terror (Hearing-Based).

Skills: Aerobatics-13; Artist (Illusion)-12; Brawling-14.

PENDULUM GHOUL

The pendulum ghoul is a legless, undead beast that hangs from a chain or rope in dungeons and other dark, cavernous places.

A violent beast that swings out of the darkness, attacking the unwary.

To attack, the ghoul climbs up its chain, crawls along the rafters and outcroppings of the walls, and then swings out to strike, either with its body or its long arms and terrifying claws. It can pull the chain together to keep it taut, and let it fully extend to get a maximum arc.

Safe in the Darkness

In darkness, the pendulum ghoul is as insubstantial as a ghost. In *any* amount of light, it has a normal, physical form. The ghoul could become insubstantial while swinging at a target from the shadows above, and only become physical just as it reaches the illuminated area around the victim's torch or flashlight. (Note that the mass of the creature doesn't change, so its swing is unaffected when it is insubstantial.)

In total darkness, the ghoul and its victims cannot attack each other physically. Psionic and magical attacks will work, however, at a -3 penalty. Smart opponents can use light and darkness to their advantage to defeat the creature . . . or at least avoid it.

A pendulum ghoul that is stuck in darkness will become frustrated, and will howl and snarl from the shadows – possibly causing a Fright Check for those who didn't know it was there.

Lurking Above

While it rests, the ghoul secretes a sticky goo that pools on the floor under it. Adventurers can roll against Observation or Perception-4, modified by any vision penalties, to notice the goo. Anyone who steps in it is stuck like an insect on

Chains, Ropes, and Vines

Normally, a pendulum ghoul is encountered hanging from a thick metal chain. This has DR 8 and 22 HP, but ignores crushing damage. The chain is securely attached to the ceiling.

The ghoul could instead be hanging from thick ropes or vines. Ropes have DR 2 and 3 HP. Vines are 0 DR and 2 HP. Ropes and vines ignore crushing damage as well, but are vulnerable to attacks by extreme heat and flame.



fly-paper. With effort, he can pull himself out of it (roll a Quick Contest of ST versus Binding 12), but he'll probably lose his shoes if he tries to escape quickly.

Pendulum ghouls will take advantage of an adventurer stuck in the goo, swinging down from the ceiling at him. Treat the ghoul's velocity (p. B431) as if it were falling. For example, a ghoul swinging from a five-yard-high ceiling would do $(30 \times 10) / 100 = 3d$ collision damage.

Pendulum ghouls secrete their sticky goo along the ceiling, building small blobs that hold weapons and food. Their "food" consists of small animals and captured trespassers. They snatch rats, birds, lizards, and people, snap their necks, and stick them along the ceiling in the shadows for later.

To create a new ghoul, they put a dead humanoid in a special ceiling cache to rot. It decomposes for a day, and is reborn as a ghoul. Other ghouls then remove its legs and fasten it to a chain.

Pendulum ghouls will steal weapons and equipment, and make sticky caches that hold all kinds of items. The GM can allow a ghoul to arm itself with a snatched weapon, such as a

spear, large knife, axe, or club. The ghouls skill level is equal to its DX-1. Otherwise, it claws for 3d+2 crushing damage.

Adventures

Pendulum ghouls are "combat creatures." They are found in underground chambers, abandoned buildings, tunnels, caves, and heavily-forested areas.

When setting up an encounter, the GM should consider the environment/terrain, the number of ghouls, the lighting in the area, and the chain or rope the ghouls hang from. The floor is another detail to think about. It could be cluttered and uneven, clear, sloped, or flooded.

The Rescue (Modern Day)

While exploring a labyrinthine Egyptian tomb, a network of underground tunnels and rooms, one investigator (an NPC) vanishes. The remaining explorers quickly find him attached to the ceiling, surrounded by half a dozen pendulum ghouls (or enough to *seriously* challenge the party). The creatures attack aggressively, forcing the interlopers to retreat. They need to regroup and form a plan to rescue their friend.

Jungle Attack (Modern Day)

The group is walking through a very thick jungle at night. As it starts to rain, they are ambushed by pendulum ghouls. The monsters hang from the thickest branches of tall trees, and are able to swing themselves around tree trunks, like tethered monkeys.

The ground is covered in sticky moss. The would-be meals will have to dodge the ghouls by hiding behind trees, seeking cover under fallen trunks and behind twisted roots.

The rain comes down, hitting the canopy above, as lightning flares overhead. The defenders need to escape the area or kill the ghouls.

If the fight goes poorly and the party needs a *deus ex machina* to survive, the sky could become so overcast that it blots out all moonlight, keeping the pendulum ghouls in total darkness, and thus insubstantial, long enough to allow an escape.

Pendulum Ghoul

ST 30; DX 11; IQ 5; HT 12.

Will 10; Per 9; Speed 5.75; Dodge 8; Move 5.

SM 0; 80 lbs.

Traits: Appearance (Monstrous); Binding 12 (Area Effect, 2 yards; Extended Duration, One day; Persistent; Preparation Required, One Hour); Blunt Claws; Clinging; Divine Curse (Forever tethered to chain); Doesn't Breathe; Doesn't Eat or Drink; High Pain Threshold; Immunity to Metabolic Hazards; Injury Tolerance (No Blood; Unliving); Insubstantiality (Affected by gravity; Can Carry Objects, Light Encumbrance; Only in total darkness; Reflexive; Unconscious Only); Lameness (Legless); Regeneration (Regular; Only when sleeping); Social Stigma (Monster); Unaging.



SEA GIANT

A sea giant looks like a tall, gray-green man with tentacles for hair, glowing eyes, and an otherwise featureless face. It is thick and muscular, with clawed hands and fins for feet.

A large humanoid that sleeps on the sea floor, in a bed of magical symbols.

Although it lives at great depths under the surface of the sea, it breathes air. It holds its breath like a whale, able to swim underwater continuously for hours.

The Pattern of Symbols

A sea giant spends most of its time lying in one spot at the bottom of the sea, surrounded by a complex arrangement of objects it has collected. The objects – bones, coins, rope, cloth, and wood are laid out in an arcane pattern that draws magical power. The pattern pulls in mana from hundreds of miles, causing the creature to grow in size and strength. The increase is very slow, like the development of a tree.

The pattern gradually expands with the sleeping giant. To fill the gaps, it must periodically wake up, gather more objects, and set them into the new spaces. It searches for special objects: items that are durable, shiny, and hard to find. Gold coins, machine parts, polished wood, and jewelry are good . . . but magic items, metallic artwork, and gemstones are best.

The area directly above the pattern is a stable bubble of normal atmosphere and pressure. Anyone walking on the pattern can act and breathe normally. The pocket extends upward about ten feet.

The sea giant is attuned to the pattern, so it can sense if any part is moved. If an object is shifted or bumped, roll against the giant's Perception, with normal range penalties; the giant

gains a +5 bonus or more if the object is removed from its spot or broken.

When the creature is away from the pattern, the pieces glow brightly enough to be seen on the surface at night with a Perception-4 roll. With a telescope (or similar device) a viewer can discern the symbols!

For an added twist, the pattern may spell something. From above, the letters, symbols, and hieroglyphics convey some sort of occult information. Roll against Hidden Lore (Oceanic Occultism) or Occultism-6 to interpret the pattern correctly.

Attacks and Size

Although barely more intelligent than a dog, a sea giant has heightened awareness and supernatural senses. It knows that ships are full of desirable objects, and will follow a nearby ship and prepare an attack.

The creature can gauge the overall threat of the ship, including the number of sailors on it and its weapons. Its attack methods are limited, however, so the plan is primarily a question of when to attack, how ferociously, and when to retreat after being injured.

The strength and approach of the attack is determined by its size, which is determined by its age – an older giant will be larger and stronger, though somewhat slower.

A *large sea giant* stands 9 feet tall, larger than any human. It can stand on the deck of a ship without causing it to sink and even hide behind large objects for cover. It can wield sufficiently large weapons (such as harpoons) at -2 to skill but usually prefers to grapple or claw in close combat while simultaneously whipping with its tentacles. Someone who poses a serious threat may get special attention: the giant will grapple with both hands while whipping him into unconsciousness. This sea giant is as fast and agile as it is strong, but it can be chained and placed in the ship's hold if it is subdued.

A *huge sea giant*, at 20 feet tall, is almost too big to be captured – only the largest ships could contain it. Most ships would capsize or have their deck broken through if a huge sea giant climbed aboard. It can clear a deck of sailors with a swipe of its arms and break a mast if enraged. It will often hang onto the side of a ship with one arm, alternating between

Claws and Tentacles

The table below summarizes the attacks of each class of sea giant. "AoA Damage" is the damage done if the giant uses All-Out Attack (Strong) while "Weight" is the *effective*

weight of the attack for the purpose of Parrying Heavy Weapons (p. B376). Note that the large sea giant can make both attacks simultaneously, while the others cannot.

| Attack | Damage | AoA Damage | Reach | Weight |
|---------------------------|---------|------------|-------|--------|
| Large Sea Giant | | | | |
| Claw | 3d-1 cr | 3d+1 cr | C | 2 |
| Tentacle | 3d+1 cr | 3d+3 cr | C, 1 | 2 |
| Huge Sea Giant | | | | |
| Claw | 7d+2 cr | 9d cr | C-2 | 4.5 |
| Tentacle | 9d cr | 10d+1 cr | C-3 | 4.5 |
| Colossal Sea Giant | | | | |
| Claw | 6d×3 cr | 7d×3 cr | C-7 | 11 |
| Tentacle | 5d×4 cr | 6d×4 cr | C-10 | 11 |

clawing holes in the side and keeping crewmen at bay with tentacle lashes. When it dives into the sea, it causes a wave that can tip a single-mast ship (make an immediate control roll at -4).

The Origin of the Creature

A lost merfolk, alone and far from home, may become a sea giant. As it struggles to return to familiar surroundings, its mind and body become very tired. It lays down on the sea floor, curls into a ball, and grows a rubbery shell. Two to 6 months later, the shell opens and a sea giant comes out. It immediately looks for a suitable location for the pattern.

If merfolk know about this transformation (and the elder merfolk surely do), they will have strong reactions to sea giants. They might want to destroy the beast, considering them mortal enemies, rivals, or polar opposites. Or, they could attempt to capture the sea giant and change it back, performing a “psychic rescue” of a lost merman or mermaid.

The *colossal sea giant* is 50 feet tall. It can capsize a single-mast ship with one blow. It can withstand an enormous amount of damage and can create huge waves or a whirlpool just by swimming (-5 to control rolls.) A giant this large will rarely even bother with sailors, preferring to tread water while rending holes in the ship with All-Out Attacks until it sinks.

Note that a sea giant grows gradually throughout its existence. The GM should feel free to interpolate other “size classes” as needed.

Weaknesses

On clear nights, the sea giant will leave its bubble to calmly float on the surface of the water. Its tentacles gently writhe in the starlight as it drifts off to sleep. Anyone who encounters the creature could sneak up on it and deliver a lethal blow, or raid the sea floor pattern while it slumbers on the surface.

Its brain is located directly between its eyes. This spot is not protected by its natural Damage Resistance, so a skillfully aimed blow could kill the creature. Even if the blow isn't lethal, enough injury will often drive the sea giant off.



Adventures

The campaign Tech Level has a decisive influence on the nature of the adventure. The TL determines the method characters use to explore underwater, the ships they will be traveling in, the type of objects used to create the magic pattern, and the weapons they can use to trap or kill the creature.

Barth's Lost Blade

In this TL3-4 fantasy adventure, the party is hired by a wizard guild to find a lost magic dagger. The wizards know it was lost at sea, and they have a good idea of the general area where it sank under the waves. They send Barth, the son of the guild master, with the party, on a trading vessel that will cross the spot where the weapon was last seen.

Barth is a capable wizard, but also naïve and clumsy. He is equal parts helpful and hindrance, there because his father is the boss.

Barth detects the dagger, lying inside the pattern of a sea giant. He knows a few facts about the creature, so the crew has some idea of what they are getting into. (If one of the PCs is knowledgeable about sea giants, the GM can also play Barth's knowledge as useless.)

Using Barth's magical skills, they travel down to the pattern. They find the dagger – and a lot of other magic items. Barth wants to bring back as many as possible to the guild and document the rest. If the sea giant is sleeping, they will have to move quietly and carefully. If the sea giant is away, they have more freedom to explore.

At this point, the adventure can turn in several different directions. The sea giant could return and attack (or wake up and attack). It might attack the ship above if it is unaware that the characters and Barth are standing inside the pattern (returning home could be a serious challenge).

If things go horribly wrong, Barth's father could help – he is a powerful mage, and has been watching his son's progress. Of course, they don't need dad if they find a magic item in the pattern that can get them back. The item could be used to kill or charm the sea giant, to teleport them back home, or to reassemble parts of the ship and sail to safety.

Modern-Day Melville

In this TL8 adventure, the characters are passengers on a small ship. Halfway through the journey, they stumble across a room full of heavy weapons and a submersible watercraft . . . and soon after, the captain takes the ship off-course, and begins talking about the “great beast,” a sea creature that destroyed his ship and killed his crew years ago. The captain is well-armed and protected by henchmen.

The “great beast” – a pale-skinned sea giant – is spotted the next day (by at least one of the passengers as well). The captain isn't hallucinating, but he *is* obsessed. The only actual benefit (to the passengers and crew) is his study of Hidden Lore (Oceanic Occultism) to prepare for this day.

The GM and players can use this scenario to recreate scenes from *Moby Dick*, using modern day versions of characters such as Starbuck and Queequeg. For a more self-referential adventure, if the *characters* have read *Moby Dick*, they may recognize literary elements from the book, manifest in the world, and try to use their knowledge of the novel to their advantage (such as preparing something comparable to a sealed coffin ahead of time).

This adventure can be run without ever involving the pattern on the sea floor. However, the pattern can be used as bait – the captain could send the passengers into the sea in the submersible craft to disturb the arrangement of objects.

At some point in the adventure, of course, the sea giant will attack the ship. The passengers can assist the captain in trying to kill the creature, try to stop him, or just get away with their lives . . . no matter what, their lives will be in danger.

Large Sea Giant

ST 21; DX 12; IQ 5; HT 13.

Will 12; Per 13; Speed 7.00; Dodge 10; Move 7.

SM +1; 750 lbs.

Traits: Amphibious; Claws (Blunt); Discriminatory Hearing; Doesn't Breathe (Oxygen Storage, x300); DR 4 (Limited, All but Skull); Enhanced Move 1 (Water Move 7/14); Extra Attack 1 (Tentacles Only); Injury Tolerance (Damage Reduction 4; Limited, Piercing); Loner (6); Obsession (Create pattern and grow) (6); Pressure Support 3; Striker (Tentacles; Crushing; Long, +1 SM); Subsonic Hearing; Unaging; Wild Animal.

Skills: Brawling-14; Survival (Open Ocean)-13; Symbol Drawing (Deep Sea Patterns)-14; Tactics (Naval)-10*.

Huge Sea Giant

ST 45; DX 11; IQ 5; HT 13.

Will 13; Per 14; Speed 6.00; Dodge 9; Move 7 (Water).

SM +3; 4 tons.

Traits: Amphibious; Claws (Blunt); Discriminatory Hearing; Doesn't Breathe (Oxygen Storage, x300); DR 9 (Limited, All but Skull); Enhanced Move 1 (Water Move 7/14); Injury Tolerance (Damage Reduction 4; Limited, Piercing); Loner (6); Obsession (Create pattern and grow) (6); Pressure Support 3; Reduced Ground Move 4; Striker (Tentacles; Crushing; Long, +1 SM); Subsonic Hearing; Unaging; Wild Animal.

Skills: Brawling-13; Survival (Open Ocean)-14; Symbol Drawing (Deep Sea Patterns)-15; Tactics (Naval)-10*.

Colossal Sea Giant

ST 110; DX 10; IQ 5; HT 13.

Will 15; Per 16; Speed 5.00; Dodge 8; Move 7 (Water).

SM +6; 75 tons.

Traits: Amphibious; Claws (Blunt); Discriminatory Hearing; Doesn't Breathe (Oxygen Storage, x300); DR 20 (Limited, All but Skull); Enhanced Move 1 (Water Move 7/14); Injury Tolerance (Damage Reduction 4; Limited, Piercing); Loner (6); Obsession (Create pattern and grow) (6); Pressure Support 3; Reduced Ground Move 1; Striker (Tentacles; Crushing; Long, +1 SM); Subsonic Hearing; Unaging; Wild Animal.

Skills: Brawling-12; Survival (Open Ocean)-15; Symbol Drawing (Deep Sea Patterns)-16; Tactics (Naval)-10*.

* Optional specialty; see p. B169.

STRIKEWORM

A strikeworm looks like a giant eagle's head on a fat, rubbery worm's body the size of a large dog.

A big, flying worm that dive-bombs its prey.

Strikeworms live in nests on the edge of cliffs, overlooking rivers, lakes, and oceans. When they see something to eat (usually rodents or fish), they leap off the cliff, dive down through the air, and slam into the victim. Their flight is directed by a magical organ inside their bodies that allows them to adjust their weight, like ballast tanks on a submarine. A strikeworm's strong, elastic body is unharmed by the impact of a plunge, even if it hits the ground.

In combat, a strikeworm uses its tail to grapple small animals, and attacks with its sharp beak (1d-2 large piercing damage). They are not timid, and have been known to kill and eat people.

The Hovergland

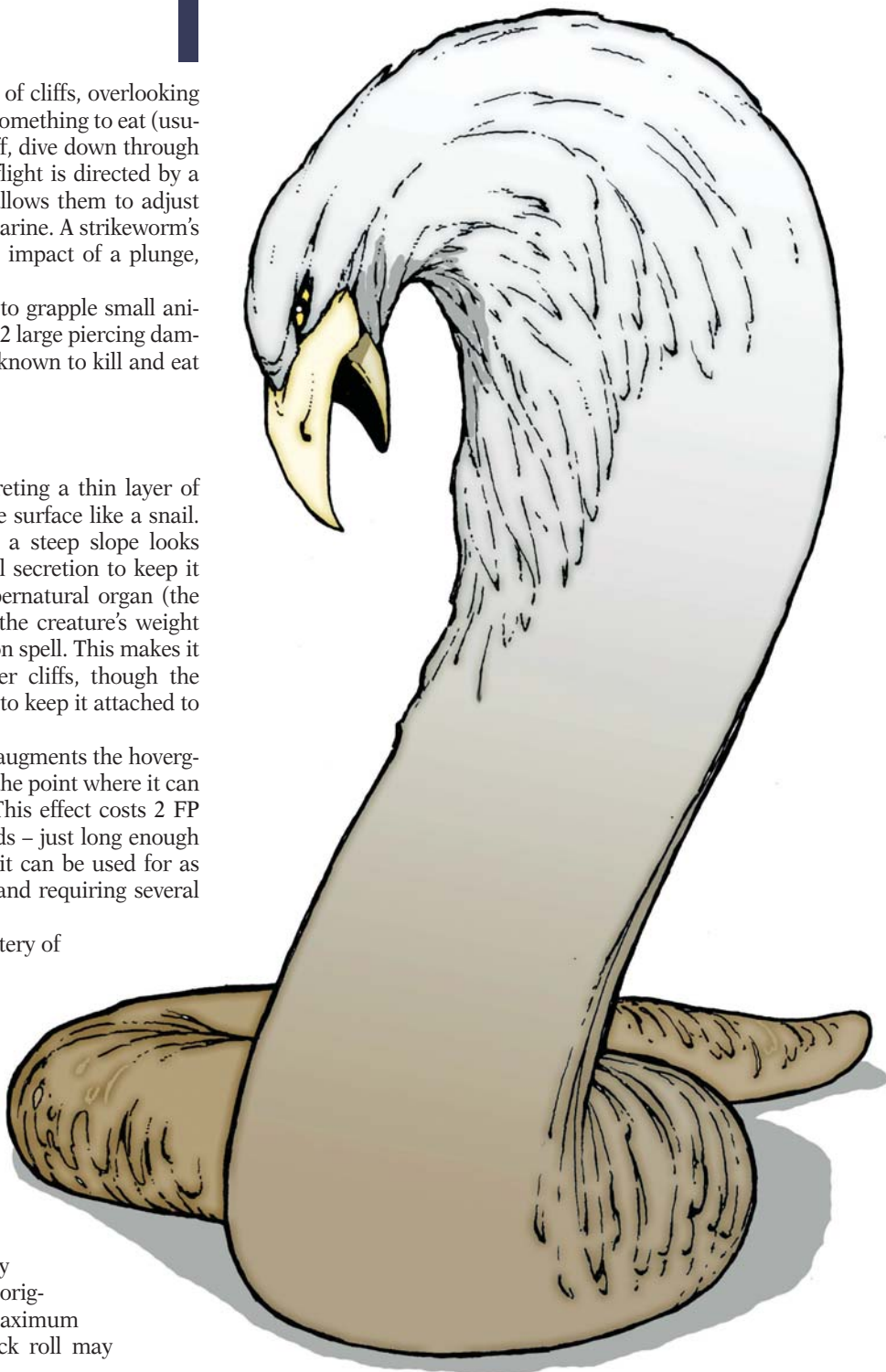
The strikeworm climbs rocks by secreting a thin layer of glue-like jelly, which keeps it stuck to the surface like a snail. Still, watching a strikeworm slither up a steep slope looks impossible – it is too big for any natural secretion to keep it stuck. The effect is achieved with a supernatural organ (the hovergland) that temporarily decreases the creature's weight through an innate variant of the Levitation spell. This makes it light enough to climb surprisingly sheer cliffs, though the stickiness of the jelly is not quite enough to keep it attached to a vertical surface.

When attacking prey, the strikeworm augments the hovergland with adrenaline, lightening itself to the point where it can glide through the air for brief periods. This effect costs 2 FP and is usually used for only a few seconds – just long enough to snatch some prey. In times of stress, it can be used for as long as half a minute before giving out and requiring several minutes of rest.

Strikeworms have an astounding mastery of the hovergland. They can spring from a cliff, glide at a 45 degree angle toward a school of fish, then “turn off” the gland, enabling the strikeworm to plunge with its full weight into the water. They are equally adept at using the hovergland, wind, and their body weight to attack animals on the ground. In both cases, the strikeworm can effectively Move and Attack at full skill, ignoring the normal -4 penalty and skill cap of 9. In a full dive, it adds its original altitude (in yards) to its speed, to a maximum of Air Move 48. Though a missed attack roll may

mean a collision with the ground, the creature's musculature is designed to withstand most blunt trauma.

If it feels it necessary, the strikeworm may slam into an opponent instead of biting him. This normally does 1d of damage, but if the strikeworm is in a full dive it slams for 4d damage! As this also inflicts significant damage on the strikeworm (taking dice equal to half its opponent's HP) this is a tactic of last resort, even with the strikeworm's natural resilience.



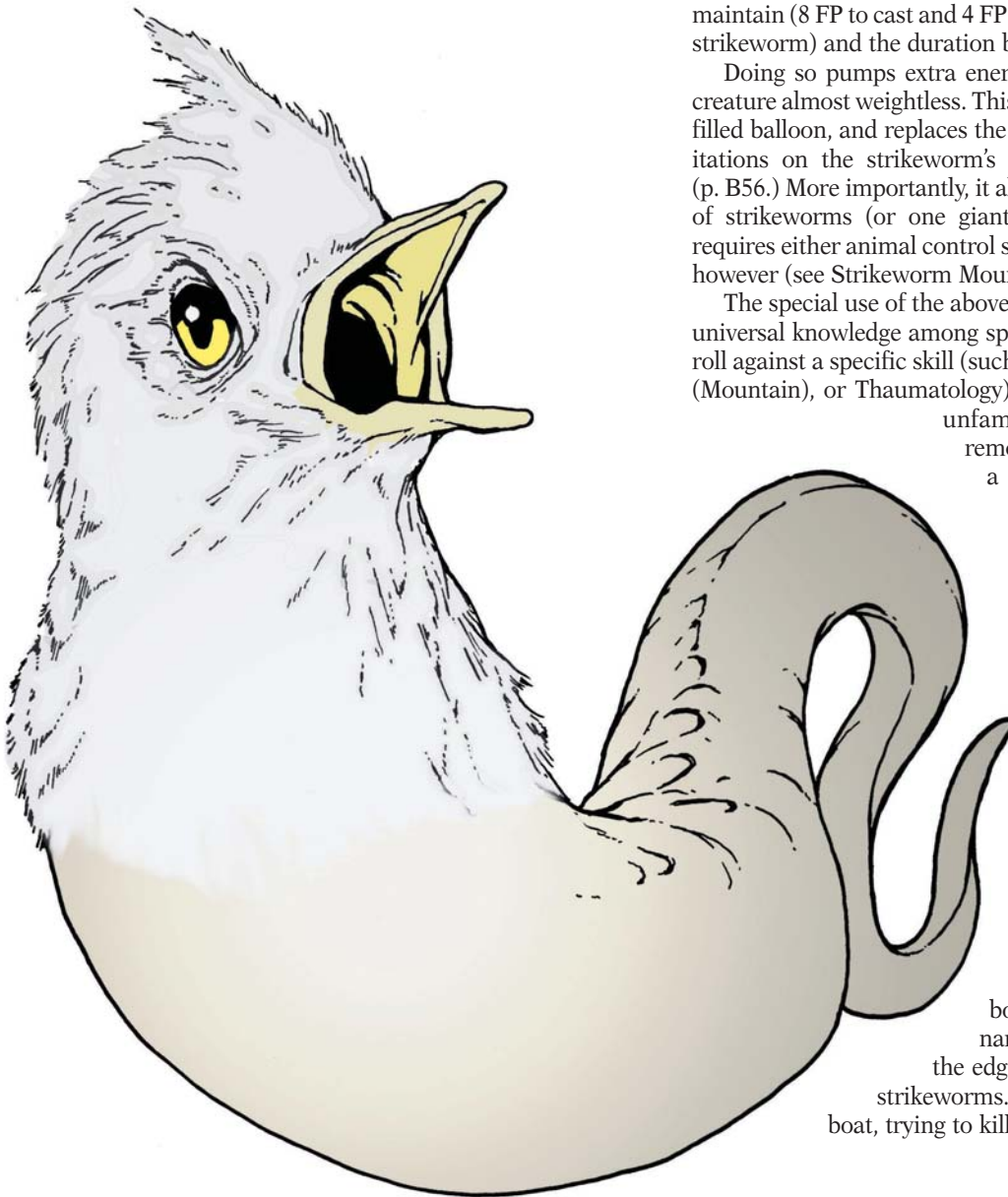
Shine Stun

The only major weakness of the strikeworm is its vulnerability to hypnosis from bright, shimmering light. If it looks into the water as it catches the sun's rays, the reflection stuns the creature. Its mind goes blank and it will not move for hours. Only the interruption of the reflected light, physical contact with another creature, or a loud noise will break the trance.

Adventurers who encounter a strikeworm can use this weakness to their advantage. A small mirror, aimed properly, may be enough to turn the creature into a motionless statue. Roll against the better of DX-4, IQ-4 or Survival skill, modified by Speed/Range penalties, to stun one.

Giant Strikeworms

If it lives long enough, a strikeworm can grow to giant size twice as tall as a man, with a body as big as the largest python. The giant strikeworm is a necessary part of the reproduction process; it is impregnated by a normal strikeworm, after which it lays a cluster of eggs. The giant breed is more intelligent than



the smaller counterparts, as well as being tougher, hungrier, and lazier. They stay in their lairs while normal strikeworms bring them food.

The giant strikeworm is dangerous if provoked, with a beak capable of inflicting 3d+1 large piercing damage and a slam that does 3d damage or 13d damage in a full dive. There are legends that describe strikeworms the size of dragons, that can speak and cast spells.

Magical Augmentation

Although a hovergland is useless if removed from the strikeworm's body (the entire circulatory system is necessary for it to function), a mage who is familiar with the strikeworm can enhance it. The trick is to target the hovergland – not the beast as a whole – with one of the following spells: Apportation, Boost Strength, Charge Powerstone, Flight, Flying Carpet, Hawk Flight, Lend Energy, Lend Power, Lend Vitality, Levitation, Light Tread, Lighten Burden, Might, Share Energy, Slow Fall, or Walk on Air. The hovergland never resists. When used in such a manner, the spell costs 2 FP to cast and 1 FP to maintain (8 FP to cast and 4 FP to maintain if cast upon a giant strikeworm) and the duration becomes 10 minutes.

Doing so pumps extra energy into the organ, making the creature almost weightless. This lifts the body up like a helium-filled balloon, and replaces the Costs Fatigue and Gliding limitations on the strikeworm's Flight with Lighter Than Air (p. B56.) More importantly, it allows a human to use a number of strikeworms (or one giant one) as a mount! Doing so requires either animal control spells or a great deal of training, however (see Strikeworm Mount, p. 15).

The special use of the above spells on a strikeworm may be universal knowledge among spellcasters, or it might require a roll against a specific skill (such as Biology (Zoology), Survival (Mountain), or Thaumatology). The GM can also assess a -4 unfamiliarity penalty (which is removed with sufficient practice) or a -3 hit location penalty for targeting the vitals (which cannot be removed.) Or perhaps the hovergland is less receptive to magic; instead of being able to use any spell which lightens or transfers energy, it requires a specific spell: Augment Hovergland. If this spell is known to only a few, strikeworm mounts will be comparatively rare.

Adventure Ideas

River Attack (Fantasy or Pirate Legend Adventure)

The characters are on a riverboat, slowly moving through a narrow mountain passage. Up on the edge of the cliff, they see a row of strikeworms. The creatures dive-bomb the boat, trying to kill everyone on the deck.

Strikeworm Mounts

An enhanced strikeworm can carry a load, or even a sufficiently small rider, if somehow persuaded to do so. Anyone with the knowledge of how to augment a strikeworm's hovergland will also be aware that their bodies are not designed for carrying large weights; a sensible rider will keep the beasts below Medium encumbrance. Following this precaution limits a normal strikeworm to carrying 48 lbs., which means a normal-sized human will need multiple strikeworms and a special harness (\$300 and 35 lbs.) to fly. A giant strikeworm can safely carry up to 438 lbs., making it a more likely mount.

Divide the total weight by the number of strikeworms carrying the harness to find out the encumbrance level for each beast. Their unencumbered Air Move is 6 after being halved for paced running (see below), which is then reduced normally by encumbrance. After determining the strikeworm's effective Move, apply ± 1 for every 5 mph of wind speed.

Even when augmented by this spell, a strikeworm is not designed for long distance travel. All travel is treated as paced running (p. B354), not hiking; every minute, the strikeworm must roll against HT if at medium encumbrance or less, HT-4 if at heavy encumbrance, and HT-8 if at extra-heavy encumbrance. (For simplicity, make one HT roll for groups in a harness.) On a failure, the creature loses 1 FP; on a critical failure or a failure by 5 or more, it also suffers 1 HP of injury. Dropping to less than 1/3 FP has its usual effects (p. B426.)

Travelers with appropriate skills may know that mirrors or similar can be used to stun them (or their guide may know). This can give them time to escape by going below deck (or jumping overboard).

Then they are hit by a second wave of strikeworms, from the other side of the river. A large colony of the creatures inhabit the area. They have become fat and healthy by feeding on the fish, animals, and travelers that pass by their cliff nests. If they survive, they will have a chance to find treasure (and skeletons of previous victims) along the steep rocky shoreline, and at the bottom of the river.

The Mountain Cave (Fantasy)

The party is traveling along a dangerous mountain pass. A storm begins, so they hide in a cave for shelter. That's where they meet a giant strikeworm, sleeping in a nest. If it wakes but they don't attack, it watches them carefully, then turns toward the wall.

A secret door in the wall opens, and a middle-aged woman in a dark red robe walks out. She is a powerful spellcaster and the giant strikeworm is her mount. She carries a leather bridle in her hands.

The woman doesn't want a confrontation. She greets them with a hint of suspicion, and talks to them. If they need help and they can get a good Reaction result, she will oblige.

If they fight the giant strikeworm right away, the woman enters and defends her mount. The team can flee into the secret passage, run out of the cave, or win the fight. (They could also call a truce and apologize.) If she is in danger of being seriously injured or killed, and she has a chance to leave, the woman flies away on the strikeworm.

The characters may meet her again.

Balloon Slugs on Planet Z (Science Fiction)

The characters are exploring a weird planet. They travel through a variety of terrain, including jungles, swamps, and jagged rocky hills, finally coming to a stop at the edge of a lake.

In the morning, they wake to a strange sight: a gigantic balloon floats over them, drifting with the wind, to the lake. It is covered with strikeworms – which look like feathered slugs at that distance. Over the water, the strikeworms detach and dive in. The water foams and churns as they feed on fish and swim back to shore.

If anyone investigates, they find a tree that emits balloon-shaped spores. A yellow-and-red spotted ball forms on a branch, inflates, and then breaks away. The tree is spreading its seeds. When the strikeworms found it along the shore, they learned to use it for transport over the lake. They ride it until they see a school of fish, they attack, and the balloon floats away.

If they get too close, they will be attacked. The strikeworms will dive-bomb their camp, or bite when they come back to the shoreline. The characters can investigate further and find the nests of the strikeworms (where hundreds of them live), analyze the weird tree (it creates at least six spores a day), or capture specimens for future study.

Strikeworm

ST 9; **DX** 13; **IQ** 3; **HT** 12.

Will 8; **Per** 12; **Speed** 6.25; **Dodge** 10; **Move** 6.

SM 0; 90 lbs.

Traits: Acute Vision 3; Clinging (Not on vertical surfaces or ceilings); Combat Reflexes; Confused (Only when faced with shimmering light); DR 6 (Limited, Crushing; Tough Skin); Extended Lifespan 2; Flight (Costs Fatigue, 2 FP; Gliding; Maximum Duration, 30 seconds; Air Move 12); Ham-Fisted 2; Minor Handicap (Cannot effectively carry heavy loads); No Legs (Slithers); One Arm (Tail); Sharp Beak; Wild Animal.

Skills: Brawling-15; Flying Attack (Brawling)-15*; Flying Attack (DX Grapple)-15*.

* A technique from *GURPS Martial Arts* which allows for a Move and Attack at full skill.

Giant Strikeworm

ST 27; **DX** 13; **IQ** 5; **HT** 13.

Will 12; **Per** 13; **Speed** 6.50; **Dodge** 10; **Move** 6.

SM +3; 2,200 lbs.

Traits: As for the Strikeworm, above, plus DR 2 (Tough Skin) and Laziness.

Skills: As for the Strikeworm, above.

URIMANDER

The urimander looks like a snake with two bony arms and catfish “whiskers” on its face and head. Its skin is shiny, colored in black and gold.

A magical reptile that makes its victims shrink.

Anyone who approaches the urimander will shrink – the closer he gets, the smaller he becomes. The urimander must be alive and awake for this effect to work.

Small World

Urimanders radiate an innate variant of the Shrink Other spell. Anyone within eight feet of the serpent must roll HT-4 every second to resist the effect.

Use the table below to determine the strength of the effect by distance. SMA is the adjustment applied to the character's normal Size Modifier. Scale affects his height, ST, HP, DR, Move, and damage done by any non-muscle-powered weapons.

| Distance | SMA | Weight | Scale |
|-------------|-----|-----------|--------|
| Eight feet | 0 | Normal | Normal |
| Seven feet | -1 | ×1/3 | ×3/4 |
| Six feet | -2 | ×1/10 | ×1/2 |
| Five feet | -3 | ×1/30 | ×1/3 |
| Four feet | -4 | ×1/100 | ×1/4 |
| Three feet | -5 | ×1/300 | ×1/6 |
| Two feet | -6 | ×1/1,000 | ×1/9 |
| One foot | -7 | ×1/3,000 | ×1/14 |
| Point blank | -8 | ×1/10,000 | ×1/24 |

Intermediate distances use the lower entry on the table (e.g., treat a distance of 6'11" as being within six feet.)

Although moving closer will make the character shrink even more, backing up does not reverse the effect. Regrowth begins only when the victim leaves the area of effect (at least eight feet away), the urimander is dead, or the urimander is sleeping. Regrowth happens at a rate of one SM every ten minutes.

The size change affects all clothing and possessions, and occurs at an even pace. As a result, the world seems to expand, and the victim may not know what is happening. If one character shrinks while others (out of range) do not, the size change will be immediately obvious to everyone.

The urimander is rarely in sight during this change. It could be curled up in a corner of the room, hiding under a blanket, or laying in shadows. Even in plain sight, it's not an obvious source of the change.

A person interested in staying small can do so by cutting off a whisker from the urimander and holding on to it. As long as he holds the whisker, he stays at his current size. Once he lets go, the whisker loses its magic power and disintegrates.

Urimanders can regenerate one whisker per day. The total number on the creature when it is first encountered is up to the GM.

Attacking Its Prey

The urimander can slither toward prey, moving the area of effect with it. But this is a rare occurrence, as it tries to avoid any confrontation with creatures larger than itself. The creature is flexible, so it can easily move through small spaces, hide itself in shadows, and crawl up trees and objects to avoid attacks.

If the victim gets small enough, however, it attacks. In a fight, the urimander grabs its victim and holds tightly, biting for 1 point of impaling damage. As an alternative, the GM can also leave the party's attributes alone and scale the urimander up (see *Forced Perspective*, p. 19). Its effective ST 72 allows it to bite for 8d-1 impaling damage. In either case, the urimander is a fierce opponent at that size.

Adventures

The easiest encounter with a urimander is in a dungeon, or similar setting. The team enters a room where the creature is waiting, they slowly shrink, and they struggle to survive. The encounter combines the confusion of understanding what has happened with the hazards of a miniature person.

But more complex adventures are possible . . .

Harding's Basement (Modern/Fairy Tale)

Old Man Harding lives alone in a creepy house. His huge basement is filled with junk, stray cats, mice . . . and a urimander. Harding is crazy. He wanders away from home for days at a time, then comes back and stays until he feels the urge to leave again. He has paranoid delusions and he hallucinates.

The characters are bored kids who sneak into Harding's house after they watch him leave. They explore the basement, encounter the urimander, and shrink.

It won't be easy to escape. Although they can hide in cardboard boxes, rusty pails, and behind piles of newspapers, they will struggle to survive against the rats, cats, and other wildlife (including a wasp's nest.) The GM can give them dozens of obstacles to overcome, such as climbing up the brick wall to a wooden shelf, or wading across a puddle. If they are resourceful, the characters can make weapons and equipment from string, nails, and other objects.

Before they escape, Harding comes home. He stumbles downstairs and, after scrounging around absent-mindedly, sees the tiny characters. Fortunately, he's too crazy and drunk to be shocked by three-inch-tall kids in his basement. He's seen stranger things. The kids might be able to use Harding to escape, by convincing him to keeping the cats and rats away, or sneaking into his pockets just before he walks back upstairs.

Tiny Heroes (Fantasy)

A druidess is withering away – slowly dying from a powerful curse. She is a specialist in magical pets and familiars, and lives in her small, secluded home near a seaport. Her home has a garden full of animals, she is attended to by a dog with near-human intelligence, and she keeps a collection of strange creatures in a secret room.



She was cursed by a rival spellcaster who currently serves as the lieutenant for a ship captain. The ship is in port, and will be leaving soon.

The druidess enlists the aid of the adventurers. They might be adventurers-for-hire or owe her a favor . . . or perhaps she caught them sneaking into her home. Regardless, she needs them to sneak aboard the rival's ship and place a small talisman in his pocket, then bring the talisman back to her. Her plan is to shrink them, to give them the best chance of sneaking in and placing the talisman without waking the sorcerer.

Before they leave, they have an afternoon practicing how to jump, climb, fight, and cooperate at their miniature size. Each hero holds a whisker from the urimander and enters the garden. (She uses magic to shield herself from the creature's effects.) Let this part of the adventure continue for as long as the players enjoy testing their skills, leaping between lily pads, or fending off insects with tiny swords.

That night, they shrink and hold on to the whiskers to stay small. They climb into the pouch of her dog, Shadow, and ride to the ship.

If they successfully climb aboard and plant the talisman on the sorcerer, he is magically stunned. In a trance, he speaks a single magic word that enchants the talisman, ready to be brought back to save the druidess . . .

But the sorcerer breaks out of the trance. If he realizes what has happened, he might try to stop them. They could toss aside the whiskers, start growing, and return to her that way. Or they could sneak off the ship, find Shadow, and ride back.

Urimander

ST 3; DX 13; IQ 2; HT 11.

Will 10; Per 10; Speed 6.00; Dodge 9; Move 6.

SM -1; 8 lbs.

Traits: Affliction 5 (HT-4; Advantage, Shrinking 8; Area Effect, 8 feet; Dissipation, Variant; Emanation; No Signature); Cold-Blooded (50°); Double-Jointed; Fangs; No Legs (Slithers); Regrowth (Minor); Vibration Sense (Air); Wild Animal.

Skills: Stealth-14.

Forced Perspective

If the entire party has shrunk, it can be simpler to handle the transformation by scaling up the rest of the world. Instead of adjusting each character's ST, HP, DR, and Move by the fraction given under *Scale*, invert it and apply it to the creatures they encounter and the distances they must cover. At SM -6 or smaller, any creature without DR that weighs over an ounce should get DR 1.

Example: A house cat has ST 4, Move 10, and bites for 1d-5 damage. If our SM -6 (Scale 1/9) heroes encounter this cat, treat it as being ST 36 and Move 90, with DR 1 and a 4d-1 bite. Move 90 may seem high, but consider that the kitchen floor which used to be 5 yards across is now 45 yards wide from the party's perspective! If the group shrinks further, to SM -8 (Scale 1/24), the cat increases to ST 96 with a 10d+2 bite – practically a dinosaur.

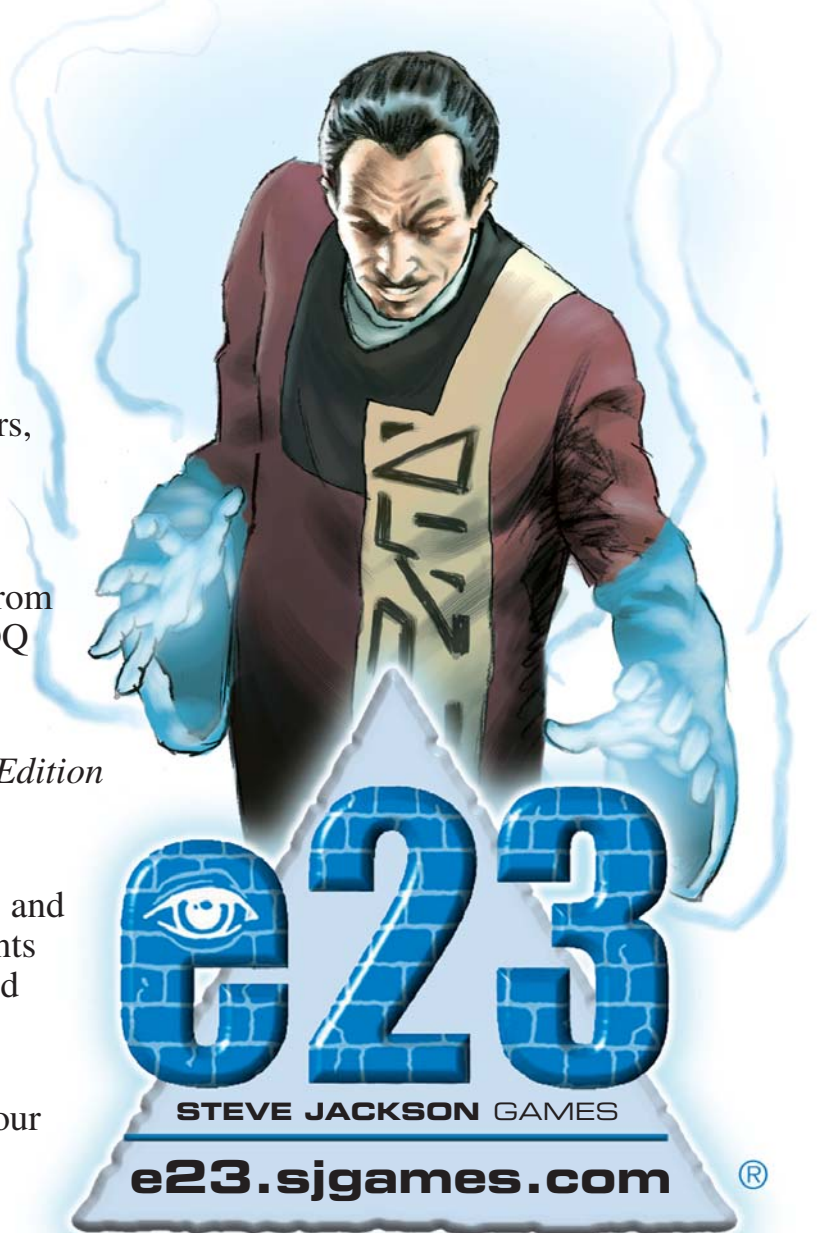
Obviously, conflict between a full-sized human and a tiny one will be fatal (and the full-sized human may not even notice). However, all Perception rolls to notice the characters are modified by their SM, giving the tiny characters some advantage. Also, any attacks against chinks in armor (p. B400) reduce the penalty by the attacker's SM (so a SM -4 character can target leg chinks at only -6 to skill) – not that their attacks are likely to do noticeable damage if they *do* succeed . . .

Equipment works normally, but is similarly affected by the change in scale. A radio with a range of 2,000 yards still has that range – but the *effective* distance to the nearest receiver is going to be far greater than it was. Similarly, an unshrunk camera that requires a battery may now require dozens of scaled-down batteries to function properly.

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