

GURPS[®]

Fourth Edition

CREATURES OF THE NIGHT

VOL. 2



Written by **SCOTT MAYKRANTZ** and **JASON LEVINE**

Edited by **THOMAS WEIGEL**

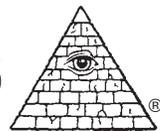
Illustrated by **SCOTT MAYKRANTZ**

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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.

About the Authors

Scott Maykrantz lives and works in Eugene, Oregon. He has been a freelance game designer for 20 years. He is a cruel man, but fair.

Jason Levine, better known to most as "Reverend Pee Kitty," has been a gamer for most of his life and a die-hard **GURPS** fan since the release of Third Edition. He enjoys making music, collecting Transformers, and praying to "Bob" for eternal salvation through alien intervention.

GURPS System Design ■ STEVE JACKSON
GURPS Line Editor ■ SEAN PUNCH
Page Design ■ PHIL REED and
JUSTIN DE WITT
Managing Editor ■ PHIL REED

Art Director ■ WILL SCHOONOVER
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Prepress Checker ■ MONICA STEPHENS
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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.

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.

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