

G U R P S[®]

CREATURES OF THE NIGHT

Sixty-Seven Original Horrors to Haunt Your Dreams

BY SCOTT PAUL MAYKRANTZ

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

GURPS

CREATURES OF THE NIGHT™

Sixty-Seven Original Horrors to Haunt Your Dreams

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STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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INTRODUCTION

Sometimes I walk down the train tracks at midnight. It's a shortcut I use to visit a friend. The rails glow in the starlight and, along the sides of the tracks, high weeds twist into the old fences.

It's in these bushes, among the debris and below the barbed wire, that I see the creatures. The wind carries an unfamiliar sound and I stop. I peer into the darkness. Something is there but I can't make it out — it's a presence, impossible to see but unmistakably real. When I feel it staring back, I start running.

During these stumbling sprints I get an image of the creature. I know what it looks like, what it eats and what it wants. I reach my destination and furiously scribble notes. In the morning, I write the entire description. This usually puts my mind at ease.

This book is a collection of those creatures. It is your guide to the species of darkness. With your understanding of these beasts, you can unleash them on your players . . . and use them to populate the shadows of your worlds.

—Scott Maykrantz

The Creature Descriptions

Attributes

These are the same as character attributes (p. B13). In some cases, a die roll is given instead of a number — 1d+7, for example. In this case, roll the attribute before play begins. DX scores are used for attack rolls. HT scores can be split; see p. B141.

Move/Dodge

Move refers to land movement unless otherwise noted. Double this score to convert it to miles per hour. When a creature is injured or tired, both Move and Dodge should be reduced appropriately (see p. B134). The Dodge score can be further reduced by the creature's unawareness of incoming attacks, or its inability to move freely. See the combat sections of the *Basic Set* for details.

PD/DR

Passive Defense reflects a creature's natural armor in some cases. For others, the score is high because the creature is at least partially insubstantial (PD is always high for ghosts and spirits). Damage Resistance that represents a creature's natural armor can be reduced by significant attacks — for example, if a burst from an automatic weapon causes a huge wound in a marrowfiend (p. 69), subsequent attacks on that spot ignore DR.

Similarly, feel free to give any creature different DR values on different body parts. Make sure the average of the different values equals the listed DR score.

Damage

A listed damage amount applies to the creature's primary attack. If no damage type is listed, assume it is crushing. Other attacks have a damage amount

About GURPS

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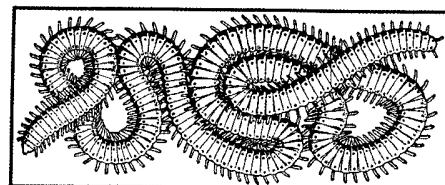
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Page References

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set*, Third Edition. Any page reference that begins with a B refers to the *GURPS Basic Set* — e.g., p. B102 means p. 102 of the *GURPS Basic Set*, Third Edition. M refers to *GURPS Magic*. PS refers to *GURPS Psionics*.



About the Author

Scott Paul Maykrantz is a professional writer living in Chico, California. He wrote *The Law of Darkness* and the *Apokolips Sourcebook* (both for DC Heroes). He has also written material for *Roleplayer*, *All of the Above*, *GURPS Magic Items* and the *GURPS Space Bestiary*.

He currently lives alone in his own personal hell.

Victims and Species

The victims of these creatures are assumed to be human. But this does not have to be the case. Some creatures could be modified to affect only certain types of humans. Or victims can include dogs, cats and birds. "Victim" also includes hosts — a symbiotic creature could prey upon humans for food, but use cats (or a special type of human) for a host.

Take the hexmutes (p. 52) as an example. They are deranged humans who thrive on the pain of normal people. You can change the species of the hexmutes, the species of the animals in pain or both. There could be hexmute dogs, for example. Or, hexmutes might only be children. Or, the only victims whose pain might appeal to hexmutes are elderly humans, Indians of a particular tribe, or people with supernatural qualities.

Take these ideas into consideration as each creature is introduced. By preparing the range and limits of potential victims and hosts beforehand, the GM will have better control over the creature.



based on the creature's ST. (See *Biting Damage*, p. B140.) Use the following table for STs above 20. (Only one creature in this book has ST greater than 33, so the table stops there.)

ST	Thrust	Swing
21	2d	4d-1
22	2d	4d
23	2d+1	4d+1
24	2d+1	4d+2
25	2d+2	5d-1
26	2d+2	5d
27	3d-1	5d+1
28	3d-1	5d+1
29	3d	5d+2
30	3d	5d+2
31	3d+1	6d-1
32	3d+1	6d-1
33	3d+2	6d

Reach

All creatures can attack in close combat. For some, this is their only attack. Close-combat attacks often warrant a Fright Check — when a cryptling (p. 25) wraps its sickly arms around a victim to squeeze him to death, he might faint from fright before he dies.

Size

This value refers to the number of one-yard hexes the creature occupies. The creature is assumed to be in a standing position. Those that are "less than 1" hex can range from midget humanoids to molecular size. See the text for details.

Weight

Nearly all of the creatures in this book have a variable or nonexistent size. Some are ethereal and weigh nothing. Others come from human bodies and have the same range of weights as humans do. Determine whether or not the weight of a creature will affect play before taking the time to find an exact value.

Habitat

The habitat of a creature is one of its most important characteristics. Only a few have total freedom. Others exist in only one type of locale. The setting of each adventure will define what creatures can appear there.

Other Names

These have been provided to add realism and additional options to your game. Like other animals, horror creatures are known by different names to different groups of people. Americans in the Roaring Twenties might use the name "inretch" to refer to the same creature that Victorian Londoners call a "skuldugger." These alternate names will add flavor to the game. It will also keep the players guessing when they hear about a new creature — if they need to fight a skuldugger in London, will they know they'll face the same thing as the inretch they just destroyed in Kansas?

The Text

The descriptions cover all the essential information about each creature. Every description has a few mysteries or unresolved ideas. These will allow the GM to add his own ideas, which can surprise players who have already read the book.

Many descriptions include the origin of the creature. Some creatures procreate, while others come from weird worlds or are sired by human misery.

Meeting the requirements to create a particular creature will not necessarily create the creature. For example, gear gnomes (p. 46) are created when metal parts are bathed in blood. But that doesn't mean that someone can throw an old watch in a cup of blood and expect to create a gear gnome.

The essence of the origin is in the supernatural, the forces no one truly understands. So intentional creation has only a marginal chance of success. If the creation is accompanied by a ceremony, it is much more likely to occur.

The number of creatures that PCs encounter at any one time has been left for the GM to decide. Most of them are useful in any number, from a single individual to an army. Due to the fact that Game Mastering several dozen independent personalities at once is nearly impossible, creatures in large groups will tend to become single-minded mobs. But a large group is also more threatening. Try to balance these two factors when deciding.

The Adventure Seeds

Most creature descriptions end with at least two adventure seeds. Some are very simple ideas that may inspire GMs enough to flesh them out and use them. Others are much more complete, requiring only a map and a few NPC descriptions to be ready for play.

All adventure seeds can be changed. Combine them, split them, or use them for other creatures. As you alter them, keep a few things in mind. First, link them to the setting. A Victorian London adventure should have references to gaslights, carriages, the current political mood, occult legends of the time and the city's landmarks. Second, design critical events to match the nature of the player characters. If one of them is a great sleuth, make sure the adventure has riddles and clues. If another is psionic, make sure his ability can benefit the party during a vital plot point. And tailor the scope and settings to the enjoyment of the players. If they hate crawling through sewers because it reminds them of their gaming style from ten years ago, keep them above ground and among people.

The role these creatures play will vary. They could take a brief but crucial part. They could be minor but constant annoyances. But they do not have to be the single focal point of the adventure. Or they can create a little suspense: encountered in the beginning of the adventure, the creature then escapes or fades away. It *might* return. This gives the entire adventure a foreboding air.

As the GM fleshes out the seeds, he will need maps. Try to locate a few that fit the setting . . . and some that don't. Use unusual maps to add a twist. For example, in a Victorian London scenario, a map from an old space station adventure might come in handy. Make the station into a hidden base under the Thames. This will surprise the players and add new dimensions to the plot.

Before play, make a list of possible complications and interludes. PCs could be arrested, investigated, or trapped. They might meet a significant NPC, or lose one. They could receive a strange message, witness an eerie omen, or come across evidence that turns the plot around. Their enemies might suddenly disappear, allowing the group to heal, rest — and worry. The investigators could also find the solution to their problems . . . which turns out to be the tip of the iceberg. Make a list of ideas such as these, add some details, and keep the list on hand. When the adventure is running dry or taking a strange turn, or the characters need a rest, the list can help.



Monster vs. Monster

When two creatures meet, anything is possible. Some creatures (such as the lying jackstraws and the truth-loving tattlers) would have explosive reactions to each other. Others (such as the green-dreads and the gallows trees) would have more subtle conflicts. A rare few will join forces.

Use this situation only when it brings the characters closer to the adventure. If warring creatures can battle without the involvement of the PCs, it doesn't add much to the game. If the creatures need the PCs to destroy their enemies, however, that will open up many interesting adventure possibilities.

Friend or Foe?

Not all of these creatures have to be enemies. People may be able to communicate with some and to cooperate with others. The creature may need their help. It might be a rare, pacifist example of its species. Or it might be toying with them before it strikes.

Change It

Two of the most common complaints with bestiaries cancel each other out. The first is the fact that some creatures, as written, don't quite fit the GM's campaign or gaming style. The second is the unfortunate circumstance of players reading the book and learning all of the juicy secrets. Both problems have the same solution:

Change the creatures. Switch a creature's appearance with another. Eliminate an ability. Add a weakness. Change the creature's habitat. There is no limit to the number of possible changes. Please do so to make this book more useful.

Fright Checks

A number of Fright Checks are noted in this book, especially when a Fright Check is essential to make a creature's presence felt. Additional Fright Checks occur during other moments in creature encounters.

The rules for Fright Checks (pp. B93-94) can be modified to add greater realism to the game. Consider these optional rules.

Two Willpowers. Each character has two Will roll scores, one based on IQ, the other on HT. Strong and Weak Will can be bought at half the normal value when applied to one score, or full value when applied to both.

HT-based Will is used for frights that involve physical trauma such as torture or being grappled by a creature. IQ-based Will is used against visual frights and psychological trauma. The Game Master always decides which type of Will is used.

Ignore the Fright Check Table . . . or use it as a guide. Rolling on the table on p. B94 can slow the game down. And few GMs will relinquish the control of character modifications to a random table.

Look the table over to get an idea of possible Fright Check failure results, then make a quick list of favorites. Base the severity of the result solely on the amount by which the roll failed; ignore the second roll (for the result table).

Combat Paralysis. Since the Combat Reflexes advantage offers a +2 on all Fright Checks, characters with Combat Paralysis (p. B32) should have a -2.

When to Roll. The Fright Check roll represents the character's ability to resist being scared. If players roleplay appropriately (they play their characters as being scared when they should be scared), there is no need for Fright Check rolls. Let the players know what is expected — when they should be scared and what the results of their fright should be. This eliminates another die roll that slows the pace of the game.

Bizarre Uses of Skills

The GM may find that characters will want to do things with these creatures other than fight them, chase them and run from them. Thinking about unusual situations that may arise ahead of time may help him prepare for unexpected applications of skills. Here are a few examples.

Continued on next page . . .

Creature Needs

All creatures require some substance, force, or condition to survive. Humans need a breathable atmosphere, calories, vitamins, water and a habitable climate. The creatures in this book need . . . other things, ranging from fresh blood to fear. For every type of need, the creature has

- (a) a specific manner of consumption
- (b) a rate of consumption
- (c) a minimum amount to stay alive
- (d) a minimum amount to stay healthy, and
- (e) a maximum capacity.

If all of these details were in every creature description, this book would be too long (and too academic to be any fun). Those needs that are vital to understanding the creature have been included. But its more subtle cravings have been left for the GM to define as needed. Some encounters will be too brief or distant for these to come into play. In other cases, the additional desires play a large role in making a more intimate or prolonged encounter believable.

Before using each creature, list any needs the creature may have. Then, for each requirement, fill in details for each of the five categories above. For example, suppose the next adventure will feature a greendread (p. 47). After a quick read-through, it is apparent that they need blood and an environment similar to normal plants. After reading the description, the GM decides that greendreads have two needs: soil and blood. Unlike natural plants, they do not require sunlight.

Now examine the five categories for each need and add details. Regarding the need for soil, the greendread does not consume it and thus has no rate of consumption. The minimum amount of soil to stay healthy is a bed at least one foot deep. The minimum amount to stay alive is six inches. At this depth, the greendread will be at half ST unless it has recently consumed a lot of blood. Below this amount, it loses 1 hit per day until it dies. It has no maximum soil capacity.

Regarding its need for blood, the mode of consumption is described in the text. Add more detail as desired. Let's say the GM chooses a rate of consumption of half a fluid ounce of blood per turn. (An adult human has about ten pints of blood. So, a victim will be drained after 320 turns. This is about five minutes.) The greendread needs at least 16 ounces per week; without that much, it loses 1 hit per day until it meets the need. The GM decides that its maximum capacity for blood is one gallon per hex of size. (Or, that could be based on its weight.)

If the GM enjoys this, he can also consider the quality of each requirement. For example, greendreads may get twice the effect from type-O blood.

All of these decisions will be the Game Master's. If they contradict the creature description, choose the details that work best. If this whole exercise is a burden, ignore it. By examining the needs of each creature, the GM explores them fully, adds his own ideas to them, tailoring them to fit his campaign flavor more accurately, and giving him a better understanding of their strengths and weaknesses.

The Exceptions

A rare few creatures seem to have *no needs at all*. Such exceptions are truly terrifying because, if survival is not their highest priority, something else is . . .

Consider the betweeners (p. 10). Their only need seems to be a lack of gravity. They do not require food, oxygen, social contact or sleep. They are very intelligent and evil. Therefore, they have not spent the past eons making sure they survive. What *have* they been doing?

Creatures as Characters

In the horror genre, the line between creature and character is often blurred. Generally, a creature is defined as any being that shares the motivations and way of life of the rest of its kind. Characters, on the other hand, have a variety of lifestyles and personalities.

The being's IQ score is a key factor. With an average or high IQ, the being should be able to break free from the pack and develop sophisticated goals and methods. Another key is the existence of cultures. In some games, vampires have their own special, hidden culture. In this case, they are more than mere creatures. But even if the ghosts in the campaign are as smart and plentiful as vampires, their lack of a "ghost culture" leaves them in the realm of monsters.

You can determine whether or not a being is a creature or character by the number of character traits it has: disadvantages, skills, advantages, quirks, a personal name and a character story. This is a question of degree, of course. Is a creature that has attributes and two skills a character, or does that creature need a disadvantage, a character story and some quirks as well? The Game Master must decide.

For example, with the exception of attributes, brackish hounds (p. 14) have no character traits. They are creatures. But in one campaign setting, there is a brackish hound named Reaper, a supernatural and intelligent junkyard dog. Reaper has several advantages, a few skills, a quirk and telepathy. Compare the description of Reaper (see the sidebar) to the description of brackish hounds on p.14.



Bizarre Uses of Skills (Continued)

Conversing with Creatures. People may wish to communicate with creatures, such as hexmutes, mooring trees and watchtowers, whose thought processes are inhuman. A person's ability to reach a creature on the creature's level does not rest on supernatural powers — he need not, for example, have telepathic contact with a hexmute. Skill with Gesture, for instance, might prove useful. Or someone might be trying to gain control of the creature, with Leadership, Fast-Talk and other such skills. Of course, the creature may use its IQ to resist attempts at any type of communication, in a Contest of Skill.

Repairing Creatures. People with either the Engineer skill or the Mechanic skill may attempt to repair technological creatures like gear gnomes, necroids and grue beetles. They could be trying to modify a creature or to restore lost hit points — or to "shut it down." Add modifiers for the tools used and the creature's own cooperation. People with medical skills may struggle to diagnose or doctor organic beings.

Reaper

Brackish hound; 3 feet high at the shoulder; 180 lbs.; some tan fur.

ST 19, DX 12, IQ 5, HT 14.

Speed 6.5, Move 6.5

Dodge 6.5.

Advantages: Alertness +1, Danger Sense.

Disadvantages: Appearance (Hideous); Bloodlust; No Hands; OPH (eats humans and live animals); Sense of Duty (to protect junkyard); Social Stigma (dog).

Quirks: Sleeps in the old Plymouth Fury at the back of the lot.

Skills: Scrounging-8; Shadowing-12; Stealth-12; Tracking-10.

Psionics: Telepathy Power 5. Telereceive-10.

Reaper was created when a mastiff was shot by teenagers in the junkyard outside of town. The dog slowly bled to death and rose the next night as a brackish hound. The creature was given the name "Reaper" when local teens spread a rumor that it killed the former junkyard owner. Reaper has spent the last few years guarding the junkyard.

Its high skills may be attributed to a trainer of some kind. There could be a mirror ghost living in the rearview mirror of a beat-up old van, or a gang of darkriders who hide in the bus at the back of the lot. If this is the case, Reaper is a pet and partner of these creatures.

Campaign Types

A number of creature-intensive horror campaigns can make full use of this book. Use one of these examples to start an entirely new campaign (possibly as a sideline to complement an ongoing campaign), or to adapt an ongoing campaign to one of them.

Darwin by Night. Occult scientists, whether by accident or through their own efforts, have discovered the darker species. They spend the campaign traveling around the world, seeking these creatures. Some creatures must be killed, others captured. A rare few can be reasoned with. The goal is to gather information.

This campaign allows the players to assume a rare role in roleplaying: the scientist with action abilities. Some characters will be straight from the Indiana Jones mold: bookworms back home, rough and ready in the field. Others will be intellectuals with special powers — for example, a spellcasting zoologist. They can meet a host of unholy cults, dark and hidden cultures, and even a few recurring villains along the way.

Demon Hunters. Strap on the twice-blessed powered armor and telekinetic blaster! The player characters are an elite cadre of monster-hunters, equipped with ultra-tech hardware, each a combination of magic item and scientific piece of equipment. But this isn't *Ghostbusters*. These are soldiers fighting a multitude of powerful, evil, cunning creatures.

This campaign adds *Call of Cthulhu* to *Aliens*. Any time things get boring, a creature attacks. The mana-draining grenades go off and the fear-guard shields go on. When things get too violent and edge *too* far into hack-and-slash territory, the monsters disappear. Then the hunters find themselves searching, tracking and escaping while they have the chance. Let the suspense build. Adventures can be built around cat-and-mouse scenarios, saving towns and surviving harsh terrain while on the hunt.

Cures

Many creatures afflict humans. For example, motes (p. 81) take control of a victim's eye. The lynchlichen (p. 68) slowly kills victims by eating away their insides.

Every affliction should have at least one cure, a cure with a supernatural source. In low-tech settings, tribal herbs and ceremonies may work. In high-tech and ultra-tech settings, certain types of medicine may help as well. The cure is not always permanent or complete. Some offer temporary relief. Some have side effects. Some replace one affliction with another. Some merely prevent it from growing worse. Determine the availability, cost, risk, effects and limitations of each cure. Possibilities include:

Spells. This could be a specific spell, such as Remove Mote. Define the prerequisites, energy cost and other details. Or, an existing spell such as Remove Curse could be used. In this case, alter the energy cost or conditions of the spell. For example, curing a lynchlichen infection with Remove Curse might require that the victim be immersed in purified water, with an energy cost of 60.

Tasks. An affliction could be removed by committing a certain deed, or fulfilling a special quest. The aging caused by murder crows (p. 83) is a good example — if the victim kills a loved one, an innocent person, or the murder crow, he is cured. The deed or quest does not have to be related to the creature. It might require cooperation from other individuals, creatures, or supernatural entities.

Drugs. Cures can come from purely scientific drugs, or from alchemical potions. For the best effect, combine the two — for example, a scientific drug that is blessed. Drugs often have a lot of special details: doses required, availability of the drug, how the drug is administered, side effects, etc.

Gradual Loss. In some cases, an affliction will slowly recede on its own. If the character can survive the initial phase, he may be able to fight it off. The rate of recovery will affect the players' impression of the affliction. If it wears off too soon, it will be remembered as a minor annoyance, not a terrifying threat. If it wears on too long, the player will be frustrated as he is preoccupied with his character's suffering instead of playing.





Seeking the Source. Every creature is related to every other. Perhaps they serve the same master — they might all be pets of the shades, or creations of betweeners. Perhaps a lab is creating them. Or a circle of dark mages may be bringing them to Earth from another world. The investigators are dedicated to finding the source and stamping it out before it is too late.

This campaign allows the GM to make sense of these creatures. Rather than random monsters roaming the land from myriad sources, their presence can be explained. The source must be found, controlled and stopped before the general public becomes aware of the threat.

The Impostor Wars. Four or five types of creatures who control humans (puppeteers, lodgers, betweeners, inretches, etc.) have divided humanity into armies. Everyone is a pawn. Each creature type wants to destroy the others and control the world.

This campaign is best when played with an air of conspiracy. Mundane tasks such as traveling, taking the garbage to the curb, dealing with banks and police, or sitting in a theater will take on an eerie tone when *everyone* involved is merely pretending to act human. Entire cities, even nations, can be strongholds of one creature type — the puppeteers, for example, might control everyone in Portugal. Adventurers will be pawns, but they have free will. They are “special operatives” of their controlling creatures. Or, if the players prefer, their characters are some of the *very* few untainted humans, fighting to save mankind and avoid detection by the battling creatures.

Spotting Them

Some of the monsters portrayed in this book will be very obvious to the casual observer; many more will not. So how does an adventurer detect the creature before it spots him? The answer, of course, depends on the type of creature itself.

Basic lore about creatures is represented by the Occultism skill and the proper specialization. But just having that skill won't tell someone that he faces one of those creatures. A number of other abilities can also apply. The GM may allow bonuses to rolls for combinations of skills and advantages. Successful rolls will let the observer identify disguised or inconspicuous creatures. Critical successes allow him to recognize details such as subspecies or the area from which the creature came. Failed rolls either represent distractions that allowed the creature to evade the spotter, or potentially deadly false identifications.

Some creatures can be detected with simple Vision rolls. One person might deduce the presence of an unnatural being by a successful IQ roll; Danger Sense might alert someone else.

Empathy is another way to notice these creatures; they just feel *wrong*. (Animal Empathy, naturally, may actually impede this effect, as well as the efforts of other people to dispose of the beast!)

Other creatures will be hidden to all normal senses, but easily unmasked with the use of psionic powers or magic spells. Psi skills ranging from Astral Sight (p. PS11) to Telescan (p. PS26) will reveal abnormal activity from some organisms. A number of spells from the Communication and Empathy college (p. M25) and from the Knowledge college (p. M47) will unveil unnatural entities.

And then there are the unfortunate individuals who just seem to see the things — and may spend their whole lives trying to convince someone else they've seen them . . .

BETWEENERS

ST: n/a Move/Dodge: n/a Size: 500,000+ cu. ft.
DX: n/a PD/DR: 0/0 Weight: unknown
IQ: 20+ Damage: n/a Habitat: orbiting Earth
HT: 500+ Reach: n/a Other Names: Crystal
 creators, sentinels

Betweeners are giant creatures that float in orbit, between the Earth's atmosphere and outer space. They are made of a delicate, crystal-like substance. Their outer shell is a multifaceted, intricate shape. The inside is equally complex, with wide tunnels, large cavities and areas of densely-packed crystal. The betweener has total control of its body — the crystal can flow, reshape itself, and transform into articulated limbs. When approached in space, the betweener has a sparkling, spectral glow, a combination of transparent glass against the blackness of space and beams of starlight against its billions of facets.

Betweeners are supernatural. They have an understanding of magic, spells, psionics and occult phenomena far beyond the simple perceptions of man. They can sense all the thoughts, supernatural qualities, physiological qualities and locations of any creature or object within ten miles. Betweeners are very territorial; anyone approaching a betweener (whether he knows it or not) will find the creature ready when he arrives.

A betweener can move to any point above the Earth at a speed just over 500 miles per hour. (This speed is measured from orbit point to orbit point, not by points on the Earth's surface.) It can also alter its appearance to fade into the darkness of space: by making its crystalline flesh non-reflective, it becomes invisible. It can avoid satellites or move them, and absorb or scramble satellite transmissions. Any "secret" satellites placed by humans will be known to a betweener.

Betweeners do not eat, breathe, sleep, or have relationships. In comparison to humans, they do not even think. The only way to explain their intellectual and physiological qualities is to use occult and religious terminology — they can be understood as demonic forces or higher powers, but not as animals.

It is not known how betweeners are created, where they come from, or what they want. It seems that they need the vacuum of space to survive. Their orbital habitat keeps them isolated from the limitless genetic material of Earth,



thus saving mankind from total domination (if that is what the betweeners want). There may be only one betweener orbiting Earth at any given moment, or as many as a hundred.

The betweener mind exists universally in every molecule of its form. If a piece is removed, the betweener can render it “dead,” causing it to disintegrate. Attackers will not find a brain or other weak spot in a betweener.

Betweeners are vulnerable to one thing: gravity. Any gravitational force other than the attraction of the planet will cause the betweener’s body to disintegrate. The betweener may survive, however; it is possible that its consciousness will drift until it can form a new body. Any gravitational force created by magic has a dramatic effect on betweeners — it suspends them, forcing them into a coma-like state. If a betweener detects the presence of a magic-using being, it will try to sense whether or not the invader has such a power.

Scions

Betweeners absorb genetic information from any living creature they can capture. Any betweener could have captured an alien, an astronaut, or a subhuman life form attached to orbiting debris (including germs). Betweeners snare the captured specimen in glass tentacles and slice it to pieces. The genetic information is absorbed by the crystal and stored in the betweener’s consciousness.

The captured flesh is held suspended for later use. When the betweener has collected enough of this raw material, it will build a synthetic life form called a *scion*. This can have any or all of the qualities of the betweener’s captured specimens. Thus, a betweener that has captured an alien, a Russian cosmonaut and the fungus from the cosmonaut’s feet could create a being with the alien’s features, a human intelligence and a fungus-like physiology. Its various mental and physical qualities can be striking or subtle.

Betweeners generally prefer to create scions with inconspicuous appearances complemented by many hidden, inhuman abilities. They also invariably have weaknesses, an unfortunate byproduct of synthesizing diverse gene patterns. A scion may have anything from night blindness to useless limbs, from an allergy to a split personality.

Scions reach Earth through special powers designed by the betweener — in addition to other abilities, they are able to travel from the betweener to the Earth’s surface, through teleportation, transport in self-generated cocoons, self-propelled flight, etc. Some can return to the betweener, though this is very rare.

Depending on the amount of genetic information and raw material available, a betweener can potentially create *any* conceivable creature. A scion can have any level of intelligence, from that of an insect to that of a genius

human. It can be created with psionic powers, the ability to cast spells and other supernatural abilities. Most can communicate with their betweener creator by supernatural means. They cannot send more genetic information from the planet (the betweener needs the actual flesh for that) but they can serve as the betweener’s eyes and ears.

Some scions are subservient to their creators. They may be aware of this, or may be ignorant of their origins. It is very possible that one or more species on Earth were created by a betweener.

It is unknown how many scions have been created by betweeners or how well they have survived. Their only real limitation comes from the amount of raw material available — due to their isolation in space, each betweener has, at best, a one-in-a-million chance of finding and capturing enough flesh to build more than one scion every thousand years.

Interestingly, the outer shape of a betweener often resembles its scions. For example, a betweener that has created two human-like scions might look like a giant abstract glass sculpture of Siamese twins. A betweener that has created scions resembling houseflies (as in the adventure seed following) would vaguely resemble a monstrous glass fly. A betweener that has never created a scion is an eerie, formless mass.

The Id

If an intelligent creature is captured, it may retain part of its consciousness. It becomes a disembodied id, waiting in the betweener for a scion shell.

Roll against the IQ of the captured creature, the source of the id. If the roll is a critical success, the id stays intact and functional; it can (incredibly) insert itself into a new scion at will. It cannot communicate with the betweener. It may not even have full control of the scion body. But its choice is final; it cannot return to the betweener unless the betweener wants it back. This fully-aware id may go slightly mad if it rests too long in the betweener.

If the roll is a normal success, the id lies dormant and suspended. It will be placed, fully intact, in a scion chosen by the betweener. It will have additional personality features designed by the betweener. The id will not remember any of its time in suspension.

If the roll fails, the id is fragmented and lost. Parts of it may be detected through sophisticated and powerful telepathic or magical searches in subsequent scions. On a critical failure, the id fragments are undetectable.

Contact

Someone who comes in contact with a betweener may find a way inside. Betweeners do not have recognizable halls or rooms, but they may shift their “innards” to form accommodating cavities. Betweeners do not have an atmosphere inside; the invader must provide his own protection from the vacuum. He may find suspended raw

materials for future scions: lumps of blood and tissue contained in geometric crystalline tubes and jars.

The betweener will take measures to trap the explorer once he is inside. It will, of course, allow him to look around for a while. The person may learn some of the secrets of the betweener before he is shredded and his flesh is preserved. There is a slight chance that a captive's id will survive (see above).

An invader will break a lot of "glass." The betweener's crystal flesh is paper-thin in many places. As the invader touches "walls" or walks on "floors," he will occasionally discharge a cloud of shimmering, razor-sharp fragments. This does not hurt the betweener — the shards that float against unbroken crystal will be reabsorbed instantly. But the pieces could cut a space suit open.

Betweener Adventure Seeds

Betweeners are gods . . . or close to it. They can be part of a pantheon of Things Man Was Not Meant To Know. Betweeners also help bring horror adventures into a new and fertile setting: space.

The presence of betweeners can explain a multitude of supernatural phenomena, especially the origins of supernatural creatures. For example, vampires might be a race of scions. Do they serve a betweener, or are they a creation that has gained independence from its creator?

Betweeners can also be used to explain a lot of weirdness in the world, especially the UFO conspiracy. They act as a sort of barrier between Earth and everything *out there* — they capture and dissect incoming aliens as well as astronauts.

In an ongoing campaign, focus on the scions first. The meeting with the betweener can serve as a climax to the adventure.

The Flies. Billions of years ago, a cataclysmic convulsion on the surface of the Earth scattered particles of ash and microscopic debris into orbit. One piece of living matter was captured by a betweener. Similar matter back on Earth later developed into the earliest forms of insects. Meanwhile, the betweener created its own insect: the common housefly. The betweener had enough raw material to build two. It sent them to Earth and they multiplied. The adventure begins when investigators hear a rumor about a fly landing on the *outside* of a space shuttle window.

Waxworld. The player characters visit a planet dominated by battling betweeners. Each betweener sends new scions to the planet's surface to destroy the pawns of the other betweeners. The entire ecosystem operates with a nightmarish precision, a multitude of freakish beasts engaged in a bizarre reproductive and predatory dance.

But the betweeners are running out of new genetic combinations — they need new blood. The arrival of the PCs solves this problem . . .

Midnight. The various individuals realize that none of them has ever seen a clock at midnight. Perhaps they thought all clocks are traditionally designed to skip from 11:59 to 12:01, like the tradition of skipping the 13th floor in a tall building. Or maybe they just didn't notice it until now. And they all met under some rather strange circumstances.

What are they doing at midnight? Reporting to their betweener creator, of course.

BOOKWORMS

ST: n/a	Move/Dodge: n/a	Size: <1
DX: n/a	PD/DR: 0/0	Weight: 1 oz.
IQ: n/a	Damage: n/a	Habitat: dead brains
HT: 1 hit	Reach: n/a	Other Names: Cipherids, brain leeches

Bookworms are found in the brains of corpses. They feed on the evil thoughts of the deceased and, if they are captured and handled properly, they can be used to transcribe those thoughts.

Each bookworm is 5 to 10 inches long. Their slimy, translucent black skin is filled with a thick, odorous juice.

They have no eyes, mouths, or other features. If touched, they twitch and writhe defensively.

Bookworms are very rare. They live only in those brains that have held significant concentrations of evil thoughts. If such a brain has bookworms (on a roll of 2 on 2d), one to six will be found. If the corpse is so old that the brain has decayed completely, they will be found hibernating in the skull cavity. Hibernating bookworms can survive for decades, but their ability to hold evil thoughts is reduced (see below).

To transcribe the evil thoughts, someone must drain the bookworm and drink its juice. Because of their grotesque habitat (and the taste and smell of the juice), a Will roll is required to keep from vomiting. If successful, the drinker's mind is filled with the evil thoughts. Absorbing

evil thoughts requires an immediate Fright Check. The thoughts are understood in the drinker's native tongue.

The thoughts will fade from memory in (drinker's IQ×5) minutes. Eidetic memory (either level) doubles this length of time. The thoughts can be preserved if the drinker writes them down. They cannot be transferred or preserved by *any* other means — not by psionics, speaking aloud, gestures, or voice recording. The writing may be in any language the drinker knows. The transcribed text lasts as long as any written material; it will not fade from the page as the thoughts do in the drinker's memory. As the drinker transcribes the thoughts, make additional Fright Checks during passages of particular intensity.

There is a second, less disgusting, means of extracting the thoughts. If a writing utensil is soaked in the juice of a bookworm for one full night, a spellcaster can transcribe the thoughts by casting the Manipulate spell. If successful, the juice is absorbed by the utensil and it begins to write. Fright Checks may still be necessary when the caster reads the text.

Bookworms from the same brain (or skull cavity) hold the same thoughts. Multiple bookworms allow multiple attempts to absorb the evil thoughts, or to allow several individuals to absorb the same thoughts.

Hibernating bookworms, however, divide the thoughts evenly among them. If two people drink from different hibernating bookworms from the same skull, they will absorb different thoughts from the same source (i.e., one person may absorb the corpse's evil young-adult thoughts, while another absorbs the evil thoughts from middle age).

The content of the thoughts — their depth, detail, and potency — is up to the Game Master. Their structure will depend on the personality of the source. The evil obsessions of a madman could appear as a massive puzzle of scattered ideas. The brutal strategies of a deranged dictator could be perceived as a cohesive dissertation. And the careful record of a serial killer's career might be a remorseless reminiscence.

Exactly what causes bookworms is unknown. Some scholars think they spontaneously generate from the brain tissue of the dead. Others feel that the worms are mystic mutations of earthworms, or that they come from subterranean hives. Whoever discovers their true origin will wield great power, especially if a method is devised to grow or plant bookworms in targeted brains.

Bookworm Adventure Seeds

These creatures give people something they need (information) but at a price. Adventures do not have to involve drinking bookworm juice. The PCs can try to find bookworms, rescue bookworms from someone who will misuse them, destroy bookworms, or use them for another purpose. No matter what happens, however, make sure the PCs have to handle these slimy little creatures (or at least dig them out of a skull).

The Fourth Reich. The PCs uncover a truly horrifying plot: Hitler set up a secret organization just before he died, a strategy that will make the Fourth Reich an inevitable global power in the early 21st century. The plot is well underway, but the PCs cannot find any evidence of its structure or members, or any way to combat it. Then they discover that Hitler's brain is being held somewhere in Russia . . . and it is full of bookworms.

The Library. In a quiet nearby suburb there is a well-stocked library. The librarian, an ancient and paranoid crone, is a spellcaster who knows how to breed bookworms. She has used the creatures to transcribe the evil thoughts of hundreds of people. Some are famous, others are not. Each has his or her own volume. The librarian researches all additional details about the subject and documents this in the book as well.

The librarian is trying to develop a special spell. When cast upon one of the books, its subject is reborn. But she needs a human body to act as the host for each of her reincarnations.



BRACKISH HOUNDS

ST: 19 Move/Dodge: 8/7 Size: 1
DX: 12 PD/DR: 4/5 Weight: appr. 50 lbs.
IQ: 5 Damage: 2d cut Habitat: farms & fields
HT: 14 Reach: C Other names: Blood dogs

Brackish hounds are undead dogs. When a dog dies a slow, painful death from a violent incident, it may change into a brackish hound. If the dog was rabid, the change is inevitable. The change occurs at midnight following the dog's death.

They are repugnant and vile. Their skin has peeled away in many locations, revealing decomposing organs. Their hair grows in thick, random patches. Their muzzles are oversized, filled with needle-sharp teeth and a long black tongue. Their eyes are blank, without pupils or color.

They are also bloodthirsty and ferocious. They stalk human and animal prey for hours before leaping in for the kill. They are particularly fond of chasing and devouring small children. They are smart enough to flee when severely wounded. This is rare, however, because their flesh is unusually tough.

In addition to their ferocity and resilience, brackish hounds have an endless blood supply. As long as a brackish hound has at least 1 hit point, it will produce enough blood to compensate for any amount of bleeding. Open wounds flow freely until the decaying skin closes. This can take hours, even days. A severely wounded brackish hound could flood a cellar or ditch in a few hours. The blood is putrid, useless for any medical purpose.

Occasionally, the victim of a brackish hound's bite "catches" the hound's curse, and will bleed almost endlessly from any injury. This happens if the subject fails a (HT+5) roll. This condition is supernatural — it cannot be healed through conventional medicine. The cure may involve spellcasting or the death of the brackish hound that transmitted the affliction.

Brackish Hound Adventure Seeds

Brackish hounds are violent and hungry. They are also intelligent enough to kill without being noticed. Of course, after they have eaten enough pigs, children and horses, the locals will become alarmed.

Use brackish hounds as a catalyst for other plots. Their presence can stir up unrest, causing deeper problems than

simple survival dilemmas. As cattle are slaughtered, for example, the blame will fly before the brackish hounds are discovered.

There can also be different breeds of brackish animals. There could be brackish horses, brackish cats, and even brackish sharks (whose blood would repel normal sharks in a wide area).

The Keeper of the Hounds. On the edge of town, on a palatial estate, a young girl named Angelica has been bitten by a "diseased dog." Her mother and father are there, along with two maids and a butler. Angelica has become a hemophiliac; she is ill and bedridden. Her father, Jacob, is a huge, violent man with an explosive temper. His wife and daughter have the dispositions of soldiers in a war zone. This is clearly not a model family.

Jacob is determined to hunt down the dog. He cannot be stopped from going out to hunt it. He's seen others like it stalking around the estate at night, however. So he will allow the PCs to intrude — he knows something strange is going on, and the group has a reputation for dealing with this sort of thing.

Angelica sits by her window day and night, sighing to go outside. Everyone in the house seems relieved that Jacob is gone; they are momentarily safe from his threatening presence. Angelica and her mother occasionally refer to a special place on the edge of the estate; they change the subject if the outsiders pry.



The sun goes down and the hounds come out. Angelica sees Jacob standing among them. “He is the keeper of the hounds!” she shouts. He runs away before the others see him. The hounds try to get inside; those in the house will have to fight them off. Jacob is seen running through the grounds the next day; he looks terrified. A careful medical exam of Angelica reveals that she has hemophilia but is otherwise healthy. A mystical examination reveals that she has a supernatural ability of some kind.

The keeper of the hounds is *Angelica*. The bite that made her a hemophiliac gave her the hounds’ ability to bleed endlessly *and* (for unknown reasons) the ability to control the hounds. She is framing her father, and terrorizing him: the creatures have been alternately stalking and

chasing him since he left the house. Jacob has beaten his daughter and wife for years. He beat his infant son to death last year; the child is buried on the edge of the estate. It is up to the PCs to resolve the adventure.

The Path. In a snow-covered landscape, the participants encounter a single brackish hound. They can tell it is something special, a supernatural creature. They wound it (or, if they don’t attack, it is already bleeding) and it leaves a thick trail of blood as it runs off. As they follow the trail, they will notice that there is more blood than the creature could naturally hold.

They come to the end of the trail, in the wilderness now. The brackish hound is sitting there, waiting. Then the PCs hear the rest of the pack — 30 more of them — closing in.

BRINE FURIES

A brine fury is an ethereal ball of light, intelligent and not necessarily evil. They range in size from 1 to 60 feet across. They feed on souls, resting on the sea floor until they become hungry. They do not glow when they are at rest, so they are effectively invisible at that time. They die if they are not in or above salt water.

The brightness of the glow depends on their hunger: a hungry one can be seen from 500 yards away if it is above water, or about 100 yards if under water. Those at rest can be seen at one-fifth that distance. The largest brine furies are always hungry; they can eat an unlimited number of souls. Medium-sized brine furies can eat about one soul per day. The small ones eat one soul per month.

Brine furies are attracted to any misuse of magic (see below) by someone in or floating on salt water within a mile of them. Hungry or not, the brine furies rise to find the source, as the event alerts them to the presence of souls. Their only other means of sensing souls is to be within 20 feet of a living creature. This can occur when skin divers near the ocean floor pass them.

The moment a brine fury can no longer sense a soul within a mile, it stops glowing. It becomes invisible and weak. It sinks down to the bottom of the sea until it detects a soul again. If it goes too long without food, it shrinks and eventually dies. The large ones shrink to medium size if they go hungry for over a week. Medium-sized brine furies shrink to small size after starving for a month. Any brine fury that goes hungry for a year dies.

They have no substantial form, but they can be affected by noncorporeal spells and psionics. For example, a Steal

ST: n/a	Move/Dodge: 15/15	Size: 1+
DX: 16	PD/DR: n/a	Weight: none
IQ: 7	Damage: see below	Habitat: salt water
HT: see below	Reach: C	Other Names: Wave wisps

Health spell would work but Winged Knife would not. For resisting spells and psionics their HT score is 14. Their HT otherwise ranges from 10 for the smallest to 100 for the largest.

Seamen, underwater explorers, swimmers and fishermen are the people most likely to see the eerie glow these creatures cast from beneath the water. If the witnesses are submerged (in a submarine, or skin diving), the brine furies haunt them, occasionally brushing past quickly. If the spectators are on the surface, the brine furies rise out of the water at some point and float overhead. In rare instances, a single, huge brine fury arrives; slowly and ominously it moves near the witnesses. These huge orbs can cast a glow bright enough to sunburn a lingering observer.

Storm-Bringers

Hungry brine furies create storms, whose severity changes with the number of brine furies present. Their size does not matter. The storm will center around the creatures, even if they move. One hungry brine fury will increase wind speed, producing a gale or raising a breeze from a dead calm. Five hungry brine furies will produce a storm that creates (or increases) local precipitation, lowers the temperature by 20 degrees and increases the wind

speed. Ten or more hungry brine furies will turn calm weather into a violent storm, and a storm into a hurricane.

The storms can be avoided by feeding the hungry creatures, by escaping them, or by killing them. Once a storm has started, it runs its course no matter what happens. If the storm starts and the brine furies are not killed or evaded, the storm goes on longer than it naturally would.

Stealing Souls

A brine fury that makes physical contact with anyone may steal his soul, transferring it instantly from the victim's body to the creature. The contact can come from a brine fury attack or through the curiosity of a witness. The victim can see from the brine fury's point of view as long as they are above water. The moment the brine fury submerges, the person's consciousness is suspended — this is identical to falling asleep. If the brine fury is killed while it holds a soul, the soul moves on to the afterlife.

Once the soul leaves, the body collapses, a lifeless shell. It can then be the subject of a *Zombie* spell, or simply disposed of. It will decay at the normal rate.

The soul transfer is involuntary; whether or not the creature is hungry, the soul still transfers. The brine fury can hold it to consume later, or return it to the body from which it came. Its decision will be based on the amount of

food available in the area, and its current hunger. The soul cannot be returned if the body has become a zombie. Of course, the body may be under water or decayed when the soul returns . . .

Anyone whose soul has been returned to his body by a brine fury can sense the creatures. The chance is a 15 or less in the first week. It decreases by 1 every week following. By the 13th week (and thereafter), the person can sense the creatures only on a critical success. Roll when they are within 1 mile of him.

Brine Fury Adventure Seeds

These aquatic creatures combine several different elements. First, the misuse of magic is likely to call them forth. The Game Master must determine what "misuse" of magic is. It could be a miscast spell, a deal with a demon, or a broken oath with supernatural consequences.

Other factors that may call for encounters include setting the adventure in or on bodies of salt water (being aboard a submarine or a ship, skin diving, etc.), giving drowning victims a second chance through the soul transfer, and bringing a *Close Encounters* feel to a first contact with the orbs or some other creature.

The Tower. An old stone tower sticks out of the waves far from the coast. Its flat, slanted top is large enough to support a small house. Runes cover the upper edges. The mystery of the tower either has a link to ongoing concerns of one of the PCs, or is a unique phenomenon they need to understand.

Deep beneath the waves, a dozen brine furies cling to the base of the tower. When the investigators arrive to unlock the tower's mysteries, the creatures rise. The GM must decide if they are hungry. The key to the survival of the humans will depend on them finding the link between the creatures and the tower.

Yellow Eyes. A canal in Victorian London is haunted by two brine furies. They rise in the darkness of the tunnel to feed, glowing yellow. The "yellow eyes" become a local concern until one woman, Myra Brecht, is able to buy the silence of the rumormongers.

It seems that Brecht has a financial interest in the canal shipping business — her deceased husband owned London's second most profitable canal company. Brecht needs to hire pilots who will brave the canal, and prevent the mysterious canal deaths from being publicized.

The protagonists could be hired as pilots (for which they will be trained and paid a staggering fee). They could be bribed to stop investigating the situation. Or, if a friend died in the canal, they might not rest until his death is solved.

Brecht will resort to muggings and blackmail to fight the PCs. She is a mundane but tenacious and intelligent foe. The climax of the adventure takes place in the canal with everyone present: the PCs, Brecht, her assistants and the "yellow eyes."



CHILLERS

A chiller is an Arctic horror, an undead creature with a bite that freezes its victim. It is attracted to cold and vulnerable to heat. It is encountered in rural areas and wilderness in the coldest parts of the world (though it is not impossible for a chiller to hunt in the towns and cities of Scandinavia, Iceland, Alaska or Canada). Chillers are usually encountered alone. In the deepest wilderness, they can be found in small groups of two to six.

A chiller resembles a furry gargoyle. The size of a human child, it has ape-like features, horns, a small tail and oversized hands ending in sharp claws. A pair of wings sprouts from the middle of its back (its flying Move/Dodge is 12/6). The chiller is covered with thick, coarse black fur. It moves quickly but awkwardly, with a lumbering gait and hunched posture. It eats loudly and breathes heavily. When hunting, it sometimes emits strange, gurgling howls.

Chillers heal 1 hit point every five minutes if the surrounding temperature is at or below freezing (32 degrees Fahrenheit). In environments between 32 and 100 degrees, they heal normally. Between 100 and 150 degrees, they cannot heal. They cannot heal damage from burns, regardless of temperature. At or above 150 degrees, a chiller becomes immobilized, "freezing" in place. If touched, it will crumble to dust. A dead chiller can regenerate if the temperature is right, unless its body has crumbled to dust or burned to ash.

Chillers are violent gluttons. They will eat humans, but prefer easier prey. They usually eat livestock, children, infants and forest animals. Even if a chiller has fed, it will attack anything edible — and take uneaten kills back to its lair.

During the day, chillers hibernate underground. Each has a well-hidden cave or hole to hide in and to store food. It defends its lair, which is strewn with carrion and bones, with berserk rage.

The bite of a chiller injects a venom that causes the victim to freeze. The venom lowers his body temperature, making it hard for him to breathe or move. The sufferer will shiver to the point of seizure, begging for heat as a relief. In the first 24 hours, blankets and fires will help. After this period, roll against HT twice a day. If a roll fails by 10 or more, the unfortunate person lapses into a coma. If a comatose subject is not saved within a week, he will be dead, frozen solid. There are rumors of tribal antidotes and spell cures.

ST: 22	Move/Dodge: 8/8	Size: 1
DX: 12	PD/DR: 3/6	Weight: 250 lbs.
IQ: 6	Damage: 1d+3 cut	Habitat: frozen wilds and northern towns
HT: 15/35	Reach: C, 1	Other Names: Howlers, frost demons

Chillers are created when the corpse of a murdered human is buried in frozen ground. If the moon is full on the night of the burial, there is a 1-in-6 chance that the remains will transform and rise as a chiller. In Aleutian legend, the corpse becomes a chiller when "the spirits blow upon the grave," placing a demon's soul in the cadaver.



The Sand Ghouls

Sand ghouls, distant cousins of chillers, live in extremely hot environments, typically deserts. They are encountered in the same numbers as chillers, and have the same statistics listed above. Sand ghouls look the same, except that their skin is parched and hairless.

Sand ghouls heal 1 hit point every five minutes if the surrounding temperature is at or above 100 degrees. In environments between 100 and 32 degrees, they heal normally. Between 32 and 0 degrees, they cannot heal. Temperatures below zero immobilize them (with the same brittle effects and regenerative qualities that chillers suffer at high temperatures). In all other ways, including the freezing bite, sand ghouls are identical to chillers.

Chiller Adventure Seeds

Chillers and sand ghouls are primarily combat monsters. In an adventure, however, they can be part of local myths and legends, then seen in the distance before they are encountered. This makes them more than a set of stats with wings — in the players' minds, the legends and sightings will make the creature more than it is, maximizing its impact.

Orphans. The PCs come upon a farm family that has been victimized by a chiller. The parents are dead. Their nine children remain, living like savages and taking great care to keep their independent existence a secret from the locals. Two winters ago, a chiller attacked their mother. She soon “froze to death.” The next year, their father suffered the same fate. Now, this winter, the children have decided that one of them must be offered to the chiller so the rest can stay alive.

The visitors discover them just after the chiller has returned to the area. The orphans are deciding who will die. Then one orphan realizes that all the siblings can live if one of the strangers is sacrificed.

Rattling Bones. A pack of sand ghouls is preying upon the people in a desert town. As they “freeze,” victims become so dry that their bones rattle when they have seizures. The sand ghouls have kept away from one ranch on the edge of town, however, a ranch belonging to two old brothers rumored to be descendants of Gypsies.

The locals go to the ranch and find that the brothers are missing. And there are more sand ghouls trapped in the cellar. When the PCs enter the action, the sand ghouls escape and the comrades are blamed. They have only a day or two to find out what's going on before there is a panic.

CHIMNEYRUES

A chimneyrue is a large spider-like creature with a human head, eight skeletal legs and a prehensile tail. Its body is the size of a dog, and its head is the size of a human infant's, with distorted features and a leering smile. Chimneyrues are bone-white, but invariably covered with a thick coat of soot and smoky debris. They can bite, or slash with the claws at the ends of their limbs; both attacks do 1d+2 cutting damage.

Chimneyrues breathe smoky, polluted air. Their lairs are chimneys, stovepipes, smokestacks and the exhaust pipes of huge vehicles. They are always hungry for more smoke to breathe.

Chimneyrues, found in many settings and at nearly all tech levels, vary in size. Generally, they fill about half the width of their smokestack homes. So a chimneyrue in the smokestack of a factory might be the size of a compact car. A chimneyrue in an old stovepipe might be the size of a cat.

Their multi-jointed bodies can squeeze through incredibly small spaces. They travel through the buildings or vehicles connected to their lairs, squirming their way through walls, cupboards, consoles, control panels and

ST: 1d+10	Move/Dodge: 7/5	Size: variable
DX: 13	PD/DR: 5/5	Weight: 20+ lbs.
IQ: 11	Damage: 1d+2 cut	Habitat: smokestacks and spyholes
HT: 2d+10	Reach: C, 1	Other Names: Soot spider

heavy machinery. When they are not feeding, they spy on people from the shadows, through cracks in walls and through exhaust vents.

Embedded in the wall of each chimneyrue's lair is a rubbery sac containing fluids essential to the chimneyrue's survival. The chimneyrue is connected to it by a thin, very strong cord of flesh, which unwinds and stretches out as the chimneyrue crawls along. The cord's maximum length is between 100 and 500 yards (longer if the chimneyrue is well-fed). Severing the cord requires either a successful ST-12 roll or 20 points of cutting damage in one blow. If the cord is severed, the chimneyrue will immediately lose half its current hit points. It will bleed profusely, losing an additional hit point every ten

seconds. If it can make its HT roll to stay conscious when it reaches 0 HT *and* if it is surrounded by thick, sooty smoke, it will live. (Modify the HT roll by the thickness of the smoke. For example, in a campfire it would be at -3, but the smokestack of a coal-burning ship would add +5.) It will heal at the normal rate as long as it stays in the smoke. All chimneyrues are protective of this cord. They are also aware of all nearby sources of smoke in case the cord is severed.

Chimneyrues increase their supply of smoke by fixating upon a single human or family. Each chimneyrue can mimic any sounds or voice with a chilling accuracy. They also have an uncanny ability to say nerve-shattering phrases in familiar voices. A chimneyrue may adopt the voice of a recently-deceased loved one (perhaps someone the chimneyrue itself killed). It may divulge secrets to a victim in exchange for smoke-making favors. It can threaten to divulge secrets to others, tell stories to youngsters in exchange for favors, and even make a person scared enough to stop eating or have a breakdown. The chimneyrue uses all of these tactics with deft ease. This combined with the chimneyrue's knowledge of many secrets gained from spying allow it to exert control over humans.

After scaring an individual or family for a few days, it will present itself. It will demand that everything possible be done to create more smoke. For example, a chimneyrue might force a young boy in a family of five to light a fire in the fireplace whenever he can. Although the boy will be severely punished (maybe even sent to a psychiatrist), he fears the chimneyrue more than he does his parents.

Little is known about the life cycle of the chimneyrue. Whether they occur in the wild (near volcanoes, for instance), or more than one to a smoke source, or even whether more than one will inhabit the same building, is the subject of debate among occultists. One student of the creatures claims to have found very small specimens in the exhaust pipes of older automobiles; his findings, however, have not been confirmed.

Chimneyrue Adventure Seeds

Chimneyrue adventures often start slowly. The creature haunts its prey and spies on the humans around it. Player characters can encounter it in a number of ways. It could be discovered by someone else (who then tells the PCs). It could leave evidence behind for investigators to find. Or, the protagonists could run into it accidentally, a face-to-face meeting that is terrifying for both parties.

Pets or Food. A chimneyrue's selected victim, a teenage girl named Claris, has just become the carrier of a puppeteer (p. 00). When the two creatures meet face to face, they react with the instinctive hatred of competing species. Both need her for food; Claris is caught in the

middle. The PCs can become interested by meeting Claris, by investigating her home, or by chance.

Standoff. A huge tire factory is home to a very large and hungry chimneyrue. It has forced the foremen to leave the plant's pollution filters unchanged. A local political group has brought the EPA in to inspect the filthy facility. When the EPA threatens to shut the place down, the chimneyrue pulls out all the stops. Under its influence, the foremen begin secretly arming loyal workers. If pressed too hard, they will lock the doors and keep the plant running 24 hours a day. This is sure to happen but, if the PCs are involved at this point, they can attempt to stop it.

In the standoff, the chimneyrue demands more smoke. The EPA tries to shut off the power, but only succeeds in cutting the lights — casting the plant into darkness. The workers inside become terrified when they find out they are locked in with a huge creature. If they don't shut the place down soon, something will explode.



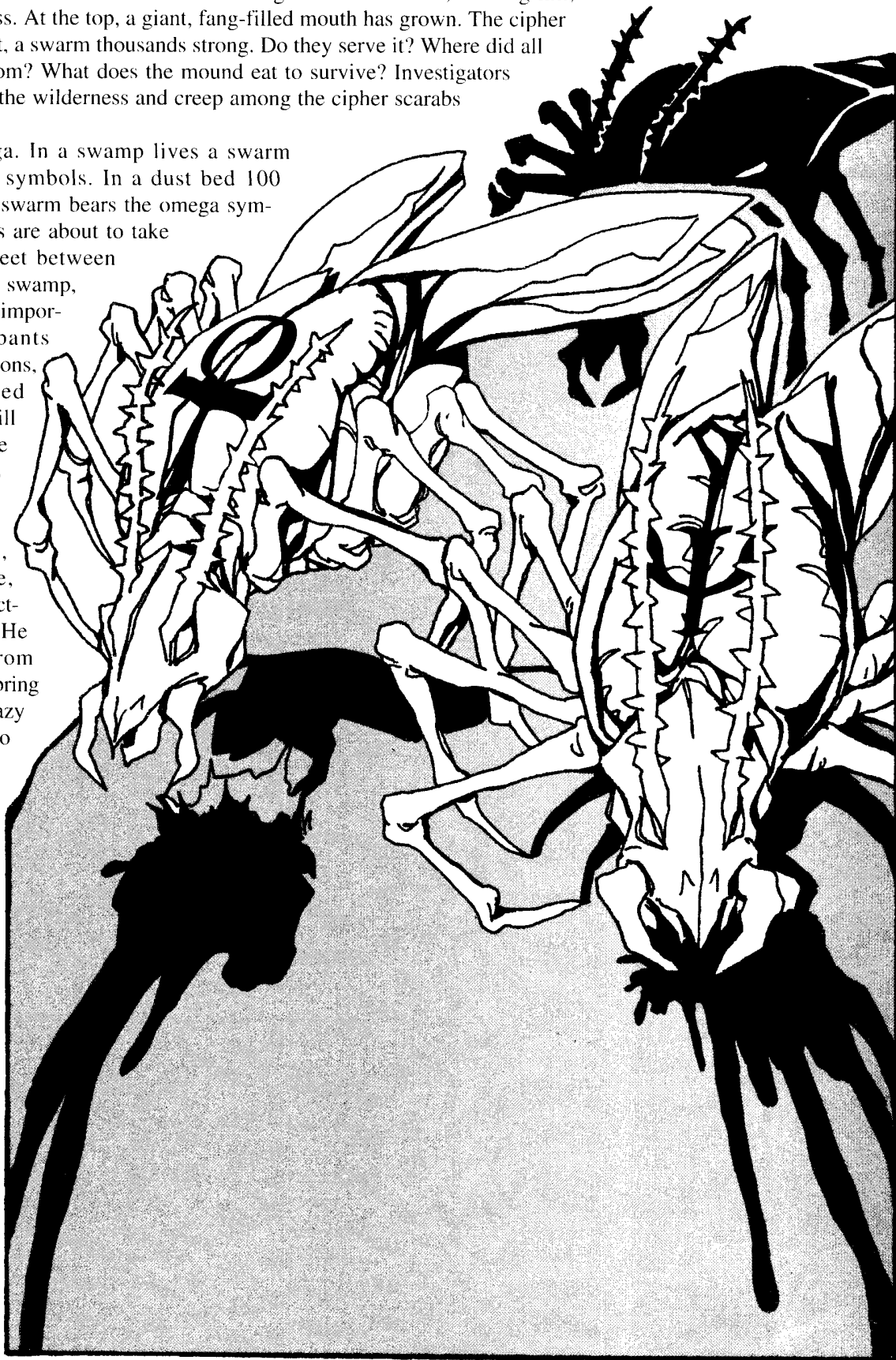
Anyone who is unafraid of a swarm and feeds it has a good chance of taming it. Cipher scarabs do not hunt if they are fed. The swarm will grow, slowly. Some swarm-keepers develop a psychic link with their charges . . .

The Maw. Cipher scarabs have assembled a huge mound of flesh, a living hill, deep in the wilderness. At the top, a giant, fang-filled mouth has grown. The cipher scarabs live around it, a swarm thousands strong. Do they serve it? Where did all of the flesh come from? What does the mound eat to survive? Investigators will have to explore the wilderness and creep among the cipher scarabs to find out.

Alpha and Omega. In a swamp lives a swarm marked with alpha symbols. In a dust bed 100 miles away, another swarm bears the omega symbol. The two swarms are about to take flight. They will meet between the dust bed and the swamp, in a location that is important to the participants (their base of operations, their town, a sacred place, etc.). What will happen when these hungry swarms arrive?

The Life of a Sculptor. An artist, completely insane, lives alone in his insect-infested apartment. He makes sculptures from the flesh the insects bring to him. He is too crazy to be afraid of them, so they will not eat him. As he works, building disgusting shapes and eating bits of flesh to stay alive, cipher scarabs crawl all over him.

The player characters hear about the artist. When they arrive, they will be horrified. This attracts the cipher scarabs, who are delighted to eat such frightened and fleshy visitors.



THE CLUTCHES

ST: see below Move/Dodge: n/a Size: n/a
DX: see below PD/DR: 0/0 Weight: n/a
IQ: 5 Damage: see below Habitat: in the shadows below
HT: see below Reach: C, 5+ Other Names: Lurkers, grabbers



A clutch is a set of animated, grappling appendages. It drags its prey down as it strangles, constricts and suffocates. A clutch could be a tangle of seaweed floating toward swimmers at the water's surface. It could be a set of slimy tentacles erupting from a sewer grate or manhole cover. It could be a pile of knotted bedsheets and clothes from under a bed that drag a sleeper down by his ankle. Or a clutch could be a pair of hands that reach out of a grave to pull someone down into the earth. They do not have bodies; they are all hands and arms.

Define the ST, DX and HT based on the size and nature of the clutch. ST ranges from 10 to 30. At 10, the clutch has a 50-50 chance of inflicting a few hits of constriction damage per turn. At 30, it could kill a grown man in one squeeze.

DX ranges from 10 to 20. At 10, it will grab its prey by the fourth or fifth attempt. At 20, it will grab its prey on the first or second attempt.

HT, reflecting the amount of damage *from one blow* that will force the creature to let go, ranges from 4 to 15. If it lets go, it will attack again in the second turn following that release. Any single attack that does twice this amount will kill the clutch. (For rolls versus spells and such, the monster has a HT of 11.)

Clutches are not biological; they do not breed, eat or live anywhere. Fear alone generates them. A clutch will attack to kill, simply disappearing when its victim is dead. The bedsheets stop moving. The tangle of seaweed scatters in the waves. The tentacles withdraw into nothingness.

They are created when someone expresses fear in a clutch-prone area. He might be swimming in a lake and feel something brush his ankle. He might see something moving in the sewer from the corner of his eye. If the GM wants a clutch there, he should roll a Fright Check. The penalty is based on the amount of visualization and expectation of the victim. Roll at +5 if he (or his player) isn't thinking about creatures or the possibility that he will be attacked and dragged down. Roll without modifiers if he knows that something may be lurking down there but hasn't said anything out loud. Roll at -5 if he mentions it, at -10 if he describes it. Claustrophobes roll at an extra -5.

If the roll succeeds, the individual is safe. If it fails, nothing happens . . . at first. Wait until he is almost safe, or has almost calmed down. Then the clutch attacks.

Battling the Clutch

Clutches attack by grappling. Roll a Quick Contest of twice the victim's Dodge vs. the clutch's DX. (This differs slightly from a normal grapple.) If the clutch wins, the victim is in its grip. The clutch can then constrict, drag the target down, or suffocate him.

Constriction is a Quick Contest of the clutch's ST vs. the victim's HT. Constriction damage equals the amount by which the clutch made its roll. Note that no victim's limb can take more damage than it has — see the rules for crippling on p. B127. The head, neck and torso can take any amount.

Someone who is dragged down is at a disadvantage to break free. Normally, he breaks free by winning a Quick Contest of ST. If he has been dragged down (a "take-down" maneuver), his ST is at -5. If the clutch tries this again and succeeds, the victim is pinned. His ST is at -10. (A "pin" in water translates into additional depth and entanglement.)

The clutch can suffocate the subject by jamming something, part of the clutch or any nearby object, in his mouth. This is a Quick Contest of DX. If the clutch wins, the victim cannot breathe. See the sidebar on p. B122.

The area around a clutch is silent as long as it is making contact with a living creature. This circular area has a radius of 2 yards, extending from the center of the clutch's limbs. If the clutch attacks in darkness, the target may be dead before anyone notices his plight. His screams would be deadened, but he might be able to throw an object out of the area to make enough sound to attract attention. Clutches do not always attack in seclusion and darkness; some will attack groups in broad daylight. They only attack one target at a time, but will lash out at others who try to save its prey.

Outcomes

The death certificates of clutch victims list "misadventure" or "unexplained causes" as the cause of death.

Bodies are found under beds, lips torn open and jaws dislocated by a mouthful of socks and sheets. Victims of the grave-dwelling variety are often horribly mutilated by the compacting effect of being pulled into solid earth. But no one can prove the clutch existed. There is no psychic residue or magical aura. There is neither motive nor trace.

Clutch Adventure Seeds

Clutches are best used as unrelated events during lulls in an adventure. They can burst from a grave during a daylight visit by the group. They can attack from a well, out of an industrial washing machine, or through a cellar door when least expected. One person can create the clutch by thinking out loud — one minute he says, "What if there were something slimy down there?" and the next, the PCs are being grappled and strangled.

Ghost Story. In a summer-camp cabin, where weeds grow through the floorboards under the cots, eight teens tell each other ghost stories. One teen tells a tale about the weeds rising up and strangling everyone. That tale is told better than the others. The clutch of weeds comes alive, attacking the sleeping teens.

The adventurers could be investigating the strange deaths of these teens, reliving that fateful night. Or, they might be the teens, who survive the first attack. Either way, the players get to tell ghost stories as they roleplay the night in the cabin. Everyone should be allowed to tell one brief tale to scare the other players. Then one of them tells the tale of the clutch, and the action begins.

Gone Fishing. The PCs accompany an old fisherman to a secluded fishing hole. He has some information they need, but refuses to talk unless they are at the fishing hole. They arrive in the late afternoon and begin fishing.

The old man would rather die than tell the secret the investigators need. He knows how to raise a clutch from the depths. As the sun begins to set, he starts talking about the tentacles in the fishing hole that pull people in. If the protagonists look into the water, they might raise a clutch. The old man will escape if he can, but he doesn't expect to.

CORPSE-KISSERS

A corpse-kisser is a dead human filled with corpsebugs (occasionally called "taxidermites"). These are black centipede-like insects that invade corpses, reproducing rapidly as they eat the organs and bones inside. Leaving only the husk of outer flesh, they continue to multiply until they form a tightly-packed mass. They secrete a fluid that preserves the flesh of the husk. The fluid also binds them together, allowing them to imitate muscles as they twitch and shift in a complex series of movements.

ST: 13

DX: 8

IQ: 1d+6

HT: 20

Move/Dodge: 6/6

PD/DR: 2/1

Damage: by ST
or weapon

Reach: C, 1

Size: 1

Weight: 90-150 lbs.

Habitat: hidden in
plain sight

Other Names: Breeders,
Bugbastards,
necrophiles

Corpse-bugs share a single consciousness, a hive mind of mutual instincts and collective decisions. While one corpse-bug has the intelligence of an ant, a mass inside a corpse has the IQ of a normal human, occasionally higher.

A corpse-kisser appears to be a normal, living being. As long as a corpse-kisser wears sunglasses (or squints its eyes) and never opens its mouth, it can blend in with society. Corpse-kissers cannot talk, smell, or taste. They can, however, learn how to behave by observing humans. This includes gesturing, shaking hands, walking, running, using simple tools and weapons, and pretending to sleep.

Corpse-kissers can see — dozens of corpse-bugs peer from the eye sockets, communicating visual information to the hive mind. Each corpse-kisser also develops some unique mannerisms such as a distinct walk (a slight limp), habitual gestures (scratching behind the ear), length of sleeping periods (midnight to dawn), etc.

Extreme heat is very painful to corpse-kissers, causing the corpse-bugs to immediately evacuate the husk. A burning corpse-kisser will shudder and then vomit a thick,

continuous stream of squirming black bugs. The husk collapses and the corpse-bugs scatter.

Occasionally, a corpse-bug will fall out of a corpse-kisser's mouth. Conventional injury (bullets, blades, etc.) will spill a few from the inflicted gashes and holes. A firm shake or solid punch will cause corpse-bugs to fall out of the ears and nostrils. Those outside a husk die. The fluid that holds them together and preserves the husk's skin dries quickly — in five minutes, the fluid is gone and the corpse-bug is reduced to a pile of black ash.

Static stimulates corpse-bugs to secrete their precious fluid. They thrive on the sound of radios tuned between stations and televisions showing "snow." After a day without static, corpse-kissers lose one hit point every two hours.

A simple IQ or Empathy roll will detect that something is wrong with a corpse-kisser. Once someone is aware of the bugs, the same roll will unmask the creature . . . if the person *looks*.

The Life of Corpse-Kissers

All corpse-kissers want to do is create more corpse-kissers and occasionally listen to static. They do not naturally cooperate with each other, and they do not want to take over the world. They will eagerly infest any fresh corpse they encounter (or create).

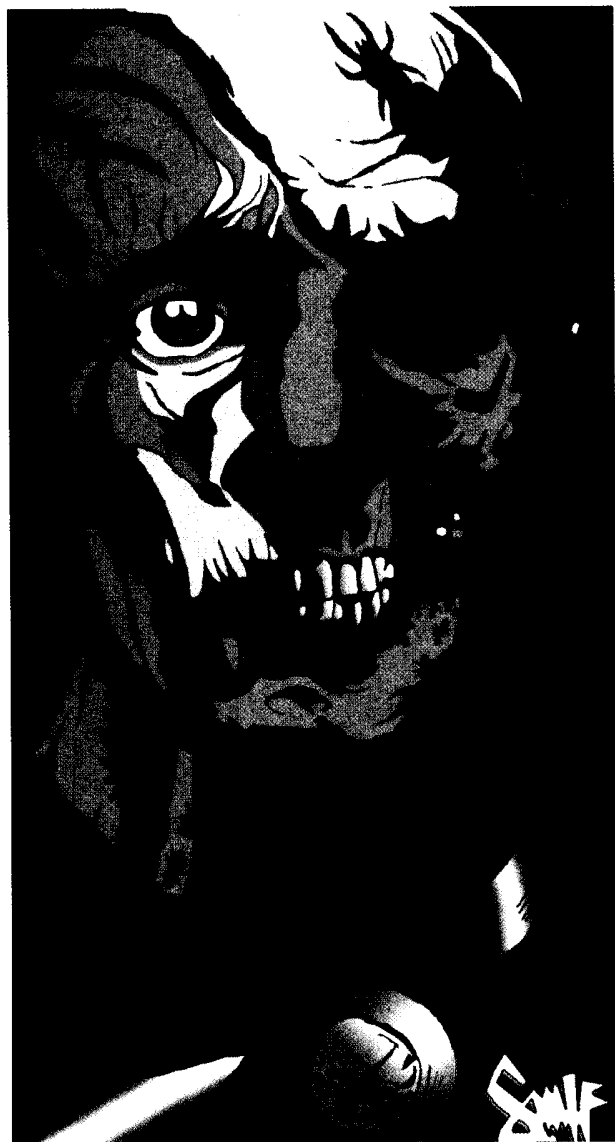
A corpse-kisser places its mouth next to the mouth of a corpse, or any open wounds. Hundreds of bugs enter the corpse and begin breeding. Within 1d days, the corpse rises as a new necrophile. However, the corpse must be fresh; a body more than a day old won't do, except as food (see p. 25).

This means that corpse-kissers will hover near the dying, awaiting their chance. Occasionally, an eager necrophile may try to hurry the process if there are no witnesses, "kissing" someone who isn't quite dead. If someone is down to negative HT, he must make a HT-3 roll to survive the foul kiss and spew of crawling bugs . . . and, if he lives, an immediate Fright Check at -10.

Very rarely corpse-bugs infest non-human bodies, but they prefer humans. Any body must weigh at least 50 pounds to be worth infesting. If a colony in an animal body can find a human corpse, the whole colony will transfer to the corpse, leaving the dried-out animal husk behind.

If a necrophile is destroyed, thousands of bugs will scatter. Normally they all die, but if there are fresh corpses nearby, roll 3 dice for the maximum amount that can be infested by the refugees. The bugs are not intelligent and will *try* to enter any human, by any orifice. The ones that enter live humans will die, unless the human is at negative HT, but Fright Checks from the target at -5 are required!

An autopsy of an infested corpse that has not yet risen will reveal bugs, but (unless the examiner has previous



experience with them) a Diagnostics+2 roll is required to know these are not just some kind of maggot. Since the bugs disintegrate outside the host, examination is difficult. Anyone dissecting or examining a “live” necrophile will immediately know something is wrong, and will certainly have to make at least one Fright Check when the bugs appear. Entomophobes will probably be reduced to gibbering horror, especially as the bugs try to crawl in . . .

Corpse-kissers eat about the equivalent of one human meal a day, of any trash or carrion that will feed the corpse-bugs . . .

If the corpse-kisser stays inconspicuous and avoids conversations, it can survive among humans for years. They are not capable of elaborate ruses, and always assume roles that combine minimum interaction with maximum proliferation: they pretend to be people who are everywhere, but never need to converse. This includes the homeless, the retarded, the transient, the elderly, the very young, the mute and the deaf.

Corpse-kissers are ruthless and deadly if provoked. If a corpse-kisser is backed into a corner, attacked with fire, or nearly dead from lack of static, it will go Berserk (p. B31). They also have Bad Tempers and a Mild Phobia of fire.

Because they do not have an agenda of their own, they can be controlled by a suitably powerful and intelligent being — a mad scientist, for example, might devise a way to lead them, building a corpse-kisser army for his own ends.

Corpse-Kisser Adventure Seeds

Corpse-kissers can be a new brand of zombie, docile cannon-fodder for a greater power, a secret sect of

humanity, or (if encountered on an individual basis) creeping horrors in the guise of normal humans. Use the special types of humans who become corpse-kissers as a starting point for adventures — think about where these types of people are found, and what they do when encountered.

Fingered. Ever wonder why Secret Service bodyguards never speak, always wear sunglasses, and have those radios in their ears? In this adventure, an anonymous tip leads the PCs to discover that most Secret Service agents are corpse-kissers. Digging deeper, they find a document, prepared by an unknown U.S. intelligence agency, describing how to use corpse-kissers in a variety of clandestine ways — as guerrillas, storm troopers, bodyguards, assassins, etc. Who leaked this to the heroes, and why? What other branches of the government know about this?

The Dregs. In the near future, a whole class of humanity has been given up for dead — the dregs. These are the pitifully poor, the human refuse who lie in gutters in the darkest ghettos of the city. Few people can stand to look at them. Entire neighborhoods, the dreg zones, are neglected because only the dregs live there.

The dregs are fast becoming corpse-kissers. One after another, they are dying and rising again. The dreg zones buzz at night with the sound of static from radios and televisions. People nearby are getting nervous. The PCs find two evil forces among the dregs. One is a shady businessman with a fortune and an army of henchmen at his disposal. The other is a secret society of bug-worshippers, led by an archiphid (see p. 58).

The battle for control of the dregs is about to begin. The winner will rule the under-city.

CRYPTLINGS

A cryptling is a graveyard ghost that feeds on fear. Normally invisible and insubstantial, it must take possession of a corpse to affect the material world. It can only inhabit the flesh of deceased humans. Its range is also limited — if a cryptling seeks a new host, its current host must be within 100 yards of the new corpse.

A cryptling is created when a supernaturally-endowed human is buried alive — if the victim had psionic powers, Magery, etc. and died from fright, his spirit lives on as a cryptling.

A failed Fright Check caused by a cryptling constitutes one cryptling “meal.” If the cryptling has not had a meal

ST: 3d+15	Move/Dodge: 8/6	Size: 1
DX: 1d+10	PD/DR: 3/6	Weight: 50+ lbs.
IQ: 8	Damage: per ST	Habitat: graves and mausoleums
HT: 15/2d×10	Reach: C, 1	Other Names: Cemeterians, tomb gloats

in a week, its possession range is halved. After two weeks without feeding, the range is 10 yards and its IQ, ST and DX are halved. Three weeks without feeding will kill it. Food at any time before this will restore its full strength.



Due to the supernatural power of a cryptling, the corpse host gains supernatural strength and resilience. In addition to the ST, DX, HT and DR above, it heals 1 hit point per minute, can see in total darkness, and ignores shock and stun modifiers (pp. B126-127).

The corpse can also stretch and make minor transformations. It can rapidly decay (disintegrating before a target's eyes), stretch to twice its length, split to reveal festering organs and crumbling bones, bleed more blood than it could possibly hold, and make a multitude of foul noises (children crying, lips smacking, bones snapping, etc.). The corpse can speak — the cryptling is a perfect mimic, able to repeat any phrase it has heard in its existence. The corpse is also strong enough to dig its way out of a grave, or to bury itself.

Most cryptlings take a single cemetery or graveyard as home. The longer they have lived there, the more sophisticated their attacks will be. Old cryptlings lure humans and trap them, terrifying them over and over until they die of shock. Young ones simply leap out of the earth and howl at humans, dining on people's trauma as they flee.

Cryptlings are vulnerable to silver. They cannot inhabit corpses wearing silver jewelry. They cannot heal damage from silver weapons.

Greater Cryptlings

If a cryptling causes a critically-failed Fright Check, it gains +1 to all attributes and +1 to DR. This is permanent.

These scores have no upper limit except IQ — after IQ 20, the cryptling gains and improves Magical Aptitude (i.e., Magery 1 instead of IQ 21, up to Magery 3). After Magery 3 is achieved, the cryptling develops psionics, one Power Level at a time. The GM decides which psionic powers the cryptling develops, and at what level it will begin to develop a new psionic power.

Old cryptlings are rare and powerful. Viking legends tell of an ancient cryptling called Norjinsuld, a wise and demonic spirit with nearly limitless power. It lives in an old Viking burial ground in Norway, known only to the local people.

Cryptling Adventure Seeds

Cryptlings are almost always found in cemeteries. They can also be found inhabiting single corpses far from any cemetery — in this case, the creature wants to find a graveyard home as soon as possible. Feel free to use other types of corpse collections than the usual field of buried corpses behind a gate. A morgue is a cemetery of sorts, and so is a battlefield full of fallen soldiers.

Life, Ltd. Xavier DeFoe is one of the world's most ambitious and demented entrepreneurs. He owns hundreds of cemeteries, mortuaries and embalming companies, all under an umbrella corporation called Life, Ltd. One day several weeks ago, while touring one of his smaller graveyards near the Mojave Desert, he discovered a cryptling named Vectnor. Vectnor was able to terrify and intimidate DeFoe enough to cause DeFoe to worship it.

Now DeFoe is trying to build the world's largest cemetery. He wants to make his Mojave Desert graveyard into everyone's choice for a final resting place, a global center for burial and visitation. This will give Vectnor nearly unlimited resources. The PCs are hired by one of DeFoe's assistants, a man who fears his boss has gone mad.

Autopsy 101. A team of medical students arrives at their pathology lab to a great surprise. The lab is full of corpses . . . and one of them is the instructor. A cryptling rose from one of the slabs, snapped the instructor's neck, and took possession of the fresh corpse just before the students arrived. He proceeds to teach the class, all the while complaining about the kink in his neck. The class is particularly grisly, allowing the cryptling to snack on the fear of the students.

The next class is different. It has been moved to a basement-level room with a single door leading in. When class begins, the cryptling seals the door behind the students . . .

The Ice Ghost Cult. The protagonists travel to Norway, looking for Norjinsuld, its graveyard kingdom and its cult. The cult brings it corpses, as well as living victims for their "god" to scare to death. The PCs can get there faster if they allow themselves to be captured by the cult.

DARKKLINGS

Darkklings are former humans who have become disciples of the night, communing with the living darkness, the “darksome.” It gives them power when they increase its link to the natural world by stealing human organs (see below).

The darkling persona suppresses the human identity over a prolonged period of time. This persona surfaces only in natural darkness. This usually occurs between dusk and dawn, but can also happen in caves and tunnels. When the sun comes up, or when a natural light source such as fire is present, the human side regains control.

A darkling takes the attributes above when its human side fades. It loses any sight-impairing disadvantages and gains Night Vision. The darkling persona knows its dominance is temporary. The human persona does not even know dominance is a question. The darkling persona works hard to keep its presence a secret.

When the darkling takes over, it quickly grows a hooded cloak, made of heavy black cloth. This appears out of nowhere, covering the creature except for its face. The darkling looks like a disembodied, floating face when in shadow. The cloak instantly fades away when the human side resurfaces.

Darkklings can hypnotize with a successful Hypnosis roll (in a Contest against the victim’s Will). Their Hypnosis skill is equal to their IQ+4. They typically use this ability to cloud the minds of those who see them, especially victims whose organs have been stolen. They can also use the ability to suppress their human alter egos (see below).

The darkklings feed the night with stolen organs. The darksome is both the creator and the embodiment of darkness and shadow. The darksome becomes stronger when it can focus its power through human viscera. As it breathes through stolen lungs, pumps blood through stolen hearts, and twitches stolen muscles, it gains power in the world, which it transfers to the darkklings.

ST: 1d+6	Move/Dodge: 5/5	Size: 1
DX: 1d+6	PD/DR: 0/0	Weight: 50+ lbs.
IQ: 11	Damage: variable	Habitat: darkness
HT: 10	Reach: C	Other Names: Stygrids, shrouds

The darkklings remove organs from living humans, leaving no scar. The cavity is filled with a strange shadow that allows the victim to live as if

the organ remained. Conventional means cannot remove this shadow organ — only a spell such as Exorcism or Remove Curse will work, and the victim then suffers the true effects of the organ’s absence. Doctors who find such shadow organs, in tests or operations, will be baffled, unable to understand how the patient continues to function.

Darkklings typically attack in groups of three to seven: one removes the organ while the rest hold the victim down. The tearing or incision is treated as a normal attack, a roll against the darkling’s DX. This causes the appropriate amount of injury and pain. But the removal of the organ and the magical, instant healing of the wound are painless.

The stolen organs are placed in a bed of soil and watered with blood. They stay alive, throbbing and gurgling quietly. Darkklings have gardens of viscera scattered throughout their immediate area — in forests, in terrariums hidden under beds, in root cellars and elsewhere.

Once a group of darkklings grows powerful enough, people begin to simply vanish. The darksome gains power. If the scourge is not discovered and rooted out, the whole community disappears. The darkklings join their master, leaving their foul gardens to rot; nothing remains but an empty, evil-haunted town.



The Viscera Gardens

As the number of nearby viscera gardens grows, the local darklings gain more power. They can see better, hypnotize better, move more quickly and become insubstantial. Use the following table.

No. of Organs	Will Modifier	Darkling		
		Vision	PD	Move
1	+2	-3	0	-2
2 to 20	0	0	+5	0
21 to 50	-2	+4	+7	+2
51 to 150	-4	+7	+9	+4
over 150	-6	+10	+11	+6

Organs refers to the number of planted, healthy organs in the surrounding community. These can all be in one location, or scattered throughout the area. *Will Modifier* is the modifier to any victim's Will roll against a darkling's Hypnosis. *Vision* is the Vision roll modifier for darklings in natural darkness. *PD* is the increased Passive Defense of darklings, reflecting their decrease of substance. This PD does not apply to their faces. *Move* is the increase to their Move score while in darkness.

The size of the "surrounding community" is subjective. Normally, it refers to the borough of a city, a suburban town, or perhaps a group of villages in the wilderness. Adjust this as needed to keep the power of local darklings at a usable level.

In the table above, an "organ" typically refers to a major organ such as a heart, lung, kidney, or brain. Minor organs such as testicles and large muscles count as half an organ. Small muscles, pieces of skin, etc. are of no use. In any community with darklings, there will always be at least a single one-organ garden.

Anyone who discovers a viscera garden will surely be horrified. The organs can be uprooted and returned to their rightful owners. This must be done within a few hours of the uprooting. The victims must also be alive, of course (most have been dead for months or years).

Special skills or powers can be used to determine an organ's origin, but the simplest method is to squeeze or pinch it. This causes pain in the source, enough to stun (p. B127). If the organ is stabbed, treat this as an attack on the owner, as if the organ were in his body. Darklings can control their victims in this way — with a simple squeeze, a target can be murdered, or crippled with pain.

Normal medical surgery is not needed to return an organ. Simply placing it in the cavity from which it came is enough. Although gaining access to the space will require spells or strong drugs to avoid sending the patient into traumatic shock, the organ immediately resumes its previous functions. The shadow in the cavity will disappear. (Organs can also be used for conventional medical transplants, but must be *thoroughly* cleaned first.)

Submerging the Human Side

It is not known how a human becomes a darkling. It is known, however, that all darklings are between the ages of 15 and 60. (Presumably a darkling gains enough power after age 60 to join with its master.) The darkling persona is aware of everything the human side thinks, senses and does. It waits in the person's head for the sun to go down. (Some of these people live in tunnels, caves and other perpetually dark places, allowing the darkling persona to stay in control at all times.) Darklings do not absorb any of the human side's skills.

Once the darkling persona manifests, it begins wearing down the human side. The darkling mind conditions the human subconscious from within, forcing the human side into a subservient role. In the first few months, the victim acts strange. He may not be able to account for his whereabouts at night. He might encounter some weird and grisly evidence of the darkling, as well — nightmares, darkling brothers spying from the shadows, discovering a hidden organ garden. Within six months, the internal conditioning has convinced the human side that there is nothing wrong; he is able to protect the darkling persona reflexively.

Once subjugated, the human often accepts his lot. He thinks of himself as a darkling who becomes empowered when the sun goes down. In this case, the darkling persona allows the human side to remember the darkling's activities.

Darkling Adventure Seeds

Darklings can be encountered as single creatures, anything from deranged pests to recurring villains. Or darklings can be encountered in groups, preying upon a community.

Before inserting darklings in the campaign, consider two key creative factors. First, determine the identity of the human side of each darkling. It makes a big difference whether the human side is a mayor or a drifter.

Second, decide what links these creatures. From this link, motives can be drawn. They could be members of a secret society, outcasts, extended families, cults, scientists, sages and soothsayers, dimensional travelers, or sub-human races. The link is unique to the darklings of a given community — in medieval England, they might be an extended family of demon-like beings. In New York of 2005, they might be a sewer cult.

Midnight Oil. Rosstown teems with darklings. Their viscera gardens are located just off the horse trails in the nearby woods. In the center of town, in a boarding house, the town's only survivors have gathered.

The survivors go about their daily business pretending nothing is wrong. They know they are surrounded by the subservient human hosts of the darklings. They cannot convince the rest of the town of what is happening — the

darklings have suppressed the human sides of their victims too thoroughly. The survivors avoid entering any place that could be cast in darkness; they stay near windows and in the open streets.

The survivors make sure they are in the boarding house by nightfall, when the darklings come for them. A few survivors have been attacked and some of their organs have been stolen. They light the boarding house brightly all night with oil lanterns, keeping the darklings at bay. They work hard to collect more supplies. But their oil is running out . . .

When the PCs arrive in town, the darklings go on the offensive. Their human sides spend their days trying to convince the visitors that the people in the boarding house are a threat to the community. They have an arsenal, the darklings say, so they must be dangerous.

The visitors have to decide who to trust. And they had better decide quickly.

The Dosage. A local female doctor has become a darkling. During the day, she treats patients. At night, her

darkling persona surfaces and preys upon them, stealing organs and planting them in a shed behind the doctor's house.

The doctor is aware that something is wrong. She has seen several other physicians, and is now taking medication. The pills suppress her nightmares and allow her to sleep at night. This has caused the darkling to become sleepy and confused. When it can surface (usually in the early morning just before the sun rises), it is too disoriented to steal additional organs.

One of the doctor's friends, knowing that the situation is more than medical, calls the investigators. They might find the viscera garden. If they reduce the doctor's dosage to let the darkling surface, but hold the level high enough to keep the creature disoriented, they may be able to use spells or psionics to eliminate it. The moment it knows what is happening, it will try to escape to an underground location. If successful, it will hide until the drugs wear off and it can completely eliminate the doctor's persona.

DARKRIDERS

Darkriders are sentient viruses which infect carbon-based life forms through bodily fluids. They have only two desires: to reproduce through new infections and to live in darkness. Their only innate attribute is IQ. All their other attributes come from their hosts, modified as indicated above.

All infected hosts have slightly irregular grins on their faces. Casual observers who stare at this expression too long will feel uneasy. Experienced darkrider-hunters can identify a darkrider by the smile with a successful IQ-3 roll. Modify the roll by +5 if the host is a close friend.

Darkriders can infect any sentient animal, but prefer humans. Blood exchange with a host is 99% likely to cause infection (a roll of 3 on 3 dice avoids infection). Infection by the casual exchange of bodily fluids is less likely — infection by kissing occurs on a failed HT+2 roll, by sharing bath water on a failed HT roll, and by sexual acts on a failed HT-2 roll.

Once infected, the host goes through a painful, confusing period as the darkrider fights for control of his body. The host has a single darkrider within him; the darkriders reproduce each time a new host is infected. In the first 24 hours of infection, the host feels no change. Immediately after this period, roll against HT. If the roll is a success, roll again every 24 hours at a cumulative -1 per roll until the roll fails. On a failed roll, the darkrider takes over for

ST: +4	Move/Dodge: varies	Size: 1
DX: +2	PD/DR: 0/0	Weight: 50+ lbs.
IQ: 8	Damage: by ST or weapon	Habitat: any
HT: +7	Reach: C	Other Names: Rictus seeds, the illen

an hour. If two critical successes are rolled (not necessarily in a row), the darkrider dies and the host is cured.

When a darkrider takes over, it has a brief link with the host's memories and mind. It learns the host's daily regimen, name and a number of superficial facts (names of relatives, favorite food and drink, mannerisms, etc.). Moments later, the link is gone . . . and the darkrider immediately tries to inconspicuously infect another victim. After an hour, the host's mind reasserts itself. On a successful IQ roll, the host will remember fragments of the previous hour. Fright Checks are in order.

After the first period of darkrider control is over, start the series of HT rolls again. Each successive period of darkrider control is twice as long as the previous period. At the start of the sixth control period (after 16 hours of darkrider control), the darkrider fully and permanently controls the host. At this time, the host can be brought back only by killing the darkrider and using telepathy to

rescue the host's psyche from the dark recesses of his own subconscious.

While a darkrider is in control of the body, it does two things. First, it maintains its precious secrecy, trying to stay inconspicuous. Darkriders feel the need to spread but they are patient. Second, it will try to infect more hosts, right up to the moment the host reasserts control over his body. This can be terrifying because, during the periods in which the host and darkrider fight for control, the host often regains control during an act of attempted infection.

When the darkrider has completely taken over, it craves darkness. It will not go out in well-lit areas or in daylight unless it must. It will wear hats, cloaks and coats. It will leave lights off indoors or hide in the basement. It does not take damage from being in light; it just prefers darkness.

Some humans and animals are immune; the Immunity to Disease advantage adds +5 to effective HT when resisting darkrider infection. Elixirs and other treatments may be developed to help the fight. These treatments can be presented by the Game Master, or the player characters might take it upon themselves to develop these defenses.



Darkrider Adventure Seeds

The darkriders were adapted from the Riders, a race from *GURPS Aliens*. In the horror setting, they have become more deviant and less organized.

Be creative with the species or social status of darkrider hosts. These creatures can infect beasts of all kinds (cattle, dogs), children of all kinds (infants, rebellious teens, orphans, politicians), and player characters of all kinds. With a uniform IQ 8 for all darkriders, this can be very eerie — adults become a bit simple-minded, and beasts and infants become unusually smart.

The River Sickness. In 1891, a spore filled with darkriders spread along the Thames. The darkriders soon began to infect London residents. Tales soon spread of a strange rash of lunacy and unspeakable acts among townspeople. A few people were found sodomizing animals and each other. Dozens of people reported having extended blackouts, and waking up in strange places after unusually long sleepwalking jaunts. The tales were collectively named the River Sickness. By late 1891, all of the local papers had run back-page stories about the disease.

Anyone rumored to have the River Sickness was soon visited by special Scotland Yard agents. The agents, wearing black coats, gloves and scarves over their faces, would escort the suspect as quietly as possible to a local asylum. The patient was monitored for several days; if the doctors felt they detected darkriders, the afflicted individual was “enrolled” in the asylum — indefinitely.

As the darkriders spread, the witch hunt continued. Mass hysteria was controlled by assurances from authorities that the River Sickness afflicted only certain people — whores, laborers, beggars, thieves and foreigners. It was never called an epidemic, and few Londoners outside that “lowly” segment of society considered it a serious threat. Of course, not everyone who was taken away for observation was afflicted.

Player characters could be whisked away to an asylum, asked to help find the source of (or a cure for) the River Sickness, or try to save an NPC who has become a victim. They might discover that the Scotland Yard agents are darkrider hosts, picking up innocent people to be infected back in the asylum.

One Percent. In this modern-day adventure, the battle against the darkriders is an all-out war. The darkriders have infected most of the world. The PCs discover that they belong to the one percent of mankind who are not hosts! If the darkriders become aware of the heroes' independence, they will be targeted. The protagonists will have to go underground. But they have a technological edge — they join the rest of the one percent and develop vaccines, detection equipment and weapons to weaken and destroy the enemy.

DEFILERS

Defilers are former humans who ruin everything they touch. Any object that contacts their skin will become dirty, rusted, spoiled, greasy, withered or flawed. The change takes from one to 30 minutes. It seems to occur naturally — anyone watching the process will have trouble remembering the old appearance.

Sacred objects suffer the same fate but they are damaged as well. The damage depends on the length of time the defiler touches it. "Sacred" is not limited to religious items. It also includes heirlooms, treasured baubles, wedding gowns, tombstones and any object whose destruction will cause trauma in someone. Ten seconds of contact will render a diary illegible or crack a crematory urn. In 30 seconds stained glass windows will shatter or a handprint will be burned into a priceless portrait. One minute with a defiler will cause a tombstone to crumble.

The creatures themselves are as filthy as humanly possible. Their fingernails are long and encrusted with germ-filled soil. Their maggot-ridden clothes and hair are matted down with layers of greasy dirt. Their skin is covered with rashes, scabs and sores. Their teeth are rotten, black shards. Defilers can be mistaken for bums or homeless people in the largest cities. In other places, they are too filthy to be mistaken for anything human.

Occultists and others with supernatural experience might assume that defilers are zombies. The faces of defilers prove this is false. Their facial expressions are hauntingly natural but wicked. One glance reveals that they are cunning and fully aware, too intelligent to be mere zombies.

Defilers are joined by a single consciousness, a *mindshare*, as presented in *GURPS Fantasy Folk*. Defilers share each other's knowledge instantaneously. They act as individuals and think their own thoughts, but they hear the thoughts of the others in their heads. This effectively gives them a clairvoyant link. The range of this link is limited to one mile.

Their mindshare causes them to act in perfectly coordinated groups. They never use weapons, but they are formidable foes nonetheless. They will push opponents into an ambush of other defilers nearby, silently send for reinforcements while others continue to fight, and convey information about enemy armaments and weaknesses instantly. Clawing attacks (the most common) will infect a victim on a failed HT roll. If the victim is bitten, the roll is made at HT-2. See p. B133 for details.

ST: 10
DX: 8
IQ: 8
HT: 10

Move/Dodge: 4/5
PD/DR: 0/2
Damage: 1d cut
Reach: C, 1

Size: 1
Weight: 80 lbs.
Habitat: squalor
Other Names:
Filthings, the unclean

They live in all places but congregate under ground. A rare few will inhabit the dwellings they owned as humans. These places invariably degenerate into what appear to be garbage heaps with roofs. The rest live like moles. Defilers can find and navigate subterranean passages as if they were raised in them. They can dig through junk heaps and soft earth like vermin. Their subterranean passages always lead to a few linked rooms where they can meet, sleep and store supplies.

They are most active on nights of the new moon. Many save their appetites for this time. They hunt small animals, devour the occasional human, and consume discarded food.

Defilers are inactive during the full moon for a special reason. If they stare at a glowing circle, they become mesmerized. This is a mental stun, requiring a successful IQ roll to recover. They lose their link to the shared mind as well. It comes back after snapping out of the stun and ten seconds of concentration.

Enemies can keep defilers confused by using flashlights and then distracting the creatures to prevent the mindshare link. Without its mindshare, it will panic and try to hide. If the mindshare is not reestablished within ten minutes, it is severed permanently. A defiler in this situation may begin to remember its former life . . .

Defilers create more defilers through a strange ritual. They surround a victim and cover him with filth. He is beaten and infected, then chased or taken into one of the lightless subterranean lairs. The defilers then chant for hours. At this time, the chanting, the darkness and the fear open an invisible node to the shared mind. If the victim senses it and makes mental contact, he joins the ranks of the defilers. He can resist with a successful Fright Check (at -5 or more, rolled every minute). If he neither escapes nor joins within (HT-2) minutes, he dies of fright. If he joins the ranks of defilers, his features transform slightly, making him barely recognizable. He forgets his name (something he has no need for once he has a link to the shared mind). His old life will be remembered as a dream.

Defiler Adventure Seeds

Defilers are smart zombies. Use their mindshare when they encounter adventurers by setting up fully-coordinated ambushes and tactics. Defilers are

not always violent and may let the PCs roam their subterranean lairs unmolested. Of course, if the new moon rises or the group abuses this tenuous privilege, the defilers will attack.

Feel free to devise special settings and terrain types for defiler encounters. Cities are the obvious place to find them. Try other places such as Arctic zones, mountains, coastlines and industrial complexes.

The Thralls of Entropy. An occultist named Jorgensson believes defilers are more than telepathically-linked filthmongers. She calls them "the thralls of entropy." She claims that they are a "bio-sect," a cult linked by biological factors (the mindshare) instead of spiritual factors. She believes the initiation ritual that creates new defilers involves a deity of entropy that hides in subterranean shadows.

PCs who meet Jorgensson may be shocked. She is filthy herself. She is also incredibly clever and full of arcane knowledge. They may have trouble trusting her and her strange ideas. She wants them to accompany her to a city where they can practice mesmerizing defilers during the full moon. If successful, they can break a defiler's link with the shared mind and use it to explore the bio-sect's secret lairs.

This may be a once-in-a-lifetime chance for the investigators to fight real evil and learn from a master scholar. Or they might be following a madwoman on a suicide mission.

The Iris. The Iris Theater is hidden behind the boarded-up storefront of a condemned building. Inside, the show goes on — dozens of defilers execute ritualistic performances on the stage. Since spotlights will mesmerize defilers, candles and lanterns light the theater. Street children and counterculture aficionados are secretly invited to attend. Each performance ends with an attack on the human visitors in the audience; they are transformed into defilers, or killed.

The party members hear about this place. They can attend a performance formally, or sneak in to examine the situation. If they take the time, they will find an old spotlight in the projection booth behind the back row. The defilers don't know it is there. It still works.



DREAD BLOSSOMS

A dread blossom is a flower that causes fear and phobias. It looks like a rose, but has black spots along the base of the petals and extra-long thorns on the stem. It is not animate. Its supernatural presence passes for a rudimentary intelligence, but it has no actual thoughts.

All Fright Checks made while dread blossom aroma is in the air are at -3. If someone sticks his nose in the flower and sniffs, the modifier is -5; this concentrated dose lasts for 4d minutes.

Anyone who drinks dread blossom broth will gain a randomly-chosen mild phobia (p. B35) based on a recent fright or on the person's current surroundings. The victim rolls against HT each day thereafter. After two successful rolls in a row, the affliction disappears. A phobia that lasts for two weeks or more is permanent. Normally, drinking dread blossom broth causes only one phobia. For each subsequent swallow, a new phobia is acquired only on a roll of 6 or less on 3 dice. An individual with multiple phobias rolls against HT each day per phobia.

The Dread

Anyone who eats one or more petals from this flower will develop a special kind of mild xenophobia, known as "the dread," in 3d minutes.

This affliction is permanent. If the drinker has another phobia acquired by drinking blossom broth, this replaces it. If he has several, this replaces all of them. Ironically, the aroma effects of the blossom are reversed for the eater — while breathing the aroma, the dread fades away and he gains a +3 on Fright Checks. But the moment he is separated from the blossom's smell, the dread returns . . . as a *severe* phobia. Thus, the victim may avoid the blossoms for fear of developing a greater affliction. Or he might covet them to ward off the severe dread as long as possible.

The dread creates uneasy feelings about new places, weird creatures, unknown machines and strangers. The victim's fear increases with his lack of familiarity. He will hate to travel. He will see the worst in strangers, especially those with critical esoteric knowledge — surgeons, lawyers, scientists, occultists and psychologists.

The extremes of the dread can bend the mind in strange ways. A victim with a severe case of the dread sees an impending apocalypse, an invasion of foreigners and strange cultures that will change everything he knows and trusts. He might become panzatic as a subconscious reaction to control his fear, seeing everything from cars to creeping horrors as commonplace, instantly explaining things apparently rationally. Or he may see everything as

ST: n/a	Move/Dodge: n/a	Size: <1
DX: n/a	PD/DR: n/a	Weight: a few ounces
IQ: 1	Damage: n/a	Habitat: temperate climates
HT: 1	Reach: n/a	Other Names: Fear-flowers, rose of madness

outlandish, strange and alien. He may become catatonic. He may plot to escape from his weird surroundings. Or he might want to destroy the apparent source of the world's weirdness.



Dread Blossom Adventure Seeds

Dread blossoms can be encountered as gifts, planted in gardens, in labs, in ceremonies of some kind, or even worn by creatures or characters. Their effects should be witnessed by PCs before they become afflicted. If they catch the dread, make sure there is a way for them to be cured.

Faceless. Someone is selling light-brown, full-face gas masks to the residents of Mexico City, where smog is life-threatening. The gas masks are fashionable, cheap and life-saving. They also make everyone on the street look the same. In public, the seller always wears a spotted rose in his lapel. He has the dread, and is trying to make a city of identical citizens. If investigators find his headquarters, they will discover a greenhouse full of dread blossoms. How did he finance this endeavor? Does he have additional plans to complete the creation of a xenophobic dream city?

Perhaps he will begin distributing the flowers to citizens in one of the boroughs. He might begin pumping the aroma through smokestacks upwind from those streets.

When the gas masks are removed, the streets are full of phobics.

The Haunted Earth. Britain's brightest scientist was on the verge of a world-shattering discovery. Then she developed a severe case of the dread. The player characters find a dread blossom with a missing petal. Was she using it in her experiments, or did someone feed one to her and drive her insane? How did she come to eat the petal? Are her claims that someone is controlling her research, making her develop something that will kill billions of people, true, or the result of her affliction?

The answers lie in a country halfway around the world (pick any part of the Orient). They will have to spirit the scientist away, just in case her paranoid delusions are true. As they travel, she gives them a tour of the world through her eyes, where everything is strange and threatening. Her ramblings reveal a lot about her life, her work and the secrets they need to find. When they reach their destination, she leads them to a man who knows everything about dread blossoms. Can he be trusted? Can he cure her?

DUSKLORDS

ST: 2d+9 **Move/Dodge:** varies **Size:** 1
DX: 1d+12 **PD/DR:** varies **Weight:** 100+ lbs.
IQ: 1d+11 **Damage:** per ST **Habitat:** Aristocracy
HT: 3d+10 **Reach:** C, 1 **Other Names:**
Clansmen, shades

Dusklords are a special type of vampire. Some occultists think of them as vampire half-breeds. They bear a strong resemblance to traditional vampires but share only a few vampire vulnerabilities (a trait that many dusklords use to fool attackers). Dusklords battle each other, using humanity for food and fodder.

Every dusklord worships death. They consider the death of humans to be a fascinating event, with unparalleled medical, spiritual, social and sensual significance. Many dusklords kill humans for study, for ceremonies and for sport. They see the mortality of dusklords in a similar light, regarding each death as an event offering critical knowledge about the survival of their race. They have a high regard for all mythic symbols of death, from Anubis to the traditional Grim Reaper. Death symbols with blood-related features have particular importance.

Dusklords are intellectual by nature. They enjoy debates, political intrigue, games and riddles. They are fascinated by technology, magic, power, medicine and the social sciences. Elder dusklords are invariably masters of the dark arts — black magic, occultism, propaganda, terrorism, murder, mind control, surveillance, etc. In every era, dusklords use the latest technology in their endeavors.

They are brilliant social chameleons. They can blend into the surrounding cultures with deft ease. Commonly, a dusklord will choose the high road, establishing a reputation and minor fame in order to avoid suspicion. This protects them against any real inquiries about their personal lives. Well-to-do nobles, politicians, businessmen and doctors can always cry foul when badgered by truth-seekers; they are legitimized by instant respect. An obscure intellectual or reclusive performer is fair game, however, and may even be the subject of unsavory rumors simply because he is secretive.

They are notoriously agoraphobic. This makes their ability to blend into society a bit tricky. Some dusklords will distract attention from their phobia by being superb hosts. Elder dusklords have a solid cover story built up over decades. There is no suspicion of their true nature and

they can lock themselves indoors for months at a time, seeing no one except their servants.

All dusklords have psionic powers. Young dusklords are notorious for having precognitive dreams. Elder dusklords are often summoned to interpret these visions. Dusklords also have telekinesis at IQ level (this is a Psychokinesis single-skill power at Power 5). Each dusklord will have at least one other psionic ability.

All dusklords have at least one level of Magery and know two to 40 spells. Some spells are unique, created for and mastered only by the dusklords who knows them. Elder dusklords commonly take one or two gifted youngsters under their care to teach them the ways of magic. The relationship is similar to that of a sensei and a martial arts student, with the student eventually emerging with knowledge of how to live as well as how to cast spells.

Physical Characteristics

Dusklords look like pale humans. Except for the infants and elders, it is nearly impossible to distinguish a dusklord from a human without the use of supernatural powers or a medical examination. Dusklords prefer to dress in expensive clothes, particularly robes and suits. They love to wear black with gold and silver accents.

They are also averse to sunlight. They can be active during the day, but direct exposure to sunlight makes them ill. They are reduced to half their current Fatigue, their IQ is temporarily reduced by 1, and all attacks and spell rolls are made at -3.

They need human blood to survive. They prefer to drink blood from a cut in the hand of a victim, or by mixing it with red wine or food. A dusklord who goes one day without at least a pint of fresh blood suffers as though exposed to sunlight. After a week, the effects are doubled. After a month, the dusklord loses 1 HT per day until he drinks or dies.

They can cross running water. They have no aversion to silver, garlic, holy symbols, mirrors, or ash wood. Any weapon, metal or otherwise, can harm them. Unlike traditional vampires, they have no inborn spells, although many dusklords will learn vampire-like spells as a means of pretending to be true vampires.

Dusklords regenerate one hit point per minute unless the injury came from magic. Damage from spells and magic items heals normally, but causes double the normal stun (p. B127).

The head of a dusklord controls its body, even if the two are separated. Decapitation has no effect. The dusklord will bleed from the neck only for a moment. The dusklord then uses telekinesis to make its head float and fly. The body operates normally, but the dusklord will have difficulty controlling it if it is out of the head's line of sight. If the head is put back in place, it will regenerate a healthy neck in a few minutes.

Reproduction and Young

Dusklords reproduce through the death of a fellow dusklord. For this reason, a dusklord accepts and even looks forward to its death — it offers its passing as a gift to the procreation of its race. The moment a dusklord dies, its body begins to liquefy; eight hours after death, the corpse has become a pool of sticky black fluid — the “liquor.”

To create a new dusklord, a human must be immersed in the fluid. Each dusklord corpse generates only 2d gallons of fluid. The dusklords will be particular about recruits; different ones will have different criteria, however, and most will use *any* victim rather than waste the liquor.

The liquor can be bottled, and will keep for 1d weeks. It takes two gallons of liquor to drown and change an adult human, and one to drown and change a child. A human cannot become a dusklord except by this rebirth. A dusklord remembers its earlier life and keeps some of its personality.

The victim drowns in the fluid and then shrivels. A day or two later, his flesh has formed into a newborn dusklord: an arachnifoal.

Arachnifoals look like human spiders, with two pairs of extra limbs and a deformed mouth. By the end of the first year, the extra limbs have been discarded and the arachnifoal begins shedding its skin. A month later, the shedding process is complete and the dusklord looks like a normal teenage human.

Dusklords age slowly. Each has a life span of exactly 300 years. Young dusklords have human-looking limbs and complexions. As they grow older, however, the limbs extend and the skin acquires a mummified appearance. After 200 years, the dusklord is an elder. Elder dusklords cannot pass for human: the arms, legs and neck have become at least 50% longer than human normal and the skin tone and texture can no longer be excused as a simple skin condition. In the final decades of a dusklord's natural life, it looks like a ghostly human-spider hybrid. Anyone encountering an elder dusklord must make an immediate Fright Check at -2.

Social Motives

Dusklords live in small groups all over the world. These groups compete with similar groups, and with other kinds of occult creatures, for the control of power resources, technology and positions of authority in their communities. This competition sometimes breaks out in open feuds.

According to rumor, one or more of these groups are part of the Cabal or the Illuminati. If they are not, the dusklords surely deal with these other powerful, secret societies.

Dusklords Adventure Seeds

Dusklords are intended to be non-player characters. Use the information above to generate attributes, advantages and disadvantages. Add appropriate skills, quirks and spells.

The degree of detail depends on the intended use of the dusklord character. For example, a brief meeting might require no more information than the dusklord's sect, its rank in the sect, its physical appearance, its mannerisms,

and a general idea of its powers. Take the time to generate attributes, advantages, disadvantages, spells and skills *only* when the dusklord is to spend prolonged periods of time with the player characters, or to fight them.

Dusklords exist outside the affairs of men, so their inclusion in a campaign will be significant. Adventurers will discover a hidden nobility and a secret war. They will also find themselves battling creatures who are respected in the human community. A simple adventure can involve a single dusklord, ignoring the sects. Or the adventure can spiral into a complete campaign.

Jackboot Soul. The group uncovers the existence of a strange cult led by a reclusive, blood-drinking woman (a dusklord). The cult worships a spider-like god of death. The most interesting aspect of the cult is its militant nature — the cultists are survivalists and terrorists. Rather than wearing robes and speaking in arcane tongues, these cultists wear jackboots and carry machine guns.

When PCs investigate, they uncover a plot to assassinate a government-appointed special prosecutor. The special prosecutor is researching the connection between a series of poisonings and the shipment of artifacts from a landmark archeological dig. Has he found something?

Dealing with the Devil. At a moment when the player characters are in dire straits, a *deus ex machina* occurs; some secret force saves them. They later find out who is responsible: a large, shadowy figure that introduces itself as “a worldly demon.” This elder dusklord has become their Patron — whether they like it or not.

Over the course of the next few adventures, the adventurers will have to decide if they want this Patron. Occasionally it tricks them into performing a “service” for it. As time goes on, it saves and assists them more and more . . . and they sink deeper into servitude. To escape their evil master, they will have to find the dusklord and kill it.



EONIGHTS

An eonight manifests as a vast, black expanse floating overhead. It cannot be seen in the literal sense — visual recognition is limited to sensing a lack of light. It only manifests at night, so it is best “seen” when it blocks the shine of stars and the dull glow of the sky above.

But it can be felt. Anyone under an eonight feels it up there, hovering and huge. It will descend to a level that attracts the attention of a few people under it who are trapped or isolated. It might, for example, appear over a group on an island. It will not appear over highly populated or empty areas.

The people beneath it become its victims after they notice the creature. While under it, their mental disadvantages come into play. An addict’s drug of choice is suddenly in great supply, a phobic person encounters the object of his fear everywhere he turns, etc. These situations are subtle at first. But, as the eonight weighs more heavily on the victims (lowering itself to make its presence more ominous), their disadvantages increasingly overpower their resistance. (Giving eonights appropriate spells or psionic powers to reflect their ability to cause these situations will add some technical detail to eonights. Basic movement spells and powers of suggestion are a good place to start.)

An eonight disappears in the light. It can be driven away by shining bright lights into it. It will fade at dawn. If its subjects are still isolated or trapped when the sky above darkens again, it will return. In a subterranean setting, it never leaves.

Eonights need a few minutes to fade. A sudden burst of intense light directed at an eonight will kill it. A nuclear blast or other explosion will disintegrate it. A high-powered spotlight could mortally wound it.

As targets remain under an eonight the pressure on them builds. Anyone who spends more than five nights in a row (or 40 cumulative hours) under an eonight will acquire a new mental disadvantage. Either a quirk will increase in severity or an event that occurs while he is under the creature will generate the new disadvantage.

An eonight will haunt its prey until one of the following situations occurs. First, an eonight can collect more victims gradually (about three new captives per night), but it will panic when large numbers of people notice it at once. It will permanently fade at the end of that night. It is possible for an eonight to victimize an entire town, but only if it can cast its spell over a new handful of residents each night.

ST: n/a
DX: n/a
IQ: 14

Move/Dodge: special
PD/DR: special
Damage: n/a

Size: 50+
Weight: unknown
Habitat: the darkness
above

HT: n/a

Reach: n/a

Other Names:
Overshadows,
the gloom, umbras

Second, a prisoner can travel out from under the eonight, simply walking, driving or sailing until the eonight is no longer over him. The eonight will follow: it cannot be outrun. But it will stay over the majority of victims. So one or two people in a group can escape. The moment someone is free, the sudden release of pressure can cause him to faint (roll vs. HT immediately). If he ventures under the eonight again, he again becomes a victim.

The Back of the Beast

Third, a sufferer can travel above the eonight. This has the same effect as getting out from under it: a sudden sense of relief and disadvantages that return to normal. He can use any available means to get above an eonight — by traveling to a suitably high floor of a local building, using an airplane, flying magically or even climbing a hill. He may pass through the creature to get above it. Of course, the creature can move upward, so people pass above only when the creature allows it.

Although the creature is merely a dark presence from below, from above it has a physical form. Its upper surface is scaly black hide, as immense as the creature seems to be from below (at *least* as big as a football field). People can walk across this hide. Although anything can pass through it while moving up, downward movement is not so easy once the human or object is above the hide — once above it, the creature is a floating platform of thick black skin.

Since the hide doesn’t really exist when approached from below, firing weapons up at an eonight has no effect. Firing at it from above, however, does. The hide has a Passive Defense of 10 and a DR of 50. Damage of 50 or more hits will create a ragged hole approximately 10 square feet in size. Damage of 100 points on the same spot will cause the creature to disintegrate and die.

The eonight knows when anyone is on its back. Its only defenses are to rise, descend and fade away. For some reason, eonights never fade in darkness while people are on

its back. When dawn comes (or a bright light hits it from below), it will fade and they will plunge to their deaths.

Eonight Adventure Seeds

No one knows what an eonight is. Its presence and intelligence cannot be denied, but the creature's motives are hard to discern. It is possible that it comes from another dimension. Most occult scholars feel that eonights feed

on the stress and misfortune of their victims.



Eonight adventures generally occur in a permanently dark place (a huge cave, for example), or over the course of several nights. In the latter case, the creature returns each night at a lower altitude. If the targets are not trapped, isolated, or in the wilderness far from other people, the adventure will be brief. But then, even one night under an eonight may be enough.

Flayer. The PCs are in a desert. A local tribe roams this area. They warn the outsiders of "the gloom." The eonight arrives. The travelers notice it and become its victims. If they retreat to a nearby cave, they find deep and wide caverns. The eonight will follow them inside and stay over them, sliding between the stalactites, until they leave.

Then the tribesmen conduct a ceremony for the creature. They paint temporary designs of animals, faces and weird things on their bodies. They light a fire and take hallucinogens. The drugs make them paranoid, afraid of the images on their flesh. Those who cannot resist will tear their own skin off in the firelight. The survivors are the worthy ones — the eonight's spell is broken for those who live.

The curse of the eonight is getting worse for the strangers. The safety of town is several days' travel away. There are two other solutions. First, they can take part in the ceremony and try to resist tearing themselves apart. Or, they could use the ceremonial fire to get rid of the creature: if they can place explosives or gasoline in it, they might produce enough of a flash to drive it away.

The Black Angel. The protagonists encounter an eonight from above. Either they are victims who have found a way to get above it, or their initial encounter is from above. This eonight is particularly old. Its hide has ridges of hard black flesh and shallow streams of milky-white fluid.

The eonight also bears a resident. She is the "black angel," a woman who was once a victim of the eonight. She traveled to the top of the creature and explored its back. Some latent psychic power has caused her to generate a symbiotic attachment to the creature — she can survive on it as long as it is healthy. She fades away when it does. She has also developed a few advantages (Voice, among others), disadvantages (Gigantism, Jealousy and such) and the ability to cast a few spells (GM's choice).

The black angel's loneliness has driven her insane. She wants to return to her normal life, but she can barely remember it. Any mention of the intruders hurting the eonight will cause her to attack them. Perhaps they can leave. Or maybe the black angel will keep them around for company.

ETHERWHORLS

An etherwhorl is a living mist, a whirling expanse of sentient air. It can adjust its temperature to alter its visibility. For example, when matching the local temperature it is invisible. By raising its temperature, it turns into a fog. Etherwhorls live in abandoned homes, graveyards, swamps and caves. They can only be detected with some sort of supernatural aid such as the Detect Life spell. They can be as small as a closet (about 75 cubic feet) or as large as a house (1,000,000 cubic feet).

An etherwhorl can shift the air inside it by spinning. This alters the density of the air; if the etherwhorl moves fast enough, it can create a vacuum. Any animal or person caught inside a swirling etherwhorl may have trouble breathing. If the etherwhorl is moving slowly, it will seem like normal air flow; those inside will feel slightly short of breath. If the etherwhorl makes a formal attack, people and animals inside will feel the air move and the vacuum build around them.

Etherwhorls attack when they feel threatened, or when their homes are invaded, often accompanying the attack by a chilling howl or echoing moan. If an etherwhorl attacks, roll a Contest of each target's Will vs. the etherwhorl's HT every second. Targets lose 1 point of Fatigue for each failed Contest. Use the Fatigue rules on p. B134.

The subjects will be mentally stunned (p. B127) as they gasp for breath. Stunned victims are disoriented, but they can notice that the air around them is moving. The etherwhorl can stop an attack at any time. Usually, the etherwhorl will carefully control their suffocation, dragging it out over a long period. It may even quit, give its victims time to regain their breath, and then attack again.

Etherwhorls cannot be harmed using conventional weapons — they are affected by psionics and spells. Spells from the Air college are particularly effective. Psionic telekinesis is useless against them, but other psychokinetic skills are useful (the pyrokinesis skill, for example, can be used to make an etherwhorl more visible).

Spells and psionic powers will also be needed to find them. The one exception is a successful Occultism (Etherwhorls) roll. (Without the specialization, roll with a penalty of -10.) They can be contacted using telepathy or the Mind-Reading spell. The communicating person will find an etherwhorl to have a soulless, defensive demeanor — the creatures love to scare, torture and kill humans. If the person who makes contact is skillful or powerful, he may be able to control the creature.

ST: n/a
DX: 15
IQ: 7
HT: 15

Move/Dodge: 50/—
PD/DR: n/a
Damage: special
Reach: C

Size: 75+ cu. ft.
Weight: none
Habitat: any
Other Names:
Breath robbers,
vacuum vortexes

An etherwhorl that has communicated with a human will absorb some of the human's subconscious fears. These images can be used later to scare others — if the etherwhorl is in a visible, fog-like form, it can recreate fleeting, vague replicas of these images. This usually occurs when the etherwhorl is defensive. Roll Fright Checks when this happens.

The Border

Each etherwhorl has a link to the border between realities. They can narrow this border by spinning (this always occurs when an etherwhorl creates a suffocating vortex). If the border narrows enough, a portal opens. It can be used to travel across the border, through the ether to another time and place.

The border between times is easier for etherwhorls to shrink than the border between space. And the past is easier to reach than the future. Generally, the larger an etherwhorl is, the greater its border-narrowing ability. All etherwhorls must make an effort (a successful IQ roll) to open a passage to a specific time or place. Otherwise, the destination is chosen by fate (the GM).

Those who pass through a portal can only return if they are at the point of arrival exactly 24 hours later. If they do not return, they remain in their new place or time. Travelers through space can usually return to their former location by conventional means. Time travelers will have much more difficulty if they fail to return.

The Game Master decides how significant a portal across the border will be in the campaign. He also decides if a portal crosses time or space, and how much time or space. This power should be used only to enhance adventures and to scare players, never as a random consequence of an etherwhorl's attack. An adventurer might only see the portal and never pass through.

If the GM doesn't want a raging etherwhorl to transport the party across space and time, he should make the portal's effects subtle. For example, it might transport



them back five minutes, or an hour into the future. It might transport them 100 yards away, or 5 feet. Stunned victims are unlikely to notice what happened — they will just be disoriented for a while, extending the mental stun. If they do notice, roll Fright Checks.

Or the border-spanning power can be a major plot element. This could be an integral part of the adventure, or a

fortunate and exciting improvisation. Characters can find themselves in any time or place the GM wants them. If they know a little bit about etherwhorls (or ask around and find an expert in arcane lore), they may even learn how to get back. They might even invent a way to extend the 24-hour time limit . . .

Etherwhorl Adventure Seeds

Like the gallows trees (p. 44), etherwhorls are complete creatures with a single, unusually powerful ability. The ability to manipulate the border may come up in a number of ways. The targets of an etherwhorl attack can gaze through a portal into another time and place, witnessing it as an apparition only. Or, one of the victims could fall through the portal, leaving the rest behind. The portal can also be used by the creature itself for escape or travel.

The portal can be seen in several ways, as well. It could manifest in an actual portal — around a doorway, for example, making the doorway lead to a new time and place. It could open on the ground or overhead. It could be small or large, easy to locate or hard to discern.

The Tunnel. The group must pass through an old tunnel immediately. This could be a subway, a canal tunnel, a train tunnel, etc. Halfway through, after hearing some strange noises and bumping into some shadowy figures, their light source goes out. As they grope their way through the darkness, the etherwhorl that lives there begins playing with them, making them short of breath for a few moments, causing one or two to lose consciousness.

Will they reach the other side alive? Will they emerge from the tunnel to find themselves 100 years in the past? Or 100 years in the future? Or maybe through the end they entered?

The Whistler. There is a stretch of pines where the wind whistles. If player characters explore it, they find that an etherwhorl lives there. It is trapped among the pines and needs their help to escape. It can speak by whistling between the trees. It needs a sacrifice to break a spell that trapped it there 50 years ago.

If the investigators will not comply, it will whistle and moan until someone comes. Then it will kill that person or, if he escapes, whistle the names of the people in the group. They must destroy or free the creature before too many people hear their names. Once their names are attached to that place, any deaths there will be linked to them.

FABRICANTS

A fabricant is a creature whose innards have transformed into mechanical parts. Everything under the skin and outer layer of flesh has developed into a technological facsimile of its organs and bones. The skin is a necessary nuisance that keeps the creature alive. Fabricants look normal, but a close examination (of their eyes, into their mouths, etc.) reveal them to be inhuman.

Fabricants hate living things. Some simply stay away from everyone and become hermits. Others secretly try to destroy life to sate their hatred. They love machines, however, and will surround themselves with all kinds of devices.

They can and will remove their skin at times. It grows back when the fabricant wills it; this takes about an hour. It can be carefully peeled off or quickly shredded, depending on the disposition of the fabricant. They do this only when they are safe from prying eyes, or when they want to terrify onlookers. The “naked” fabricant feels the same sense of essential freedom as a nudist.

They are created in two ways. One type transforms as a result of being “unstuck” in time. This strange condition is suffered by those who are transported by malfunctioning time machines, by victims of poorly-cast time-travel spells, and by the rare few whose temporal anchors simply come loose. After such an event, the victim will find his innards painfully transforming. This takes 2d weeks. Medical examinations reveal nothing; magical examinations do. As the transformation progresses, the developing fabricant learns to hate living things. By the end of that time, it knows what it is and how its body works.

The second type are the “manufactured” fabricants. These are humans or animals who have been forced to eat several pounds of fabricant flesh. Like victims of a vampire, they become one of the breed. They transform just as the first type do, but in only 2d *days*. Transformation begins after (subject’s HT-5) pounds of flesh have been consumed (at least two). The flesh can be eaten over a number of days equal to the number of pounds.

The manufactured fabricant is not necessarily a servant of its creator. But the creator can use the situation to establish mastery. For example, the creator can imprison and brainwash the victim as he is fed fabricant flesh. The victim will be terrified and confused (especially if it is an animal), and may become a servant by the time the transformation has ended.

Each fabricant’s innards are two TLs ahead of its environment of birth. The creature understands this level of

ST: 2d×5	Move/Dodge: *	Size: 1
DX: 1d+8	PD/DR: 6/1d+10	Weight: 100+ lbs.
IQ: 2d+5	Damage: see below	Habitat: any
HT: 15/3d+30	Reach: C, 1	Other Names: Futurians, technogores

*use attributes



technology well — it has a default in all TL-based scientific skills equal to its IQ. Thus, in a TL6 world, a TL8 fabricant of IQ 14 has Electronics/TL8 at level 14. It can invent, build, and repair items at this TL, including itself. The Engineer skill will function as its medical ability.

But few fabricants have access to suitable parts, materials, chemicals and other delicate or processed components. For instance, there would be integrated circuits in the body of a TL7 fabricant in a TL5 world, but none in the outside world. To repair a circuit, it will need TL7 tools and spare TL7 parts.

This is the purpose of manufacturing fabricants. Manufactured fabricants are the same TL as their creators, no matter what TL currently surrounds them. So a fabricant can have a kennel of fabricant dogs to cannibalize for parts. Whether or not a TL5 fabricant travels from its TL3 world to a TL5 area, its manufactured offspring are still TL5. It can use some of these parts to create tools or other instruments. The fabricant of course needs plenty of time and secrecy to do this.

In addition to other cures (see *Cures*, p. 8), a changing individual can travel through time to resist the transformation. Any amount of time travel — magical, psionic, or scientific — doubles the transformation time. If the victim arrives at a time one TL ahead of his own, three successful HT rolls in a row will cure him (roll at the end of each day). If he arrives in an era that is two or more TLs ahead, one HT roll will cure him.

Fabricant Adventure Seeds

Like the Whisper (p. 118) and the zero zombies (p. 122), fabricants bring a strong technological element to a horror game. Avoid burying the evil and horror of these creatures under their high-tech gleam, however. Fabricants *hate* living things. They appear to be normal, but are cold and calculating. Many have the ability to cause great harm. They are not just flesh-wearing robots.

The form a fabricant takes in a campaign can add a special twist. A fabricant could appear to be a child, a dog, a snake, another horror creature, or an authority figure.

Another twist involves the TL setting of the adventure. The TL of a fabricant is based on its surrounding TL. Thus, a person who becomes “unstuck in time” while in the Third World of 1980 might change into a TL7 fabricant. In this case, the surrounding TL is about 5. Or, a modern-day individual might start transforming while in a high-tech space station. Since he is surrounded by several acres of TL8 science, he turns into a TL10 fabricant.

Don't be afraid to introduce some weird science. A TL7 fabricant can have the science of an *alternate* modern time. Its innards must operate well enough to keep it alive, and all TLs below 8 are unable to produce efficient robots. So, a TL5 fabricant will have some incredibly

strange machinery inside. The machinery will seem to be from an alternate TL5.

Fermina. Fermina is a female vampire who has recently transformed into a fabricant. For this adventure, the setting is modern, or TL7.

Fermina is TL9. She has bionic limbs, sensory implants, retractable claws and (of course) stainless steel fangs. She hates wearing her skin and has lately been hunting “in the nude.” The PCs start to investigate some of her handiwork, a set of murders and illnesses with the usual vampire clues (two holes in the necks of victims, etc.). It is the other clues that thicken the plot: sightings of a steel humanoid on rooftops, a metallic bat flying across the sky and pieces of Fermina flesh left at certain crime scenes.

Discarded Miracles. Outside of London is a high-tech junkyard. This bowl-shaped yard is surrounded by trees and a tall stone wall. Most of the items are covered by makeshift sheds. A TL7 fabricant lurks there in the form of a middle-aged man. It has transformed dozens of rats, dogs, cats and birds into fabricants. All of them have been cannibalized for parts. It does not want to be bothered.

When the PCs arrive, they will be fascinated by the weird science around them. Some of it works. All of it is battered, weatherworn, or faulty. The fabricant will try to capture the intruders at night. It will then attempt to feed them soup filled with bits of its flesh, to transform them so it can have bigger parts to cannibalize.



THE FLAYED

The flayed have a disease that causes their skin to fall off — but they are still humans. The flayed feel no pain and do not bleed, so they can survive as long as they can keep their organs from falling out of their bodies. Several square inches of skin will fall off each hour, starting with the face, hands and feet. Once those body parts are exposed (just muscle on bone), the skin falls from their legs and arms at the same rate. The torso and groin are last. These effects are doubled while the flayed sleeps, so those with insomnia (either natural or induced through drugs) will live longer.

The flayed can temporarily halt their decay by inflicting trauma on other people, either by terrifying them or causing injury. Each time a flayed causes a Fright Check that fails by 5 or more, he incurs no skin loss for the next hour. Injuries suspend skin loss for one hour per hit inflicted. Murder offers no benefit (but inevitably occurs when a flayed gets carried away). The flayed must be personally responsible for the trauma in order to benefit from it.

Each flayed has a different method of inflicting trauma that helps him more than all others, offering twice the usual benefits. Examples include stabbing with a knife, shooting with a gun, striking with a hammer, frightening someone by targeting a phobia, causing a subject to go into shock from blood loss, burning the prey, etc. Those who know their method (1-in-6 chance when encountering a flayed), invariably carry the tools they need (knife, hammer, can of gas and a match, etc.).

The flayed have Wills of 20 and ignore Fright Checks. They do not feel pain. They ignore stun penalties when injured. Their bodies can live without skin — their eyes will not dry out, they do not suffer from the inability to sweat, etc. They always take precautions to hold their organs in, however; the flayed wear clothes that fit tightly around the torso, often under looser clothing such as a coat. Many also wear gloves, shoes and masks to hide their skin loss.

The flayed have normal human intelligence. Each has the personality he had before becoming a flayed. But they also have a few mental disadvantages caused by the flayed affliction.

Their acquired mental disadvantages can be used creatively to make each flayed different. While Sadism and Bloodlust are obvious, Lecherousness, Pacifism, and Split Personality can add chilling and fascinating elements to them. Other personality changes are up to the Game Master.

ST: 1d+6	Move/Dodge: 7/7	Size: 1
DX: 1d+6	PD/DR: 2/0	Weight: 75+ lbs.
IQ: 1d+6	Damage: by ST or weapon	Habitat: drifting among mankind
HT: 1d+9	Reach: C, 1	Other Names: Lepers, skinner

A flayed is created when a human handles a corpse. It is not known which corpses hold the "flayed virus" or which humans are susceptible to it. The chances of being infected are determined by the age, race, place of origin and supernatural abilities of both the handler and the corpse. The GM determines who is in the high-risk category.

The flayed have a few special senses. First, they can smell fear as if it were a normal odor. This is rolled as a normal Smell roll (p. B92), with a +1 for every Fright Check the target has rolled in the past three hours. Second, they notice others of their kind with a simple IQ roll. And third, all of the flayed develop at least one advantage such as Alertness and Night Vision.

There is reason to believe the flayed have formed a loose network. Their ability to sense each other easily, coupled with their need for support to survive, makes this very likely. There are rumors among scholars that some of them try to create more of their kind to increase the network.

If a person with latent supernatural abilities becomes one of the flayed, those abilities will surface. In every case, however, the abilities are uncontrollable and violent in nature. For example, a boy with latent psionics who becomes one of the flayed may find that nearby people spontaneously combust around him when he gets angry.

Adventure Seeds with the Flayed

The flayed can be found anywhere. Some will try to live with their affliction, possibly seeking a cure while causing a minimum amount of trauma to survive. Others become downright sadistic and revel in their condition; this may occur because the imminence of their deaths has caused mental breakdown.

The flayed can also be encountered in groups. They might have acquired their affliction from the same source. They might be pooling their resources to find a cure. Or they might cause trauma through teamwork.

People who know how a gallows tree is born may attempt to create one intentionally.

If a gallows tree eats nothing for ten years, it reverts to normal.

Cocooning

Once or twice a year, a gallows tree will cocoon a victim instead of consuming it. The victim is attacked and killed in the usual manner but, while the body is still hanging, the tree injects it with a strange chemical. This chemical causes the corpse to grow a milky white shell around itself. The cocoon hangs from the branches for two days, then falls to the ground and breaks open.

The body inside will awaken, transformed into a perfect copy of one of the tree's former victims. The person whose corpse grew the cocoon is dead; what hatches from the cocoon is some earlier victim reborn. The reborn victim will not remember the gestation period, though he might remember dying at the tree. He may have died only a week earlier, or centuries before. He will have all of the skills, attributes, advantages and disadvantages he had when he died at the gallows tree. He will be fully healed. He will not have any clothing or equipment, however.

The reborn person will have no idea how he was reborn except for his dreams. When he sleeps, he will dream that he is the person whose corpse grew the cocoon. Psychic and magical analysis of these dreams will show exactly what happened. A powerful spell or psionic power might be able to destroy or extract the subconscious memories of the former self.

Game Masters can use the cocoon process in at least two ways. First, if the GM does not want someone to die, a gallows tree can give him a second chance. The character can be reborn as someone else and then embark on a quest to regain his former self. This technique can be used even if no one, characters or players, know the tree is a gallows tree — the original character could be murdered in a forest and then find himself reborn, totally unaware that the tree was involved.

A second way to use the cocooning process is to allow a player to retire an old character and start a new one. The old character dies and the new character is reborn from the cocoon. The new character could be from a previous era, making his insertion into the ongoing campaign even more interesting.

Remember that the cocooning ability of gallows trees is used only when the Game Master wants it used. Without the cocoons, the gallows tree is still a formidable horror creature, an animated and hungry tree that can appear in many settings and adventures.

Gallows Tree Adventure Seeds

Gallows tree adventures do not have to take place in forests. Although this is a good setting, they can also be found in parks, yards, swamps and zoos. To increase the chance of scaring players, place a gallows tree in a location where the PCs feel safe.

Sergeant's Hill. Outside of Chicago, in a small but dense stretch of woods, is Sergeant's Hill. At the top of Sergeant's Hill is a massive oak tree — a gallows tree. The most notorious hit man of the Roaring 20s, Kane Killgore, brought all of his victims to Sergeant's Hill. He was a known occultist, so it is possible that he knew it was a gallows tree.

In 1929, a small band of competitors murdered Killgore at Sergeant's Hill. Now, in the 1990s, the survivors of that small band — still alive but in their late 80s — contact the PCs. Their relatives are being murdered, turning up dead on their doorsteps. They can't go to the police for fear of revealing their past. They do not know about the gallows tree, but they are sure Killgore has come back from the dead for revenge.

Into the Wood. A twisted old woman lives in the woods outside of town, on an island in the middle of a rushing river. She is a psychic vampire: she thrives on the pain and suffering of people near her. She lures people into the woods (or finds anyone who ventures into it) and kills them slowly.

She recently discovered how to create a gallows tree. She has also learned how to sneak past them, moving slowly so they cannot detect her. Feeding from the pain of a gallows tree victim is as wonderful as killing the person herself. She plans to transform all of the trees on the island into gallows trees.

The group is asked to investigate a series of disappearances. Clues lead them to the woods and they begin to explore. As night falls, they are attacked, first by the old woman and then by a gallows tree. Later, they find the island. At the foot of many trees are murder victims. The investigators will have to survive and capture or kill the old woman to resolve the adventure.



Each gear gnome can bring back to life one person whose death it counted down. It will only do this at the request of a desperate human. Once the person is alive, the gear gnome must be transported to a place at least 1,000 miles away or it will disintegrate. It will demand huge amounts of blood, mechanical parts and a guarantee of transport to the new location. It will also require the human to perform some task such as establishing a safe place for the gear gnome to live or arranging a perpetual supply of blood.

Gear Gnome Adventure Seeds

Gear gnomes can be used to foretell the death of a stranger, NPC, or player character. A stranger is more a victim than anything else; in this case, the focus remains primarily on the gear gnome. If an NPC is going to die, the players will be concerned; this death will affect their characters and possibly the course of the campaign. If a PC is threatened, the implications are obviously more serious and have a greater campaign impact than the other two options.

Gear gnomes can be independent creatures or servants. They can be little metal men or deformed mounds of debris. They can be presented as neutral beings, little Grim Reapers serving Fate. Or they might delight in their countdowns, relishing the terror they bring.

Motorsoul. While in London, the PCs discover a mad scientist, Dr. Martin Reign. In his Victorian two-story house, located near two major hospitals, he has built a giant contraption. The contraption is his "motorsoul," a machine that can chart the deaths of people up to a mile away. The machine is made from the parts of several dozen computers, a number of aircraft instruments, hundreds of clock parts and (hidden among the vast machinery) a gear gnome. Dr. Reign does not know about the gear gnome.

If asked for a demonstration, Dr. Reign eagerly displays the accuracy and power of the machine. With the help of the gear gnome it *does* work, and the computers have enough data to explain some of the secrets of the gear gnome's power. The plot thickens when the PCs discover that Dr. Reign has been "feeding" blood to his motorsoul on a regular basis. He knows the machine needs it to work, but he doesn't know why.

Dr. Reign is on the verge of a breakthrough — with another day or two of concentrated work, he can fix the motorsoul to tell him the first name of the person whose death it is counting down . . .

Uncle Baines. A boy named Samuel found a metal toy in his Uncle Baines' garage the day after his uncle's funeral. Uncle Baines worked on cars all the time. In fact, that's how he died — he was crushed when a car jack collapsed. The drain in the garage filled with blood, but it was clogged by all of the old nuts, bolts and metal scraps that had fallen in there over the years.

Samuel's new toy is shaped like a little pot-bellied man, just like Uncle Baines. It talks to Samuel in Uncle Baines' voice, too. Uncle Baines is always ticking. When Samuel has a bad day and he's mad at someone, Uncle Baines ticks louder. And then that person dies.

Samuel's mother is getting worried. So is Samuel's principal, who has lost three teachers in the last two weeks to strange deaths. Then Samuel brags about killing them with the help of Uncle Baines . . .

The PCs can be involved in a number of ways. They might live in town. They might be called in to investigate the strange deaths. Or, they might come for the exhumation of Uncle Baines' grave — just to make sure he isn't still alive and killing teachers. Eventually, the investigators meet Samuel. If they are nice, they might get to see his Uncle Baines doll.

GMs, remember. Ordinary gear gnomes don't kill. Something else may be "helping" Samuel . . .

GREENDREADS

A greendread is an intelligent, bloodsucking plant. Each one looks like a known, multistemmed plant, usually a nondescript bush or vine. Rarely, a greendread will be a number of trees joined at the roots. Its size may be relatively small (a hedge) or enormous (a 10,000-square-yard expanse of forest). They can be found in parks, bodies of water (as beds of seaweed), forests, jungles, yards, terrariums, fields, swamps and even on street corners.

ST: 17	Move/Dodge: 0/7	Size: 3 to 10,000
DX: 7	PD/DR: 4/2	Weight: 50+ lbs.
IQ: 8	Damage: 1 hit	Habitat: all but Arctic
HT: 5/hex	Reach: C, 3	Other Names: Venus mantraps

Although they can survive without it, greendreads crave blood. They will attack weak-looking or solitary prey. The prey, including both humans and animals, will be grappled by animated branches, sliced open by sharp leaves and vines and drained. If the victim escapes, he may notice that his blood did not stain the ground below . . .

While held, the creature does 1 point of damage per second. Use the grapple rules (pp. B111-112) for escape attempts. A survivor will feel weak, having lost 1 point of Fatigue for every point of damage. If the greendread is attacked, it may take some injury to preserve its secrecy. If it thinks the attacker knows it is more than a normal plant, it will defend itself. Branches and vines will lash out (roll against DX) and recoil (its Dodge score).

Some attacks are more subtle. The greendread can, for example, quickly and silently lash out as the victim passes. The victim will be shocked to find an open wound. The greendread will remain still. A Vision-8 or Naturalist-4 roll is needed to notice that the plant caused the injury.

A more careful examination of a greendread is very revealing. If the creature is touched, a successful First Aid-4 roll will detect a pulse. Unearthing its roots will prove it is not a normal plant: the roots look like deformed, elongated human hands. If a greendread leaf is studied under a microscope, it reveals a pattern of interlocking plant cells that look like human forms.

Supernatural powers can be used (telepathy, Mage Sense, etc.). Waving fire near a greendread might also work — it must make an IQ roll to resist recoiling from threatening flames.

A greendread may poison its victim by the attack (if he fails a HT-2 roll). Greendread poison causes a host of strange afflictions, all of them plant-related. The victim may develop bark-like skin, begin using carbon dioxide and exhaling oxygen, age or grow more slowly, or heal twice as quickly in sunlight. The effects are always both beneficial and frightening. Superficial side effects are common: green eyes, a protective feeling toward plants, a newfound quiet demeanor. The condition's effects are never obvious outwardly; only a careful medical examination or the observations of longtime friends will detect the change.

The affliction wears off in 3d days. If infected again before this period ends, the affliction continues for twice as long as the previous duration. If the victim is regularly exposed to greendreads, he may never recover. The

effects of this circumstance are unknown. The victim might develop profoundly unnatural (and powerful) qualities. He might die. He might turn into a greendread. He will surely go mad.

Greendread Adventure Seeds

Greendreads may be most useful as background features. They can cause injury and strange mutations without being directly involved in an adventure. When they are directly involved, feel free to use them in different settings and shapes. While the "bed-of-roses" greendreads are interesting, so are seaweed greendreads. The mutations can be suffered by NPCs (who will either accept or be terrified by their affliction) or by PCs. In the latter case, the players can have fun finding the source of the affliction as well as the cure.

The Maze. The player characters must travel through a labyrinth of tall hedges. The hedges are either a single greendread, or many. The greendread(s) can shift and move to create traps, dead ends, or new passages. The greendread(s) will not allow anyone to rise above the top of the maze. To make it more interesting, add weather conditions (snow will recreate a scene from *The Shining*), pursuers, a time limit, or a supernatural ally.

Roses Grow. The heroes meet Stanislaus, caretaker of a large rose garden — a greendread — behind a mansion. Stanislaus was first infected over 100 years ago, when the small bush attacked him as a child. He now appears to be in his late seventies. His skin is stiff and wrinkled like bark. He is very tall, and always dressed in a black long coat. When he stands still, he almost looks like a tree.



Stanislaus serves the rose garden, and it takes care of him. He wants it to grow. He knows it needs a little sun, a touch of water, some good soil and a lot of blood. Anyone who threatens this pair will regret it. Stanislaus is quiet but very cunning. He is also very strong (ST 20), heal-quickly (Rapid Healing), has a thick hide (Toughness DF 6) and little fear of pain (High Pain Threshold). When he meets the visitors, he either feels threatened by them, or he senses that his garden wants their blood. They might reason with him (he has a sage-like wisdom to complement his twilight attitude) or fight him. If they run, he will chase them into the mansion (which he knows like the back of his hand), through the garden, or out into the vast pasture and forest beyond.

GRUE BEETLES

Grue beetles grow from, and are part of, a stand-alone machine of some kind. Each grue beetle will “hatch” from within the device, molding itself to the existing form to create a half-insect, half-machine creature. They grow in personal, often domestic, devices, never out in public. They can grow out of televisions, radios, calculators, computers, rifles, lamps, heaters, telephones, etc. The hatching could be witnessed, or the creature might be discovered, sitting and waiting to be found.

Their appearance is always the most hideous combination of demonic insect and device possible. The device is immediately recognizable to those who know it well; others must make an IQ+2 roll. The device is still usable. If the item was previously broken, it now works. Its use gives the grue beetle great satisfaction, even pleasure. If the item has any kind of circuitry, the creature’s IQ is at least 10. If the item has any kind of data in it, the grue beetle knows this information — in the case of a computer, the grue beetle knows everything about the unit and can recite anything on the hard drive.

All grue beetles can communicate by some means. Most can speak. Others use sign language, gestures, written or printed messages, or screen displays. (Some that can speak will still use these other means.) Those that speak always have distinct and unsettling voices, from the weird (a little girl’s voice) to the foul (a gurgling and deranged mutter).

They want to be fed and unharmed, to live a peaceful existence. To do this, they need their discoverer(s) to care for them and keep them hidden from the rest of the world. The creature lays out its demands early on — each has specific and unique needs. All of them want to be used. For some, being used is enough for them to survive. But others need raw flesh, blood, some sort of chemical, or a special environment as well. Most want to be used for the device’s normal purpose. Others want to be used for a specific function (for example, a typewriter grue beetle that wants a specific book written on it).

If it feels its existence is being revealed to the uninitiated, or if it feels physically menaced, a grue beetle becomes very dangerous. It will threaten to hurt the friends and family of the user, or to cause the death of innocents and frame him. If threats and violence won’t work, it will try to escape. This is always a desperate act, because it forces the grue beetle to look for someone else to nurse it and use it. The final resort is to die — if trapped, neglected, or mistreated, it will spontaneously dissolve, taking its mechanical body with it. In rare cir-

ST: 2d+10	Move/Dodge: varies	Size: varies
DX: 1d+10	PD/DR: varies	Weight: 10+ lbs.
IQ: 1d+8	Damage: varies	Habitat: domestic settings
HT: 3d+4	Reach: varies	Other Names: none

cumstances, through the use of special spells, the device can be saved while the grue beetle dies.

In some cases, a grue beetle will end its life after a specific task has been completed. If, for example, the creature grew for a specific purpose, was treated fairly, and completed its task, it may crawl away and dissolve.

Although their origins are unknown, grue beetles tend to appear where they are needed. If someone needs his computer for a vital task, for example, and the unit is broken, he may wake in the middle of the night to discover a grue beetle has grown out of it. The machine now works, but only with the help of the creature. Typically, the “need” is unknown to the individual — the creature may relieve him of an ailment he didn’t even know he had, or solve a problem that would have soon become his own.

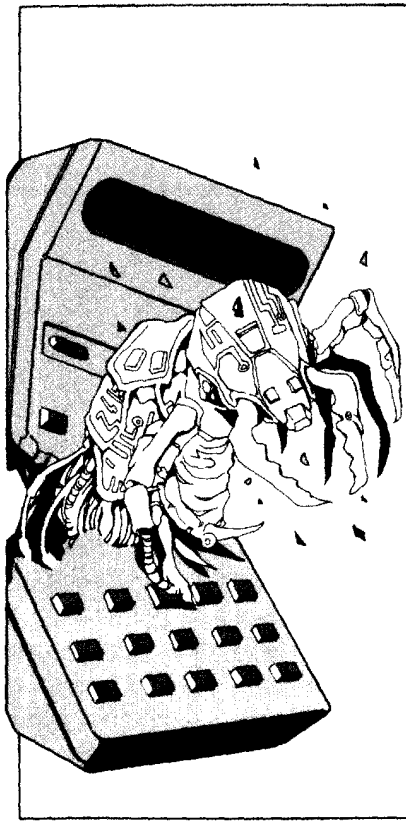
The Devil in the Details

Some grue beetle statistics have been left for the GM to determine. Use the following guidelines.

Each has at least two attacks. Attacks are both unnatural and insect/spider-related, things like web-spinning, emitting a sleep-inducing gas, long blade-like claws, blood-sucking mandibles and a stretching tongue. At least one attack must be nonviolent. The total dice of damage for the rest of the attacks are 10; divide them up as desired, with at least one doing cutting or impaling damage. Reach always includes Close; one of the attacks will also have a Reach of 1.

Calculate Move, Speed and Dodge scores using DX and HT. Count the weight of the grue beetle’s body as encumbrance. Increase the scores for multiple legs or a special mode of travel (even wings).

Roll 2 dice to find the total Passive Defense and DR; divide the roll between the two scores as desired. (Both should range from 0 to 6.) If the creature has a chitinous hide, DR should be higher than PD. You can also give different parts of the body different values — a television screen or electrical cord would have less DR than the creature’s hide.



Grue Beetle Adventure Seeds

Grue beetles were inspired by the film *Naked Lunch*. In the film, the grue beetles were typewriters that helped their users work through writer's block. Of course, they wanted something in return . . .

To make grue beetles more useful (and less derivative), be creative when choosing devices. The tech level of the campaign shouldn't limit you. Even in TL3, there are many possibilities — torture devices, coin stampers, alchemical apparatus, etc. Of course, the

higher the TL, the more possibilities there are. Always keep in mind that the devices should be personal and, when they become grue beetles, horrific.

Life Line. The player characters are in the Arctic investigating a strange occurrence (a fallen meteorite, a wandering creature, a cult, etc.). A storm blows their camp apart, leaving only a secure cabin, a generator to provide heat and power and a battered crate of vital supplies. The supply crate was blown off a cliff a few hundred yards

from the cabin. To fetch supplies, someone has to be lowered on a wire cable.

The next night, the generator goes out. All the power is gone and the travelers wait in darkness, expecting to freeze to death. Then the generator hums to life. The power comes back on and they see that the generator has transformed into a grue beetle.

The grue beetle will keep generating power as long as it is fed. When it becomes obvious that the food will run out, it secretly asks one of the PCs to kill another for more meat. It asks him to use the wire cable to kill — the victim could be hanged, left dangling until he freezes, or attacked while on his way up or down.

Even if they survive the grue beetle, they still have the other mission that brought them here. Could they use one threat to eliminate the other? Are the two threats related?

Mr. Mantis. Cale Mantis was once a famous theoretical physicist. He was always considered a maverick because he did not have a degree of any kind; other prominent minds in the field merely tolerated him. A rare nerve disorder confined him to a wheelchair. A special computer allowed him to write and to speak to others. His theories became wilder than ever — he began incorporating ley lines and voodoo mythology into his work.

He was completely ignored and fell into a deep depression. Then his wheelchair and its on-board computer turned into a grue beetle. Now his theories are more accurate than ever, but he keeps them to himself. The investigators plan to meet Mr. Mantis when they hear rumors about his amazing ability to locate places of supernatural power, find creatures, and predict future supernatural events. Just before he meets them, Mr. Mantis (and his wheelchair) disappears.

GUARDIAN GHOULS

ST: 25	Move/Dodge: 8/9	Size: 1
DX: 15	PD/DR: 5/8	Weight: 50 lbs.
IQ: 8	Damage: variable	Habitat: guarding dark and lonely places
HT: 40	Reach: variable	Other Names: Keephaunts

If a dedicated guard is fanatically loyal, and if his death is sudden and painful enough, his body may continue guarding his post as a guardian ghoul. Guardian ghouls need little food to survive (equal to one rat per month, or half a child every two months). They speak haltingly, with a vocabulary limited to ten or 15 one-syllable words.

When a guardian ghoul rises, its brain stays alive but changes. It still knows the task of guarding but forgets why. The creature also loses its identity and memory of its former life. The brain secretes a chemical into the veins that keeps it alive. This chemical spreads to the rest of the body, but begins losing its potency the moment it leaves the brain. As a result, only the flesh near the brain and the barely-beating heart survive; everything below the waist rots away. Only the left arm will survive (presumably because it is closer to the heart).

A guardian ghoul can float above the ground, up to 20 feet in the air. Its decaying spinal cord dangles with the rest of its rotting torso. It can fly fast and dodge most attacks. Guardian ghouls usually wait in shadows above

their posts, or lie in corners, so they can ambush intruders. If a guardian ghoule is underfed, it can neither float nor fly; it must crawl until it eats and regains its strength.

They attack quickly and violently. A guardian ghoule can claw with its arm for 1d+3 cutting damage, but most carry weapons. This can be the ghoule's weapon of choice when it lived, or a more effective weapon it has found since. Guardian ghoules are smart enough to operate high-tech weapons (including reloading ammunition and power cells), but they cannot repair them. Most guardian ghoules have extra weapons hidden near their posts.

In addition to their formidable attacks, guardian ghoules are incredibly tough. They heal 1 hit point per turn. They can see in darkness, hear better than dogs, and move as quietly as prowling cats. Their high number of hit points and tough hide allow them to outlast most humans. They make all resistance rolls against spells and psionics at a base 15 or less.

A guardian ghoule will not pause in its attacks unless the intruders retreat or it hears the name it had while it lived. If the latter occurs, it will be mentally stunned (roll every second against IQ to recover). Repeated utterances in the same day have a lesser effect — +1 to IQ to recover the second time, +2 for the third, and so on. Their faces look much as they did during life, and their task of guardian may be known in legend. As a result, careful research of a ghoule's identity can make all the difference.

In Arabic cultures guardian ghoules are magnets for magic items. Through fate and fortune, magic talismans, tomes, rings and other enchanted baubles will accumulate around a guardian ghoule's post. Most guardian ghoules will use the cruder items, such as rings and magic weapons. Whether the same phenomenon occurs around the posts of guardian ghoules in other cultures is not known.

The blood of guardian ghoules is highly prized in the development of reanimation medicine. Because the blood reanimates the ghoule corpse, occult scientists regard study of the chemical as one of the most promising clues toward a foolproof reanimation serum.

Guardian Ghoule Adventure Seeds

Guardian ghoules can be encountered in groups or alone. Use them to guard unlikely places such as abandoned buildings, junkyards and hillsides. This will make the guarded area seem special — if the guardian ghoule protects an obvious place such as a tomb or occultist hide-out, the creature will be fought and destroyed without adding much to the adventure.

The Choir. A church outside an old town has a dormitory connected to it. Both buildings have been gutted by fire; weeds grow through the floorboards and the rafters are ready to collapse.

The basement of the dormitory, accessible only through a narrow passage behind the rusted pipe organ, is the

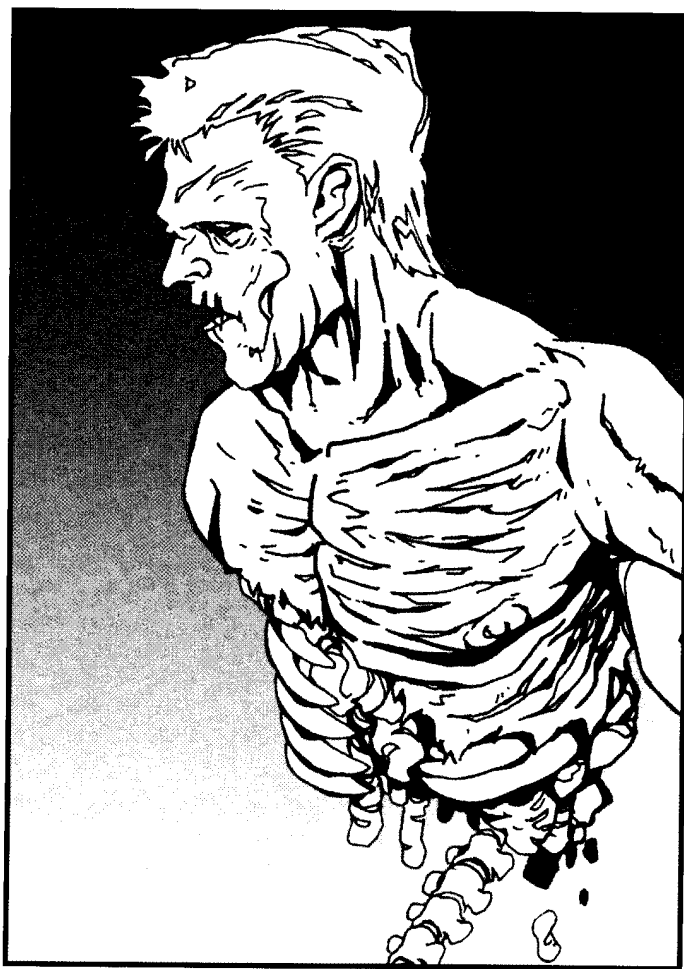
home of 22 guardian ghoules. They are particularly terrifying because their faces (or what is left of them) look so young, from ten to 16 years old. And they wear white choir robes.

Years ago, this young boys' choir had to hide in the basement from something. They tried to guard their cellar retreat, but died trying. The place burned that night and the choir was given up for dead.

But someone was out by the old church a week ago and heard the choir singing. A few more people heard it, a beautiful and chilling sound. When the investigators arrive, they encounter some locals who want the church left alone — the parents of the choirboys, parents who would rather hear their sons sing in the night than find out what happened.

Will the player characters investigate? If they do, some people may try to stop them. Some want the singing to go on. Others don't want anyone to know what happened, or what chased the boys into the basement to die.

The Wreck. About 300 years ago, a ship crashed off the coast. Its sailors have survived as aquatic guardian ghoules. What were they defending their ship against? What was in the ship that was so precious? If the PCs investigate, they will find floating torsos on the water at night. If they don't leave soon, the torsos swim to their boat and attack.



Hexmutes do not show up on film or other recording devices. The only way to detect them is by smell, by sight, or by examining incidental damage or debris left in their wake.

Battlefields, highways and operating rooms are the wombs of hexmutes. If someone spends too much time in a location that has been the scene of many deaths, he may become a hexmute. A rare few will snap out of this state of mind after a few weeks. Most remain hexmutes until they die. There are rumors of other causes of this disorder . . . and some cures. Most rumors focus on some strange curse or drug.

Hexmute Adventure Seeds

Hexmutes can be found in alleys, hospitals, near auto accidents and at disaster sites. They always appear human at first glance; most PCs will not know the hexmutes are creatures without looking into their eyes. Adventures can revolve around finding cures, locating an NPC who has turned into a hexmute, and exploring hexmute-intensive areas to destroy or capture the creatures.

Fortitude. In this two-part adventure, the PCs are on board the *USS Fortitude*, a cruise ship that was once used as a floating hospital in World War II. The ship's shadows have about a dozen hexmutes living in them. The hexmutes have never been able to escape because, for one reason or another, the ship has rarely come close enough to the mainland to allow them to pass to other shadows. During the cruise, a major catastrophe occurs: the engines explode, food poisoning or disease breaks out, the ship hits an iceberg, etc. As the passengers suffer, the hexmutes emerge. But each passenger who survives soon becomes a hexmute.

The second part begins when everyone except the heroes and the captain have become hexmutes. The captain's family, who were on board, are hexmutes. This has driven him to the brink of sanity. He tries to appease them by hurting the PCs. He knows the ship from bow to stern and will stop at nothing to keep the ship away from other ships, away from land, and the PCs alive and in mortal pain.

Thirteen Stories. The Hotel Howard, located in the center of the city's worst neighborhood, is a dump. The lobby and the 13 stories above it are populated by criminals, addicts and derelicts. At least once a day, someone falls off the hotel, either being murdered or committing suicide. A group of hexmutes lives in the shadows in and near the hotel, feeding on the "jumpers" and the people inside.

The PCs become involved when they learn that someone they need to find (someone they were hired to save, an enemy they want to capture or kill, etc.) can be found on the 13th floor. They have to explore and survive the Howard Hotel to reach their goal. At each floor, they have a dramatic encounter with one of the residents: a wino with a famous past, a deranged killer, a wise old witch, or even a supernatural creature of some kind. Each encounter offers some sort of advice or other advantage that will help the intruders when they reach the 13th floor. Several people fall from the hotel as the hunters climb higher; every time, they see the hexmutes below surrounding the writhing victim.

When they finally arrive at the 13th story, they meet the object of their quest. He has created the hexmutes, who are now filling the streets, waiting for the heroes to fall.

HOARDERS

A hoarder is a crawling, disembodied human hand. They are encountered in inhabited places such as buildings, ships and underground complexes. They do not eat or communicate. Although each hoarder is just a hand, they all look different. The hand can be wrinkled, scarred, noticeably female, or a child's hand. It could also be unusually hairy, missing a digit, tattooed, disjointed, pale, dark brown, or oversized. In a horror-cyberpunk campaign, a hoarder might have metallic pieces or be completely bionic.

They sense their surroundings magically, with Vision and Hearing equal to their IQ+6. They are cunning — they know when to sneak, when to flee and when to attack. They cannot build traps, plot schemes, or recognize the

ST: 15
DX: 13
IQ: 7
HT: 7

Move/Dodge: 3/7
PD/DR: 0/0
Damage: see below
Reach: C

Size: < 1
Weight: 1-2 lbs.
Habitat: any

Other Names: The hand
crawlers

value of an object. Except in relation to the skills below, they cannot make a connection between a button or trigger and the effects of using it. For example, a hoarder can trip a guillotine or flick the switch on a television, but it does not know that the action caused the blade to fall or the TV

to create noise and images. A hoarder makes DX rolls at a penalty when it uses scissors (-3), a writing instrument (-5), or a knife (-7).

A young hoarder has the following skills at level 11: Climbing, Scrounging, Sleight of Hand and Stealth. A veteran (one that has been active for five years or more) has those skills at level 13, plus the following skills at level 11: Escape, Lockpicking, Pickpocket, Shadowing and Tracking. An ancient hoarder (one that has been active for 30 years or more) has all of the previous skills at level 15 and Gesture at level 10. No hoarder can learn sign language. All hoarders have Area Knowledge of their surroundings at level 13 to 20 (the GM decides this level). An ancient hoarder may also know one or two non-Magery spells.

Hoarders collect and hide small, shiny objects. Any item palm-sized or smaller attracts them — keys, coins, rings, silverware, etc. Each hoarder has a hidden niche where it stashes its treasures. It also sleeps there 2d hours a day. If a hoarder is chased, it will run to its niche after it has thrown off pursuers. A chased hoarder can use the *sprint bonus* (p. B108).

Hoarders may attack any human or animal that threatens them. They attack by choking and suffocating (see pp. B112 and B122). They also gouge a target's eyes and attack genitals. They get a +3 bonus to notice that a suffocating victim is unconscious.

If a hoarder is having trouble surviving in its current niche, it will try to find a new home. The hoarder will bury anything it has hoarded, leaving it behind. It will travel by hiding among other travelers — it will sneak into a storage compartment, hide in a suitcase, etc. After a week or two, the hoarder will escape and begin searching for a new niche. If a good one becomes available sooner, the hoarder will take it.

Creating a Hoarder

When the hand of a thief or evil person is severed at the wrist in one blow, the hand may become a hoarder. This can also happen if the hand was holding an evil instrument, engaged in a sinister activity, or placed in a forbidden area.

If the hand becomes a hoarder (GM's decision), it will disappear immediately after it is severed. It magically appears in its niche, sleeps for a day or two, and then begins its life of sneaking and stealing.



If a hoarder's former owner (the person whose hand was cut off) is reunited with the creature, the two may be fused together. The stumps of both the hoarder and the person must be in nearly the same condition as they were when they were separated. For the hoarder, this is inevitable — its stump is not likely to be different from when it was created, except that it has healed a bit. The person, however, may have a prosthetic replacement, a hook, a cloned hand, etc. If this is the case, the connection will only take place after the replacement is removed.

Once the stumps are prepared, they must be in constant contact for one full week. If the hoarder does not want to be reattached, it must be forcibly held in place (or drugged) until this period is over. When the period ends, the creature is still alive, but it responds to the owner's wishes. There will be a thick scar where the two are joined. The hoarder still has its skills or spells, and it still enjoys hoarding small shiny objects. If the hand is severed a second time, it dies.

Hoarder Adventure Seeds

Hoarders usually take the role of eerie pests. They scamper around, stealing things and attacking sleeping humans. They can be grisly — just add a trail of blood, a tail of bone and a tangle of veins. They can be encountered as the pets or servants of a witch doctor or mad scientist. They can be used to lead someone to a secret room or passage, or to relieve anyone of an item that threatens to short-circuit the adventure. Hoarders are more frightening when encountered alone.

Interloper. Someone received a hoarder in the mail. It came in a plain, brown-paper package the size of a shoe box. When the package was opened, the hoarder scurried out and got away. Who sent it and why?

If the protagonists receive and open the package in their office or base of operations, this will be fun. Or, someone else might have received the hoarder and have asked the PCs to help find it. Maybe the hoarder will let people inside at night. Or, it could lead pursuers into a trap.

The Endless Night Sky. The heroes are flying in a supersonic plane on the edge of the atmosphere, where the night never ends. In the cargo bay are hundreds of boxes. Each holds a hoarder . . .

hOBBBLES

Hobbles are crippled, misshapen dwarves about a foot tall that curse the area around them. Their faces and bodies are hideously deformed, so much so that gender and facial expressions are completely obscured. They have tails much like those of rats. Their legs are malformed, making their movement slow and painful. Some wear clothes (stolen from dolls or children) to cover their twisted forms. Others go naked.

They are quintessential selfish hermits. They want to suffer alone. They will kill, disfigure, or maim anyone to create or maintain this circumstance. They steal their food and everything else they need to survive. They enjoy taking advantage of the old, the foolish, the crippled and people's pets. They are intelligent; some even read humans' books.

Hobbles live in the bodies of other animals. They are very secretive and cautious, however, so they prefer dead bodies. Human carcasses are risky to use as homes — that kind of body is rarely discarded and left unaccounted for. They usually live in large and expendable animals such as cows and horses. Farms and prairies are most habitable; they often have one or two large carcasses located just far enough from meddling humans. When a carcass decays too far to provide shelter from the elements, the hobble searches for a new home. They do not mind the stench of decay; hobbles have no sense of smell.

Hobbles thrive on misfortune and suffering — they cannot stand to live where the land is healthy and the people are content. To make its home area more habitable, a hobble will curse the land. To do so, it creates a "blight patch" by laying a trail of blood on the ground. The blood can come from any number of sources, but it must be fresh. Once one end of the trail meets the other, the blood evaporates and everything inside it begins to change.

The area within the blight patch soon takes on an air of solitude and twilight. The colors of everything inside become subdued, some paling and others becoming darker. Nothing seems humorous. Night feels comfortable and day seems a bit unnatural. Shadows are too long. Anyone in the blight patch suffers a -3 penalty to resist mental disadvantages, or for any Will roll. The "rule of 14" (see italics, p. B30) is lowered to 11. Other effects are possible, such as reduced energy costs for evil spells, or slowed healing. These are up to the Game Master.

The hobble's home will be somewhere in the blight patch. It wants the patch as large as possible to reduce its

ST: 1d+4	Move/Dodge: 2/2	Size: < 1
DX: 1d+4	PD/DR: 0/3	Weight: 15 lbs.
IQ: 12	Damage: 1d-2	Habitat: any
HT: 1d+3	Reach: C	Other Names: Gnarls, curse trolls



chances of being discovered. But creating a large area is difficult — it requires a lot of blood, and the trail may be discovered before it is complete. Blight patches in the wilderness or rural areas can be as large as an acre or more. In urban and suburban areas, they might be no larger than an abandoned building or someone's back yard.

If the local humans die or leave, the hobble will have to fend for itself. It will tire of this quickly and, in only a week or two, the hobble will leave to find a new home closer to human misery. The blight patch will shrink until, 1d weeks later, it is reduced to a spot 1 yard in diameter. This spot will eternally reduce Will rolls by -3, and nothing will grow there. In all other respects, it is normal.

Hobbles are terrified of strange sights in the sky. Shooting stars, aircraft, weird cloud formations and eclipses make them frantic. If the hobble saw it at night, it will be especially frightened. The source of this fear is unknown.

If a hobble stays too long in one place, it will fixate on a pet or object that belongs to a nearby human. This could be a puppy, a cat, a doll, a precious heirloom, a parakeet, etc. The hobble will want to keep track of the object or pet, carefully monitoring its location at all times. As this fixation wears on, the hobble will feel the need to "alter" the object or pet — the creature will remove the puppy's tail, place a permanent mark on the heirloom, or mutilate the limbs of the doll.

Hobble Adventure Seeds

Hobbles are cunning schemers and are rarely caught off guard. Some build traps; others use their abilities to create protective environments. They are usually discovered only after they prey on cattle, pets, children, or isolated individuals. Their blight patches can add a special atmosphere to each encounter — the hobble's demeanor will seem more sensible in this dour setting.

Jonah. An undead killer whale nearly beached itself a few weeks ago, near the home of a hobble named Jonah. The hobble moved out of its large, coastal blight patch and now lives in the whale. One night, the hobble encircled the whale with the whale's own blood, creating a movable blight patch. The two creatures now travel along the coast, attacking swimmers and capsizing small fishing boats.

The Dark Carnival. A hobble rides into town with the carnival. At each of the carnival's stops, the hobble blights a new ride. At the last one, the hobble blighted the funhouse, making it too horrid and depressing for many people to enter. This time, the hobble plans to blight the carousel.

A very fat man named Royce, newly hired to work at the fair, is running the carousel. The hobble plans to kill Royce, use his blood to make the blight trail around the carousel, and live in Royce's carcass in the center. The PCs meet Royce the night before the hobble makes its move. Royce has seen a twisted dwarf out of the corner of his eye lately, but then he's been drinking. When he disappears, the investigation begins.

INRETCHES

ST: n/a	Move/Dodge: n/a	Size: < 1
DX: n/a	PD/DR: 2/2	Weight: 5 lbs.
IQ: 1d+11	Damage: n/a	Habitat: in seclusion and sanctuary
HT: 5	Reach: n/a	Other Names: Urjers, skullduggers

An inretch is a sentient skull, intelligent and telepathic, receiving thoughts but not projecting them. They also have limited telekinesis — they can move themselves and, on rare occasions, make telekinetic blows against others. Some have other psionic abilities and spellcasting knowledge. All inretches are evil; they take delight in manipulating, torturing and murdering humans. Each has a unique, inhuman personality.

Each inretch is a single, skinless skull. It cannot speak. It does not eat. It does not have brains, eyes, or ears. Because of their lack of special features, most new inretches are mistaken for common skulls.

However, each looks slightly different. The moment an inretch comes to life, it begins growing small bone deformities. Eye sockets may slowly narrow, a jaw may become flared, or an ear cavity may close. If the inretch survives for five decades or more, these deformities will be major features. In the rare event that the inretch survives a century or more, it will no longer look like a human skull. An ancient inretch may be the size of a basketball, with a single eye socket, buzzsaw teeth, and an extended jaw and nose resembling a muzzle.

Many inretches are spellcasters. Most spellcasting inretches come from necromancers, so their grimoires

concentrate on the Necromantic, Light and Darkness and Mind Control colleges. The Game Master must generate the grimoire.

An inretch is produced when a murdered human's corpse remains above ground as it decomposes. Once only the skeleton is left, there is a slight chance that the skull will detach and come alive as an inretch. Roll against the former IQ of the corpse, with a penalty of -7. If the corpse was a mage, add a bonus equal to twice the Magery level. Add 2 if the mage was a necromancer. If the roll succeeds, the skull becomes an inretch.

At this point, roll its new IQ level. It will retain vague memories of its previous life. If it had Magery, it retains that advantage as well as any spells. The number of spells it can cast depends on each spell's need for gestures and incantations. Inretches can use any Powerstone within 20 feet.

For the purposes of spell and psionic energy costs, inretches have a ST score equal to their IQ. Their Telepathy level (see p. B167) is 10 at first; it increases by 1 every ten years. Inretches have one telepathic skill, Telereceive, at IQ level. After ten years, an inretch can develop the Mind-shield skill (p. B169) and the Suggest skill (p. PS24) as well.

Their Psychokinesis power is 10 (see p. B172); this level never changes. They have the Levitation skill at IQ level. They also have Telekinesis at IQ level, with the following limitations: only in emergencies, only for telekinetic attacks and only one attack per minute. Inretches have a psionic limitation that doubles their fatigue cost for PK.

Inretches use their Telereceive ability on anyone in range. They absorb people's memories, thoughts and (if possible) spells. An inretch can communicate with humans only if the subject has a spell such as Mind-Reading, or telepathic powers. Anyone making contact must make a Fright Check to maintain communication — the inretch's personality and thought patterns are very alien and evil.

Each inretch will be found in a special place. Some reside under water, others in a chest or hanging on a wall. If a human focuses on an inretch, he will prepare a special shrine or equally fine place.

The Fortifying Urge

After a month, anyone who spends at least eight hours a day near an inretch will develop a special kind of paranoia. The individual will develop a strong attachment to the location around the inretch. The specific effects depend on the disposition of the victim. An insecure person will become wary of unwelcome intruders; he will check and double-check the area after spending time away, and may even install security systems. In time, he may develop full-blown Paranoia or (if he finds the inretch) a Sense of Duty to it. A more charitable person

will consider the location a sanctuary — he will want to secure the location to protect visitors. No matter what his disposition, he will want to fortify the location. In a few years, the place will have security systems, walls, locks, guards and reinforcements against the elements. The subject does not have to know the source of this urge to feel it — in all probability, he will never know that the skull in the area is sentient.

The range of this influence is the same as the inretch's Telepathy range. In time, enough significant people may be sufficiently influenced to cause dramatic changes in the area. Decades later, the area around the inretch may be a prison, military installation, research complex, castle, or walled village. Occult scholars agree that one in ten modern-day prisons is built around an inretch.



Skullswitching

An inretch can perform a special procedure called a skullswitch. If it passes at least eight hours in total darkness within 10 feet of an unmoving human, it can magically switch its skull for that of the human. The inretch inhabits the victim's skull (now outside of his body), while the person gains the inretch's former skull (without being possessed). The individual feels no pain during the switch. His face will look different because his flesh has to cover a new bone structure.

The subject does, however, become aware of the inretch as soon as he notices the switch — he knows where the inretch is and that it is alive. If latent Magery or psionics were part of his makeup, these abilities will surface. At the moment of realization, the victim must make an immediate Fright Check — at -8! If he survives, he may try to destroy the inretch or escape from it, or he may fall under its power and serve it.

Inretches perform skullswitches when they want to draw attention to themselves, or when they want to alter their appearance after being discovered. An inretch may also make a skullswitch when it feels the victim is likely to become its servant and protector.

Inretch Adventure Seeds

Inretches can deal with people directly, or through manipulated humans. Those who are manipulated will usually be unaware of it, and will question such accusations before they believe them. Inretches can be found anywhere there are walls: castles, prisons, hospitals, stadiums, walled yards, etc.

The Damned. In a near-future America, the player characters are wrongly accused of a crime and sent to the

Rock, a maximum-security prison. The Rock was built by a paranoid architect named Ferrall. Ferrall discovered an old inretch decades ago after a skullswitch. He is now the warden of the Rock; he keeps the inretch in his office.

Ferrall's face looks strange. Over the years, the inretch grew a long chin, a row of bumps along its forehead, and a shrunken nose cavity. These features now complement Ferrall's own.

In the prison, the PCs try to learn about Ferrall while they fight to stay alive. Then, just as a gang of inmates plan to rape and murder them, the prison is invaded by federal special forces commandos. Ferrall snapped a week ago and declared the Rock "my own nation of the damned." The special forces team wants Ferrall taken alive, but they know nothing about the inretch. As the invasion gets underway, the inmates riot . . .

Feud. There is an inretch at the bottom of a well between two hills. On the top of each hill lives a family. Both of them get their water from the well. Each family has developed the fortifying urge.

Each feels threatened by the other family, so a secret war has been waged between them. The members of one family are poisoned, and a child dies. Then the other family's barn burns to the ground in retaliation. The plot thickens when both families begin consulting occultists and witch doctors — conventional feuding has been replaced by a need for curses, hexes and visitations by bad spirits. The families are going to amazing lengths to get their hands on arcane texts and to find voodoo worshippers and cultists who can do real damage. They contact the protagonists this way, asking for help to destroy the other family. The PCs need to stop the feud before it gets out of hand.

IPHIDS

ST: 6 **Move/Dodge:** 6/7 **Size:** 1
DX: 7 **PD/DR:** 4/6 **Weight:** 100 lbs.
IQ: see below **Damage:** 1d cut **Habitat:** in sands and swamps near humans
HT: 20 **Reach:** C, 1 **Other Names:** Yarrows, brainbugs

An iphid is a supernatural heat-loving insect the size of an adolescent human. It has an oversized insect head featuring twisted mandibles, a pair of multifaceted eyes, a cluster of hairy antennae and a cylindrical mouth full of jagged teeth.

An iphid's body is a blasphemous compromise of human and insect forms. It has two arms (with multiple joints) ending in taloned hands. Their torsos are divided into two parts: an abdomen adorned with small blowholes, and a tail portion with hundreds of delicate segments. Iphids do not have legs; they slither along on their segmented tails.

Each iphid's tail has a tiny stinger at the end. The iphid uses it to steal the appearance of a human — if a human stung by an iphid fails a HT roll, the iphid can transform into an exact replica of that human for ten minutes for every point by which the roll failed. For example, a roll of 15 for a HT of 12 would allow the iphid to look like that human for 30 minutes.

Iphids love heat and dry weather. They are generally found in deserts. They are (or were) plentiful enough in the eastern Sahara to become an obscure part of Egyptian mythology — they can be found in hieroglyphs in some tombs. If placed in a humid or cold environment, the iphid will try to flee. (There are rumors among occultists of a humidity-loving swamp iphid, said to be approximately the size of an elephant.)

They are omnivorous. They will eat any amount of flesh or vegetation, but prefer flesh because it gives them more energy.

Iphids are evil by nature. Although their intellects can equal or exceed that of humans, they think like insects. They crave security, food and power. Each has an inborn belief that other creatures are only good as food or servants.

Iphids increase their intelligence by consuming the brains of more intelligent species. When an iphid is first born, it is a football-sized larva of IQ 2. If it does not consume a brain, its intelligence will not change. For every 15 pounds of brain matter of IQ higher than its own, its IQ increases by 1 point. (The average human brain weighs ten pounds.)

As an iphid becomes smarter, it becomes aware of the benefits of eating brains . . . and it is better able to acquire them. At IQ 9 and up, the iphid is a thinking, scheming creature. It will begin to collect food and clothing, secure a small home, and spy on humans. At IQ 13 and up, the iphid begins enslaving stupid humans and covertly interfering in the affairs of men. At IQ 16 and up, it may assemble a cult to worship it, collect books to educate itself, and travel. The maximum IQ of an iphid is 20. An IQ 20 iphid is called an archiphid.

At birth iphids generate psi static (p. B176). They have the psi static skill as a single-skill power at Power 17. This Power decreases by 1 for every IQ point gained, until IQ 20, at which point the static is gone and the iphid's latent psionics (if any) emerge.

To reproduce, two iphids must court each other in human form, one as a male and the other as a female. They must have intercourse before either iphid reverts to its true form. If successful, the impregnated iphid gestates the young for three weeks or until the next new moon (whichever is longer). The litter consists of several dozen larvae. The young eat each other in the first few days, resulting in zero to four surviving iphids per litter.

Iphid Adventure Seeds

Because of their range of intellect, iphids can be used in a variety of ways. Low-IQ iphids can be encountered in packs of four or more, sneaking from the shadows to attack. Smarter iphids will often be alone, preying on men in more sophisticated ways.

The Curse Of Kammehn. In Egypt stands a sacred tomb, the resting place of Kammehn, reputed to be a powerful mage thousands of years ago. It is protected by a legal but fanatical Arab group by day, and by four iphids by night. Few people approach it anyway, because of the curse.

When the iphids defend the tomb, one will sting an intruder and steal his appearance. The iphid then goes to the nearest town and murders someone. The intruder whose form was stolen is always tried and executed for the crime. The locals think the tomb causes murderous insanity. The condemned individual's frantic cries of innocence are proof that the intruders are mad, since someone always witnesses the murder.

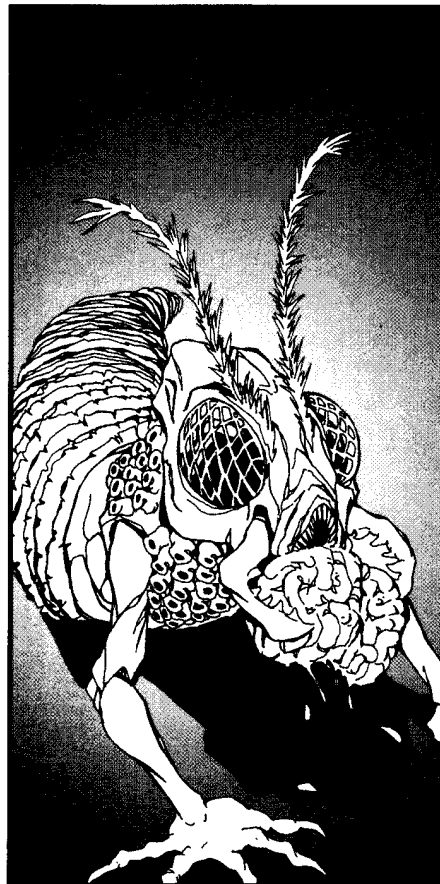
The PCs need to get into the tomb. Perhaps they are looking for an artifact, or Kammehn himself. If they try, they may succumb to the curse.

Mary on the Wind. In the Arizona desert, in the town of Rumfort, lives a woman named Mary. She has had an imbalance in her brain since she was six; it causes her to become schizophrenic, paranoid and violent. When Mary was a teenager, she found a young iphid. The iphid's psi static allowed Mary to think normally for a few weeks each time it stung her. Mary eventually learned that the iphid wanted human brains.

Mary is now 35. She stays close to her iphid to stay sane. She manages a rest home for senior citizens and has enough medical connections to feed her iphid a steady diet of brains. In the past few years, Mary has worked hard to find high-IQ brains.

The iphid, which has just become an archiphid, has developed the levitation skill. It takes Mary's form and floats in the wind at night, looking for an iphid mate. When the newcomers arrive in Rumfort, they meet Mary. She is just about to go crazy again. That night, they see "her" floating on the wind.

As they investigate, they will meet a number of eccentric townspeople and strange diversions — some are authentic, but others are the creations of the archiphid.



JACKSTRAWS

ST: n/a Move/Dodge: n/a Size: 1
DX: n/a PD/DR: 0/0 Weight: 40-80 lbs.
IQ: see below Damage: n/a Habitat: farms and fields
HT: 1d+15 Reach: n/a Other Names: Devil dolls, woodfauns

A jackstraw is a magical, sentient, inanimate humanoid — a living scarecrow. Each jackstraw knows spells that help it survive, but no spells that would allow it to animate itself.

A jackstraw must be made from once-living material. Corpses do not make good jackstraws because they decay quickly. Stone and metal materials never lived. Animal hides and plant life work best — natural-fiber cloth, leather, straw stuffing, wooden limbs, etc.

The more human a jackstraw looks, the more intelligent it is. A crude jackstraw (just straw stuffing in overalls and a hat) has only animal intelligence (IQ 4 or 5). A wooden sculpture with articulated limbs is almost a genius (IQ 14 or 15). The exact IQ is up to the Game Master.

This level can change as the jackstraw's appearance changes. For example, if a jackstraw often mistaken for a person (even up close) has its head removed, its IQ will drop from, say, 14 to 6. The change takes one minute per IQ point, whether going up or down.

Each jackstraw knows all of the spells in the colleges

of Communication and Empathy and Knowledge. Each spell is at IQ level; this severely limits spellcasting for crude jackstraws. They use their spells to gain power and influence; their favorite tactic is to use magic to shock or frighten, or to threaten innocent people with injury. A jackstraw who uses the Exchange Bodies spell will lose its natural spellcasting ability; the victim who assumes the form of the jackstraw can retain his normal IQ and any spells or psionic powers he has.

Jackstraws cannot directly defend themselves. They need human assistance to repair decaying limbs and mend disintegrating clothes. They fear fire and people who know spells in the Plant college. They are all pathological liars and cowards.

It is not known how a jackstraw is born. Clues to their origins can be found in Haitian voodoo fetishes — the dolls used to cause pain to someone they resemble. Each of the fetishes contains some piece of clothing or hair from the victim, which is believed to give them their power. Many occultists believe that jackstraws are born in similar situations. They come to life when something in or on them has great sentimental value to a person. If the person died recently, the chance of a jackstraw being born increases dramatically.

Dolls and Dummies

A rare few jackstraws are found far from cornfields. They are ventriloquist dummies, dolls, statues and mannequins. They meet all the general requirements for jackstraws (inanimate, made of once-living material), but are found in special settings: display windows, toy stores, sewing workshops and the corners of children's bedrooms.



These jackstraws have attributes and abilities identical to the traditional kind. Their appearances are often much more human, giving them IQs ranging from 7 (the average ventriloquist dummy) to 16 (a life-like mannequin).

Jackstraw Adventure Seeds

No matter what their form, jackstraws will affect humans before they are known to be supernatural. They prefer to work this way, covertly sowing seeds of dissent and discord.

A Murder of Crows. On one farm in a farming community last year, the harvest was great. All of the others had poor harvests. The fortunate farmers have a scarecrow (a jackstraw) in their field. This year, the crows are staying away from the jackstraw farm . . . and devouring others' crops.

The neighboring farmers get mad and march to the jackstraw farm. There are rumors that the farmers on the jackstraw farm have made a pact with the devil. But when the mob arrives, hordes of crows attack. Wolves pace around the house, standing guard. A few days later, a swarm of insects severely injures a few teenagers who were creeping toward the scarecrow one night. The farmers on the jackstraw farm are as scared as the rest. They fear their scarecrow will attack them, too.

The plot thickens when other farmers begin building scarecrows of their own. Only one or two (at the most) will become jackstraws. But, if they do, how will the original jackstraw react? Will the jackstraws rule the town? Will they battle each other using people and animals?

The Third Testament. In a department store, at the foot of a mannequin (a jackstraw), a young boy has a seizure. By the time paramedics arrive, he is dead. When the boy suddenly revives, he looks up at the mannequin and says, "Jesus."

A few people in the onlooking crowd take this to heart. They take the mannequin to a church and dress it as Christ. Its arms are raised, its face is painted to look chillingly real, and it is given a wig and beard made from real hair.

Before long, the jackstraw mannequin is giving secret sermons to true believers. It uses its power to convince the blindly faithful that this *is* the Second Coming, brought to Earth to dictate the Third and final Testament.

The extent of this adventure is up to the GM. It can be expanded to involve several churches, even other religions. Religions are a controversial but rich source for horror games, and this jackstraw may be used to explore these ideas. Or the adventure can take a more melodramatic tone — perhaps a clergyman will simply contact the heroes for assistance in an exorcism.

LODGERS

A lodger is a sentient, insubstantial being that takes control of an inhabited structure to survive — a "haunted house." The inhabited structure (a house, hotel, castle, RV, etc.) becomes the lodger's body. Lodgers feed on human emotions. A well-fed lodger will develop its latent supernatural abilities. Every psionic power, every psionic skill, every spell and Magery lie dormant in them, ready to surface.

They are not of this world. They neither age nor socialize. Some of the more intelligent lodgers develop personalities and establish greater goals, but this is very rare. The average lodger only wants to eat. All lodgers enjoy using their special powers to spook humans; some cause harmless frights while others can injure or traumatize their victims.

The lodger develops its supernatural abilities when a human in an extreme emotional state is inside the lodger or touching it. If the human feels angry, depressed, overjoyed, frightened, etc., one of the lodger's latent magical or psionic abilities gets 1% closer to surfacing. After enough emotional stimulation, the percentage reaches

ST: 1d+16	Move/Dodge: n/a	Size: varies
DX: 1d+6	PD/DR: 0/0	Weight: n/a
IQ: 1d+6	Damage: special	Habitat: human dwellings
HT: 14/60	Reach: variable	Other Names: Haunts, eltergeists

100%. The lodger either gains a new ability at level 1, or increases an existing ability by one level. Then the process begins again. A lodger can gain up to one percentage point per inhabitant per day.

For example, suppose a lodger with no supernatural abilities has taken possession of a suburban home. A family moves in. Two weeks later, the husband and wife get into a bitter fight. The lodger gains two percentage points. The fighting worsens; soon, the kids are feeling rotten every day. Six months later, the lodger is up to 66%.

Then they throw a Halloween party; 46 people arrive. A fire breaks out. Of the 39 people inside (the rest were standing out on the lawn), 37 of them panic. As a result,



the lodger is now up to $(66 + 37):103\%$. At midnight that night, the lodger has telepathy, power level 1. The next day, the lodger is at 0%.

Over the next five years, the neighborhood goes to hell. The house becomes the sanctuary of a series of dysfunctional families, drug abusers, deviants and unusually emotional people. The lodger averages a level every three weeks. By the end of five years, it has Telepathy power 12, Magery 3, ESP power 10, two spells at level 15, and two telepathy skills at level 15.

The Game Master decides which abilities the lodger acquires and which levels increase. The abilities can be used on anyone in range, not just targets inside the lodger's body.

The Hunger

A lodger needs a steady "diet" to survive. Specifically, it needs to have people inside it! For every full day without a human inside it, a lodger loses one hit point. Once the lodger develops powers, it requires more food. For every ten levels, the period between feedings decreases by one hour. Thus, a lodger who has between 10 and 19 levels will lose one hit point if it goes 23 hours without a resident. At 100 levels, it loses a point every 14 hours. The hungriest lodger can lose one hit point per hour.

The Nature of the Haunt

This cycle has ominous implications. By the time the lodger has three or four major psionic powers, psionic skills, Magery 3 and a few spells, it will be very hungry. It will panic if it is uninhabited for even a few hours. If its body is a hotel, it may be able to survive for centuries. If its body is a house or yacht, it may use its power to enslave or trap a human to ensure its own survival.

It takes a while for a lodger to become proficient in a given psionic ability. Many lodgers die from starvation before they become powerful. The most powerful lodgers are haunted hotels, prisons, hospitals, office buildings, auditoriums, theaters, ships, large war planes, passenger trains, mansions and apartment buildings. A lodger with a small house for a body will take years to develop. But a hotel lodger could gain 10% to 20% of a level every day, depending on its size and type of residents.

Lodgers that develop the astral projection power can drift into the ether, leaving their bodies behind. They must return, or find a new structure to haunt, before the power fades. The lodger is vulnerable when astral — its current body can be destroyed (thus forcing it to find a new body or die), or it can be attacked astrally. A lodger may use this ability to escape an attacker.

Lodgers with psionic healing are particularly powerful. By using skills such as healing, life extension and metabolism control, a lodger can survive starvation. If the lodger's body is empty for extended periods, it can hibernate or heal damage until someone arrives to feed it.

Other abilities can be used to attract and manipulate humans. Telekinesis is used to create poltergeist-like effects. Making and Breaking spells can be used to fight attackers or to repair damage. The only limits are the Game Master's imagination.

Conductive Lodgers

A special breed of lodger, the conductive lodger, develops only the Electrokinesis power and electrokinetic skills (p. PS11). These lodgers are found only in TL5+ settings. They manifest themselves in appliances, telephones, computers and televisions. A conductive lodger may even create an image and distinct voice as it presents itself to humans. Conductive lodgers have a limited range of powers but, by concentrating new and developing abilities in one area of expertise, they become masters of electronic manipulation.

Hunting the House

Lodgers can be detected telepathically, and by using certain spells. Successful use of the Occultism skill can also locate a lodger, but never as conclusively as supernatural means. Occultists who specialize in haunted houses will have greater success. Lodgers are typically discovered by the people living in them, and their presence is then confirmed by an expert.

There are many ways to harm a lodger. It can be attacked psionically, or with spells such as Panic (p. M56) and Steal Health (p. M64). Damage to the lodger's body does not hurt it but, if enough of the structure is destroyed to prevent a human from entering it, the lodger will die; if a haunted car is crushed into a two-foot cube, for example. They can also be trapped (using spells such as Soul Jar, p. M69) or starved to death.

Lodgers have a natural Will equal to IQ+4. Some attacks will be suffered quietly as the lodger plans a strategy or keeps its power secret. This is very likely for IQ 11+ lodgers. Other attacks will cause a defensive, all-out response — a successful Panic spell, for example, could cause a lodger with no astral abilities to lash out because it cannot flee. Lodgers should be fought by experts.

If a lodger's body is large, it will secure a special, out-of-the-way place as a point of power. In this place (an

attic, a particular room, a crow's nest or bell tower), the lodger's levels and attributes are at +3 but its Will is halved. The place is always spooky — filled with cobwebs, slime, or evil artifacts. An untrained psychic is vulnerable in such a place, but a veteran haunt-hunter knows the lowered Will makes the spot a weak point.

Lodger Adventure Seeds

The lodgers were designed to make haunted houses more fun. By approaching a haunted house as a being with psionic and magic powers, the Game Master can play the house as an NPC. Most lodgers are animals, without personalities. But if it adds to the adventure, give a lodger advantages, disadvantages and quirks.

The Domestic Casket. A beautiful building downtown is possessed by a powerful lodger. The lower floor is used for office space by a widely-read newspaper. The upper floors are a well-kept and inexpensive boardinghouse.

The lodger is very powerful, skilled in an array of spells and psionics. Its IQ is 12. The lodger uses its abilities to cause the paper to print an obituary for each new resident in the upper floors. It then makes it plain to the resident that it can and will torture anyone who tries to escape. It will use Teleport Other and Delay (both at level 20) to bring them back. The building is full of trapped people; some are frightened, while others accept their fate. There have been some suicides. The lodger makes valuable residents comfortable. It makes the rest suffer.

Loyal residents are allowed to leave the building temporarily in disguise. They are needed to fend off investigators and to make some of the faked deaths more believable. Start the adventure when the haunt-hunters either move in or investigate one of the deaths.

Viewscreen Dreams. This adventure takes place in a TL8 home. It could be in a TL8 world, or it might be an experimental home. It is fully computerized, with a multitude of viewscreens, terminals, automatic doors and other devices. A lodger takes possession of the place.

The devices malfunction, trapping the residents inside. They suffocate. The owners hush it up and move in a new set of residents. And it happens again. The lodger soon grows strong. It develops Electrokinetic abilities, psychic vampirism and a special weakness — it can only feed when a human is asleep. The person's dreams show up simultaneously on all of the viewscreens. If other people inside are dreaming, the dreams merge.

The lodger can only be destroyed by entering the residents' collective dream. To enter, someone can use psychotronic gadgets, electrokinesis, or the Soul Jar spell. Once inside, the invader can find and converse with the dreamers . . . and find or fight the lodger. The dream landscape shifts with the emotions of the dreamer(s).

Will the heroes survive? And who will protect their bodies while they are inside the dreamworld?

panion, if he is still alive). In this last case, the companion may be able to persuade the lonesoul to lay itself to rest alone; he might reach that shred of humanity hidden deep within the creature.

Flowers for the Lonesouls

A lonesoul needs a living flower within 2 yards of its corpse to escape the confines of its grave. If the flower dies or is moved, the lonesoul instantly returns to its grave.

If there is more than one flower, the lonesoul can carry some of them for added strength. The total number of flowers it carries represents the lonesoul's minimum number of hit points. Thus, the HT of a lonesoul carrying a bouquet of seven daisies cannot be reduced below 7. The flowers must come from within 2 yards of the lonesoul's corpse — flowers that are stolen from someone's lawn or nursery have no effect. If the flowers are taken from the lonesoul or the flowers die while it holds them, the effect is lost.

Lonesoul Adventure Seeds

Lonesouls can appear in adventures as mummies (a lonesoul from a tomb wrapped in cloth), as invisible haunts and as howling phantasms in the rain. They can also be found in groups, perhaps an undead platoon that was buried in scattered graves near their final battlefield. People can try to identify the lonesoul and help it rest. Or, the lonesoul might be hostile, making the PCs want to destroy it instead.

Rum and Flowers. Bums are dying all over town. Each is found with a bottle of rum laced with formaldehyde. A coroner discovers that the bums have been drinking this concoction for months — they die when the chemical reaches a fatally toxic level. Now their bodies are well-preserved. Some of the bums were found with white roses.

Investigators will find that white roses grow on the back lawn of the city cemetery. These people are not allowed in, however; the cemetery is run by a crotchety old man who doesn't like the way they look. They will have to sneak into the cemetery at night. The old man knew one or two of the bums and wants them buried in the cemetery's back lawn.

There is a lonesoul buried at the back of the cemetery, under the roses. To catch it, the party can pose as bums and wait for the lonesoul to come to them. When they do, a cloaked humanoid with a hat floating above his shoulders comes calling in the dead of night. He carries a bottle of rum and a large bouquet of white roses.

The Drifter. The player characters meet a woman who wears a long coat, a hat and gloves and whose

face is bandaged. She is a lonesoul whose corpse has been moved. Apparently, it was moved with live flowers on it. And someone has made sure the corpse has had flowers near it ever since, because without them the lonesoul would have automatically returned to the corpse. She needs their help to find her corpse, but she will not admit that it is her own. When they find it, she tries to kill them and bury them nearby for company.



Humans can hear the lune fish song up to a quarter of a mile away. The listener will feel compelled to find its source. Most people simply swim into the sea. Others resist and take precautions, using a boat or scanning the water with binoculars. Lune fish will attack and eat anyone who ventures into the sea. They will tear boat hulls asunder; they may even attempt to leap into boats, if they are hungry enough.

Lune fish have driven entire towns insane before consuming the inhabitants. Victims of their song can stay alive, losing their minds and never straying far from the coast, for months. It is very possible that the song of the lune fish is addictive to its victims — some may have discovered the source of their disorder, but will not expose or kill the fish because they crave the song!

Lune fish sometimes toy with their prey, biting chunks from victims as they tread water and try to resist going into shock. The lune fish enjoy fear; a terrified victim is more delicious.

Weaknesses

The lune fish have a few limitations. First, they cannot survive out of water for long. Their gills work in any type of water (including sewage water), but like other fish they will soon suffocate on land. They lose one hit point for every minute out of water. As they die, they thrash about, trying to escape to any available water or to kill any animal nearby. A dead lune fish's flesh decays rapidly; six hours after death, only the skeleton, brittle and fragile, will be left.

Their second weakness is their loss of strength and resilience during the new moon and during daylight hours. At this time, they swim and fight sluggishly. Their IQ drops to 4 and all their attack and defense rolls are at -3. If attacked, they will try to escape or hide, among rocks and wrecked ships (this is why they prefer rocky, jagged coasts, and may explain why they are more plentiful near lighthouses).

Third, they have an aversion to dead flesh. A lune fish must be starving to come within 10 yards of decaying flesh. Waterborne corpses will drive lune fish away.

The Moonchildren

If a pregnant woman is driven crazy by the lune fish song, she will give birth to a litter of moonchildren. Her fetus will replicate and shrink, transforming into five to 12 embryos. These are born in a gelatinous sac that soon breaks apart to reveal the pale, half-human infants. They will grow rapidly, reaching their adult form in two months.

All moonchildren look like thin, pale, skinny dwarf children, with deep black eyes set slightly too far apart, and no genitals. They know that they will die within a

year. They also know that lune fish exist; the moonchildren accept the lune fish as their true parents.

As a race, moonchildren have IQ+2 and HT-2. They are Ugly, Skinny, Amphibious, Albino, Eunuch Dwarfs. They have two Odious Personal Habits — they don't like wearing clothes and they will eat anything, including people and live animals. They have a Sense of Duty to protect lune fish. They are Terminally Ill (they live for six to 12 months) and they have a Weakness: -1d Fatigue every 30 minutes while active during the new moon. They have a 10-point Unusual Background, Peripheral Vision, Voice, Dark Vision and Universal Digestion. They have at least two Quirks: a fear of corpses and an attraction to the moon. It costs -52 points to be a moonchild.

Moonchildren are best used as NPCs. Their half-monster, half-human nature make them eerie encounters. Moonchild player characters are possible, too, but their adventuring careers will be brief.

Lune Fish Adventure Seeds

Lune fish can be used in at least two ways. First, their effects can be the focal point of the adventure. After dealing with insanity along the coast and deaths off the coast, the PCs can encounter the lune fish themselves only at the climax. Or, second, focus on the lune fish right from the start. Their ability to cause insanity is one of their attacks, just as deadly as their jaws. In both methods, fighting the lune fish can take place at sea, in their element. (See *Jaws* for inspiration.)

The Tide. On an island near the coast of England is a town called Eatonshire. Eatonshire has gone insane. A rather large school of lune fish has been preying upon the people of the island community for years. The PCs arrive to find a village of maniacs. Their psychoses seem to become more acute during the full moon. Can the heroes save the town before succumbing to the song?

The Mortals. A handful of moonchildren learn that they can extend their lives if they relocate to the moon. The moonchildren have devised a means to get to the moon and survive there, but the PCs are essential to the plan. The method will be supernatural in nature, not scientific; details are up to the GM.

The PCs discover that the lifespan of the moonchildren will be effectively limitless on the moon — the PCs may be responsible for creating an immortal race! Given the fact that the moonchildren were smart enough to devise a means to reach the moon and survive there, could they use their isolation and freedom from humanity to become gods? Will these gods help or hurt mankind? Do the PCs have the right to sabotage the plan, or should they help these creatures survive, no matter what the cost?

LYNCHLICHEN

ST: 25 Move/Dodge: n/a Size: 1+
DX: 6 PD/DR: 0/0 Weight: 50+ lbs.
IQ: 11 Damage: 1d+1 cr Habitat: anywhere
HT: 10/sq. yd. Reach: C Other Names:
Executioner's moss



Lynchlichen are beds of living, thinking moss. Each bed is one creature. They thrive in dark, damp places and feed on flesh.

All beds of lynchlichen are located in high places, well above the floor or ground. They can be encountered along the ceilings of caves, in the rafters of buildings, and along the thicker limbs of trees. The smallest are about 2 square yards. The largest are incredibly huge, covering several hundred yards of flat surface.

They control humans by infection. The victims slowly grow more lynchlichen in their bodies and soon die. To prolong their lives, they must feed the creature.

Infection

Anyone who comes in contact with a lynchlichen will come away with a speck of moss on their skin or clothing. If it is washed off, the danger is gone. If not, the lynchlichen will slowly crawl (usually at night) along the flesh and find a way into the victim's bloodstream. Typical routes to the bloodstream are cuts and open sores. An infection can also occur from under the fingernails or through an orifice such as the ear. The lynchlichen then grows, creating small patches of moss on the skin.

Although the creature thrives in the bloodstream, it needs the patches to collect nitrates from the atmosphere to stay alive. If the victim bathes every day for ten consecutive days, washing off all moss patches each day, the infection ends and the person is safe. Most victims are people who are consistently dirty. They never notice the patches of moss, or they never wash them off.

Once in the bloodstream, the lynchlichen will grow stronger, eating away at the insides of the subject. Every day the sufferer must make a HT roll or lose 1 HT. A critical success restores 1 HT; normally the unfortunate's life will be short and painful. When he dies, the lynchlichen quickly consumes the rest of the body. Then it begins crawling, at a snail's pace, to a higher location. Once there, it waits for more prey.

However, someone who pollutes his body in interesting ways — with nicotine, alcohol, strong drugs, a heavy diet of preservative-rich junk food, etc. — gets a bonus to HT. A smoker might get +1, a chain-smoker +2 or +3. A drinker would get +1. Regular drug use is worth a significant bonus. Someone who consumes the right substances could easily live for years. The creature also absorbs the worst effects of drugs; no lynchlichen's victim will actually die from drug effects, although he might become crippled, stupid and crazy.

Sufferers often become deranged by their affliction. They become despondent, suicidal, violent and delusional. Many take on a paranoid trait, seeing certain types of people as “wrong.” These people are often protected by law like anyone else, so these carriers must take the law into their own hands to execute them. This particular trait does not always surface; it is generally experienced by those victims who are already comfortable with stereotypes, murder, or vigilantism.

Sacrifices

To further prolong their lives, victims can feed a bed of lynchlichen. If they bring the creature a living human or large animal, the bed of moss will reward the sufferer. The creature first grapples the sacrifice and strangles it — a DX roll determines if it has a grip, and each turn it does the damage listed above to the head and neck. The dead body hangs limply as the creature infects it.

Once fed, the creature will allow the victim to touch it. This contact allows the creature to temporarily alter the growth of the lynchlichen inside the subject’s body. He gains one extra day of life for each substantial sacrifice.

In rare situations, a large bed of lynchlichen will save the head of a sacrifice. It will keep the head covered under a lump of moss and, when it needs to, reveal the head and speak through it. It will only speak to those it feels it can trust, particularly those who regularly bring it new bodies.

Lynchlichen Adventure Seeds

Lynchlichen exist in two forms: inside someone, and hanging in their lairs. They can be encountered on their own, or with infected servants. They can also be encountered solely inside a victim, with no hanging bed of moss involved.

Hosts do not always have to be filthy people who smoke and drink — they can be clean people who smoke

and drink, as well. While bums, street people, peasants and prisoners make good lynchlichen victims, so do businessmen who replace bathing with anti-sweat drugs, kings who think bathing is a dirty practice and anyone who bathes in a dirty lake or river without soap.

The Halo Collector. A middle-aged janitor of a rest home has been infected by the lynchlichen. He has little patches of moss in the corners of his eyes and under his toenails. He has been giving terminally-ill people to the bed of moss in the ceiling of the boiler room. The janitor has always thought of himself as a religious man, but this experience has pushed him beyond the borders of sanity. He sees himself as an angel of mercy, saving himself by “collecting halos” — he dresses his kills in white gowns and pretends they are turning into angels as they die overhead. He keeps their ID bracelets to remember those he “helped.”

The rest home is so poorly managed that the investigation of the disappearances has just begun. This has allowed the janitor to secretly scramble enough paperwork to cover his tracks for a few more days. The lynchlichen, meanwhile, will save the head of the next kill so it can tell the janitor how to deal with investigators.

Subterranean Secrets. A huge bed of lynchlichen is hanging in an old subway tunnel. It has four servants: three infected street people and one former subway-train driver. They prowl the trains at night, snatching meals for their lynchlichen master.

The former train driver has been talking to the lynchlichen. It has promised to cure him completely if he can bring it a whole carload of fresh victims. (It can’t do this, but it promised anyway.) He is now trying to figure out a way to heist a single car full of people, to separate it from the rest of the train and send it down the tracks of this hidden tunnel. The PCs will be on that train when it happens.

MARROWFIENDS

A marrowfiend is a ferocious, disgusting beast that enters our dimension through the marrow of a living human. When the marrowfiend arrives, its slimy, grotesque body grows from inside the bones, splintering them in seconds. The victim’s organs burst from his tearing skin. The marrowfiend’s body continues to expand until it reaches its normal size, leaving bloody shreds of human flesh and bone at its feet. The entire process takes about 30 seconds.

ST: 32 Move/Dodge: 4/3 Size: 1 to 7
 DX: 11 PD/DR: 5/12 Weight: 500+ lbs.
 IQ: 6 Damage: see below Habitat: any
 HT: 65 Reach: C, 1, 2 Other Names: Gnashers, journeymorphs, bursters

A witness must make a Fright Check in the first few moments, at -8. If the roll fails, he must turn away until the marrowfiend is fully formed. If he keeps watching or listening, make more Fright Checks.

Although each marrowfiend looks different, all of them are monstrous, inhumanly ugly and putrid. Each is between 5 and 12 feet tall. Each has one to ten arms, either tentacles or humanoid limbs ending in claws. Marrowfiends typically have tails. Each has one to four legs. A one-legged marrowfiend is a monopod — its leg and tail merge at the base of its fetid form.

The head of a marrowfiend is dominated by a vast fang-filled mouth. Some have lamprey-shaped maws. Others have more human structures, often adorned with a row of small pseudopods along the lips. Each marrowfiend has from one to ten eyes which are mounted on short stalks or deeply embedded in the fleshy head. A marrowfiend has a few other features as well — anything from horns to blow-holes, from a muzzle to bony spine ridges.

Each marrowfiend has two or three methods of attack. One of these is its bite. The others are also physical attacks. They do not use spells, psionics, or weapons. The amount and type of damage is up to the Game Master. The total number of dice for all the attacks is always 16. At least one attack must do cutting damage. For example, a marrowfiend might attack with its tentacles (6d crushing), a huge mouth (7d cutting) and an ear-shattering howl (3d to the ears).

A marrowfiend's stench is overpowering at close range. Anyone within 30 feet must make a Will roll to avoid feeling queasy. Marrowfiends are also covered with dripping fluids of all kinds. Anyone it touches must make a Will-4 roll to keep from vomiting violently.

The moment a marrowfiend enters this world, it will attack anything that moves. It will try to eat any living creatures it can reach. If attacked or caged, it will make All-Out Attacks until everything around it is devoured or destroyed.

They are smart enough to avoid creatures that do them great harm. They are also smart enough to start fires or create other diversions. If a marrowfiend is outmatched, roll against its IQ. If the roll fails, it keeps fighting. If the roll is a success, it will flee. Keep rolling as long as it is outmatched.

Once a marrowfiend flees, it will try to hide. They prefer subterranean escapes. They can burrow quickly. If pursuers lose a marrowfiend in a cellar, for example, it may dig its way to a cave several hundred yards away before they find the burrow entrance.

Once it feels safe, the marrowfiend rests. If its stomach is full, it will not re-emerge for 1d×10 hours. If it is still hungry, it will return within 24 hours. It will try to return at night.

The only known weaknesses of marrowfiends are demon-controlling spells. Marrowfiends will take 5d crush-

ing damage from a successful Banish spell (p. M65). If reduced to 0 HT as a result of the spell, the marrowfiend disappears. If Planar Summons (p. M65) is cast on a marrowfiend, the creature can be controlled. Use the demon control rules for Summon Demon (p. M65). Marrowfiends are affected by pentagrams just as demons are.

Rebirth

If a marrowfiend is resting, the human victim from whose marrow it burst may be resurrected. While a marrowfiend is dormant, the victim will begin growing inside, starting as a fetus. In 9d hours, the victim will have grown to the exact point at which it died; the body will be vaguely visible through the marrowfiend's skin. One to six hours later, the skin tears away and the person bursts forth. He gains consciousness and the marrowfiend takes 6 dice of damage. This can kill a wounded marrowfiend. If it does not die it will become enraged; it will immediately try to consume the victim . . . killing him a second time. From this second death there is no return.

As soon as the victim erupts, roll 3 dice. On a 10 or less, he is too disoriented and weak to react. This lasts (victim's Will) minutes. After this period (or if the roll is 11 or more) he is conscious — make an immediate Fright Check at -10! If he makes the roll, he has a chance of escaping the marrowfiend. With luck, someone will be around when he is reborn to drag him to safety. Such "reborn" victims frequently seem extremely absent-minded, almost as though they are perpetually listening to something no one else can hear . . .

The Marrowfiend Doorway

Marrowfiends reach our world in a number of ways. One method is a curse called "the marrowfiend doorway." This is one of the most hideous and arcane curses known. It can be cast as a spell (Regular; 10 minutes to cast; energy: 60; prerequisites: Curse [p. M54] and Planar Summons [p. M65]). It can also be an alternate effect of a Curse spell; in this case, the caster must know Pentagram (p. M53) and Planar Summons, and spend 60 points of Fatigue. The target of the spell will give birth to a marrowfiend in 1d days.

A second cause is a failed dimension-spanning spell. Such spells seem to attract the attention of marrowfiends in their own world. If the spell fails, a small rift allows one marrowfiend to pass into our world. The target is chosen randomly from the humans present at the spell's casting. The passage is not instantaneous — the hapless individual will feel strange for 5d minutes before the marrowfiend erupts.

There may be other methods of bringing marrowfiends to our world. These methods are hidden among cults, necromancers and witch doctors. A victim who has been resurrected from a marrowfiend can become a target *again*.

Anthroviles

There is a rare subspecies of marrowfiends called anthroviles. They are smarter (IQ 8) and smaller (about 5 feet tall). They have a HT of 20. All their other statistics are the same as normal marrowfiends.

When these creatures arrive through bone marrow, they expand slowly. The human victim goes through incredible pain for several hours. Then his organs and bones creep out of his orifices. The damage to his skin is minimal enough for the anthrovile to stitch a few wounds together and wear the victim's flesh as his own.

At a distance, a skin-wearing anthrovile can pass for human. Make a Vision+4 roll. If the roll is made by 3 or less, the anthrovile appears to be a badly scarred and misshapen human. If the roll is made by 4 or more (or if the creature is close), the anthrovile is obviously inhuman. Make a Fright Check at this time.

An anthrovile may control its appetite long enough to blend in with society. Soon enough, however, it will begin rampaging for food to keep its skin from decaying and falling off. A rare few will find new skin to wear.

Like their larger brothers, an anthrovile's human doorway can be resurrected. If the human emerges, the 6 dice of damage is likely to kill the creature, whether it is wounded or not.

Marrowfiend Adventure Seeds

Marrowfiends are big, violent, dumb, ugly, hungry horrors. Focus on their two principal features: their revolting appearance (especially at birth), and their ability to create unparalleled mayhem. Any meeting with a marrowfiend should be swift and vicious.

Anthroviles are intended for more subdued adventures. They are hungry and violent, but they can also pass as humans.

The Ghoul Guilders. The Ghoul Guilders are a group of inexperienced spellcasters. They have found an ancient tribal ritual they think will summon demons. But it summons marrowfiends. When things get out of hand, a few members defect and contact the heroes. The rest of the group thinks it can control the creatures. When the PCs arrive, they find one or two marrowfiends rampaging.

This is an action-oriented adventure. The party can act as occult commandos, hunting these disgusting and powerful beasts. Use a special setting for this adventure, from the Arctic north to a ship to the top of a skyscraper. To make things more challenging, remind the players that they need to keep this situation quiet — they don't want the marrowfiends on the nightly news.

Dark Passage. An occultist who has known about anthroviles for years has discovered a way to "cleanse" the spirit through anthrovile summoning. The subject simply sits in a pentagram surrounded by candles and bleeds to death. This always summons an anthrovile through the



subject. If the anthrovile survives long enough for the subject to resurrect, the subject emerges in an enlightened state.

When the occultist tried the experiment on himself, his pentagram was located in a vault. The anthrovile did not know the combination for the door and could not escape. The PCs meet the occultist. He is in perfect health. He is charming, witty, incredibly intelligent and strong. He seems almost superhuman. If they find records of his former self, they discover that he used to be sickly and strange. Will he develop an evil side?

If a previous adventure afflicted an investigator with a major disorder, perhaps this is the cure . . .

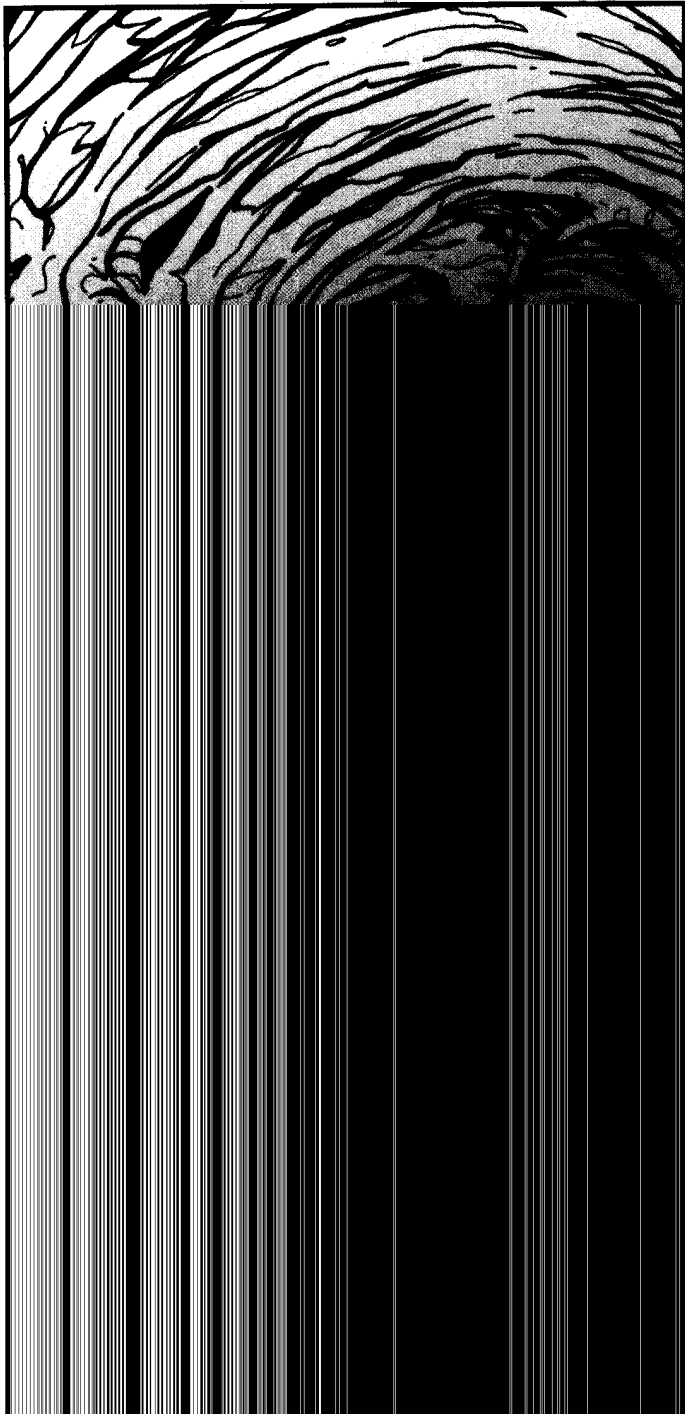
MAZEWORMS

ST: 30 Move/Dodge: n/a Size: 100+
DX: 7 PD/DR: 5/8 Weight: unknown
IQ: 1d+3 Damage: special Habitat: just below
HT: 18/ ground
5d+100 Reach: special Other Names:
Cavercysts,
underscourges, weirds

A mazeworm is a maze of living subterranean tunnels and caves. Like a gigantic buried digestive tract, the mazeworm's body consists of intertwined tubes and ducts of gray-yellow flesh. No one has ever seen the exterior of a mazeworm, nor has a mazeworm's interior ever been mapped or charted. They can be found anywhere, lying just below the surface of the earth.

Each mazeworm has several tunnels, each 3 to 10 feet in diameter. Close examination of the fleshy walls reveals veins and arteries, random blowholes, sores, lesions and clumps of wiry hair. The walls are saturated with a sticky mucous. The "floor" is a shallow river of *circumplasm*: flowing, bubbling, acidic bile. Anything that touches the circumplasm will take 1 die of damage per minute.

Strange lumps of flesh and soft bone grow haphazardly from the tunnel walls. These appendages and organs seem to be in a state of jumbled evolution. They look function-



pool will take 1 die of damage *each second*. Swimming rolls are at -5 due to the thickness of the bile.

Waiting for Food

Mazeworms are intelligent creatures. They actively hunt prey — their diet includes all animals, including humans — and can defend themselves. The mazeworm's brain, a greenish ball of flesh, hangs from a thick knot of nerves and tissue in the nexus, directly above the pit. The brain cannot be digested by the circumplasm, but it is easily damaged by attacks such as guns, swords, or explosives. The brain has 2d+10 hits and DR 2.

The brain can sense movement through the body's sensitive flesh. It can feel anything inside it, and can sense the size, speed and weight of any object directly above it.

The mazeworm waits for a creature to pass above it and then muscles the ground open and swallows the prey. It seals itself and slithers around to settle the turf above. The prey will be in a tunnel, scared and possibly unconscious from the fall. The flowing circumplasm digests the prey, and the body flows into the nexus.

Reactions and Retaliations

The brain's principal defense is a psionic attack when it is injured. The psionic attack causes a loss of equilibrium. This is a Quick Contest of Wills; the mazeworm's score is 25, minus the amount of damage the brain has taken. It attacks all human and animal minds within 100 feet of the nexus. Roll a different Contest for each target. Each victim that fails will have his DX halved and his IQ reduced by 2 for the next 3d minutes. If the target wins the Contest, his DX score is halved for the next two seconds and his IQ is unaffected. Targets can use Mindshields to defend (p. B169).

It has another defense as well. Serious injury to any part of the mazeworm will cause the whole creature to convulse. Anyone inside will fall unless he makes a DX-10 roll. In the worst possible case, the convulsion will cause a minor, localized earthquake.

If a mazeworm is starving, it can slowly worm its way through the ground to a new location. This takes a long time (it can only travel 100 yards per week) but mazeworms can go without food for up to a year.

The Process of Procreation

If a mazeworm has eaten well for months, it will use its next victim for reproduction. Each mazeworm has a number of fetal pockets spaced evenly in its body. Each fetus can attack as a pseudopod, adhering to, constricting and enveloping the victim.

The victim can make five ST rolls to escape, or attack the fetus with a weapon. The second ST roll is at -2, the third at -4, and so on. Damage totalling 30 hits will release the victim; 60 hits will destroy the fetus. A victim who cannot escape will suffocate (see sidebar, p. B122).

If the victim dies, the filled fetus will mount itself on the wall of a tunnel. It will digest the body in the next few weeks; the flesh is scrambled and blended. Then the fetus, covered with a skin that resists the circumplasm, detaches and floats into the nexus. After a dozen such balls have collected at the bottom of the well, they merge and develop consciousness. The new mazeworm, careful not to rupture the parent's pool of circumplasm, will slowly dig its way out and through the earth. When it is miles from its parent, it locates a suitable place and starts to grow, becoming a full-size adult mazeworm approximately one year later.

Mazeworm Adventure Seeds

Mazeworms are meant to be explored. The characters might not even know they are *inside* a creature until it is too late. A mazeworm can be the home of other beasts, a source of special chemicals and spell components, or even a sage-like mind to be consulted. Mazeworms should exist as unmovable landmarks — if they are directly under a building, harming them could cause a catastrophe.

The Pulse. While the PCs are visiting a hotel in the hills, they become aware of a throbbing sound. If they explore the cellar, they hear a heartbeat; it is steady and strong, as if a giant were buried under the hotel. If they explore further, they will find a trapdoor leading into a huge mazeworm.

This mazeworm is unlike others of its kind in one minor way: in the nexus, there is a heart as well as a brain. The heart looks identical to a human's — but it is the size of a small car. As the explorers try to make sense of this, they are attacked by the vampire who lives in the mazeworm, a vampire that feeds off of it when it does not have a victim from the hotel above.

For an added twist, the hotel could be the convention center for the annual Edgar Allan Poe festival. This little-known and largely exclusive gathering features, as its centerpiece, a theatrical interpretation of one of Poe's tales. The featured tale this year is "The Tell-Tale Heart."

The Corridors. When the PCs become involved in the exhuming of a grave, they find that the corpse is gone. The bottom of the casket is broken open. A tunnel below the grave leads down into the earth, to a vast, sprawling mazeworm. Its corridors extend from one end of the city to the other. There are at least two dozen more connections between graves and the creature.

What is happening? Why have these graves been looted by the mazeworm? And what has caused it to grow so large? As they explore inside, it becomes apparent that someone is using the mazeworm to move secretly around the city. Many answers will be found when the PCs enter the nexus, a huge chamber full of bats with a worm-infested floor directly under one of the city's principal landmarks.

MIRROR GHOSTS

ST: 2d+5 Move/Dodge: var. Size: 1
DX: 2d+4 PD/DR: 0/0 Weight: variable
IQ: 1d+8 Damage: variable Habitat: the Other Side
HT: 2d+8 Reach: C, 1 Other Names:
Phantasms

A mirror ghost is an insubstantial spirit that lives in a mirror. The ghost of someone who once lived, each has the appearance of its former self at the moment of death. The cause of death is often apparent — the mirror ghost will have a sucking chest wound, an elongated neck in a noose, etc.

Mirror ghosts are created when a violent and evil person is killed near a mirror. If there is enough hate and anger in his heart, his spirit enters the mirror. He turns into a mirror ghost and spends months, years, or even decades plotting revenge and dreaming of escape. This kind of thinking, in solitary confinement, can cause the mirror ghost to lose its grip on reality.

Each mirror ghost has a single mirror for its home. The mirror is always 1,000 square inches in size (or larger). Its habitat is identical (and limited) to the area reflected in the mirror. This is called “the Other Side.”

The Other Side of the Mirror

The Other Side is like a set built for a stage, but with no “backstage.” All furniture and other objects that are captured in the reflection are present there. If the mirror is moved (causing the Other Side to change), the ghost inside disappears until the mirror has been at rest for at least one hour.

Any human can enter the Other Side while the mirror ghost is in view. Seeing the mirror ghost is always an uncanny experience — it appears to be a reflection, someone standing behind the viewer, but when the viewer turns around, no one is there. The viewer can walk through the mirror as if it were a doorway.

Humans in the Other Side can move around normally, but cannot go beyond the limits of the reflection or move objects. From the Other Side, the mirror is a one-way mirror — people outside cannot see or hear the humans in the Other Side, but those in the Other Side can see and hear the outside world as if the mirror were an open window.

If the mirror is moved, visitors are frozen in time and space until the mirror has stopped moving for an hour. At

this point, they resume their awareness in the new reflected setting. To them, the setting changed instantly — they will have to look at a calendar or a clock to discover how much time has passed.

In the Other Side, the mirror ghost is substantial. It will usually speak to visitors, either screaming epithets as it pounces, or ingratiating itself to gain their trust. It always presents itself as powerful, a master of the Other Side. Some even claim to be mythic beings such as angels or demons.

While it is in the Other Side, a mirror ghost can stay invisible to those outside. This power is lost for one hour per day. During this time, the mirror ghost can hide in the setting (in a shadow, behind a chair, etc.) or hope no one looks at the mirror.

The Goals of the Ghost

All mirror ghosts want to escape. To do so, at least one living person must be in the Other Side. If this occurs, the mirror ghost can walk out as easily as a human can walk in. It cannot place any part of itself outside the mirror until at least one complete human is inside — this still allows the mirror ghost to grab the hand of anyone reaching in and drag him through.

Once a person is inside, the mirror ghost will make sure he stays there while it leaves. The moment the mirror contains no living humans, the free mirror ghost will begin to fade. If it does not return to its mirror in 5d minutes (roll for each escape), it fades into nothingness. A faded mirror ghost will reappear in its mirror 5d hours later. If a human leaves the mirror while the mirror ghost is free, he cannot re-enter until the mirror ghost returns.

The placement of the mirror is critical in this case — if placed just outside a jail cell, the habitat inside the mirror is the same, so the mirror ghost simply locks the humans in the cell. Or, if the mirror is in an operating room, the humans inside could be drugged or strapped down by the mirror ghost. Those inside must remain alive, so captives will receive some attention (feeding, etc.).

When a mirror ghost is outside the mirror, it *looks* substantial (it is opaque) but is not. It cannot move or touch things. It can move through barriers such as walls, but it cannot defy gravity to move through floors or ceilings.

If the mirror breaks while humans are inside, they will reappear near the broken mirror. They will be *mentally stunned*. Anyone whose stun remains for ten seconds or more will not recall what happened.

If the mirror breaks while the mirror ghost is inside, it dies. If it is free, it begins fading as described above. When it disappears, it is dead. The only way it can avoid this is to kill whoever broke the mirror before it fades away. Since it is insubstantial, the mirror ghost must be resourceful to successfully commit this murder. A success makes the mirror ghost substantial, a living entity reborn.

To ensure a long period of time outside the mirror, the mirror ghost will try to bring cooperative humans inside. Children are best for this purpose — the ghost can pretend to be a friend and bring them into his “special place.”

Prattling Portraits

The bastard cousin of the mirror ghost is the prattling portrait. This is a painting that depicts, at the very least, the bust of someone who meets the appearance requirements for mirror ghosts. In most cases, the painting shows a scene and the entire body of the subject. There is never more than one subject in the painting. The portrait’s eyes are always clearly visible.

The prattling portrait can see what goes on around it. It can also talk (using any language it knew when it died). It has the same goals and stats as a mirror ghost, but it escapes by possessing someone.

To possess a victim, the prattling portrait must first prepare his mind. It must fill his head with knowledge of itself. If it (or its victim) has telepathy, this can occur in an instant. But, more often, it must simply prattle on and on about itself. The only suitable target, therefore, is one who does not run in fear when the painting begins talking.

The subject can only hear the portrait when his eyes meet those of the portrait. Every minute of eye contact dulls his nerves, making him more receptive. To break eye contact, the victim must make a Will+2 roll in the first moment of contact. This roll can be made every minute thereafter, at a cumulative -1. This roll is not automatic — if he is willfully attentive, the penalty still accumulates.

Once the sufferer has heard (20 — victim’s IQ) hours of chatter, the creature can attempt possession. Halve the time if the victim has Eidetic Memory or a substantial knowledge of the creature’s previous life. This period of time can be spread over several weeks or months. When the period is over, roll a Quick Contest of the victim’s HT



and the creature’s IQ. If the human wins, he faints and forgets the whole experience. If the creature wins, the painting reverts to normal and the person is possessed.

A possessed victim can be cured by exorcism. Meanwhile, the creature will go about seeking to avenge its death, satisfying its cruel desires, and spreading evil.

Mirror Ghost Adventure Seeds

Mirror ghosts can have the listed stats, or be created as NPCs. Base this decision on the creature’s relevance to the campaign. If it is encountered as a monster — an interesting creature that acts as a sidelight to an adventure — use the given stats. If it had historical significance (for example, someone whom the group knew), create it as an NPC.

These creatures can be male or female, children or adults, known or unknown people. A mirror ghost could have a pet. They could be encountered in nondescript mirrors (old ovals in the attic) or in special settings (in a funhouse, behind a throne, etc.). The mirror could even be a reflective surface such as polished silver or the still surface of a pond.

Vanity. In the vanity mirror in his dressing room, a locally-famous performer sees an image: an understudy who was murdered a decade ago. The understudy wants to replace the performer, but is not yet talented enough — it needs lessons.

The PCs can discover that something is wrong in any number of ways. They might be on the case of the understudy’s murder. They might be looking for a mirror known to harbor a mirror ghost that is rumored to be somewhere in the theater. They might be in the audience one night and notice, along with everyone else, that the performer is an impostor. When they try to save him, the mirror ghost is ready for them . . .

The New Dark Age. While exploring the old castle home of a notorious historical despot, Baron Villard, the researchers come across his portrait in a high tower. Whether through one of the group or someone accompanying them, the prattling portrait possesses an individual. Baron Villard rules again. His first task is to secure the castle. If the PCs are inside, they are trapped. Then he goes about refreshing his old black magicks, preparing himself to take control of his barony again.

MOORING TREES

ST: n/a	Move/Dodge: n/a	Size: 1 or more
DX: n/a	PD/DR: 5/5	Weight: 500+ lbs.
IQ: 14	Damage: n/a	Habitat: any safe place
HT: 65	Reach: n/a	Other Names: Murderkinders



A mooring tree is an inanimate, sentient plant that will strike a deal with a potential murderer. It appears to be a normal tree, except that its roots are always too large. Mooring trees are only found in places that are isolated or near major trade routes, locales where a murderer is (at least temporarily) safe from pursuers and able to escape the area easily. The name comes from their ability to act as a supernatural anchor for anyone who strikes the deal — if the person commits murder, he can be instantly transported back to the tree.

When someone is near a mooring tree, it may decide to speak. Each has a distinct voice. The voice sounds as though it comes from someone on the other side of the tree. If the listener tries to find the source of the voice by going around, the voice stays on the opposite side. If the listener tries too hard to find the source of the voice (rather than just listening), the tree will end the conversation.

The tree will ask for a few simple facts about the listener. Its questions are strange because it wants to know if the listener plans on murdering anyone in the near future. But it will not ask this question bluntly. If the tree feels the listener has no chance of murdering anyone any time soon, the conversation ends.

If the chances seem good, however, the tree wants details. Any amount of detail, from the bare minimum (a gender or ethnic group) to total disclosure (name, date, the method to be used, etc.). The tree then tells the listener that, if he murders a person who fits the given details, the tree will “anchor” him. The conversation ends there.

If, at any time in the future, an event occurs as described, the murderer will instantly return to the foot of the tree the moment the victim is dead. The amount of detail determines whether or not this can occur — if the details were very vague, nearly any murder will do. If the details were very specific, there is less chance of returning to the tree. But, with greater detail, the murderer is also in greater control of his destiny.

When the criminal returns to the foot of the tree, the tree thanks him and tells him his “anchor” is gone. Few trees will offer a repeat deal — only one mooring tree in ten will speak twice to the same person. But if a tree speaks to you again after the first killing, it will *always* make a bargain.

If the mooring tree is killed, uprooted, or destroyed between the striking of the deal and the intended return after a qualifying murder, the individual will be wracked

with pain. Roll against HT-5 immediately. If the roll is a success, the pain lasts for the rest of the day, incapacitating the sufferer and ending the next morning. If the roll fails, he will be comatose for a number of days equal to his HT score. Once he recovers, he will be feeble for weeks.

Thus, with every passing day after a deal is struck with a mooring tree, the risk increases. The risk is low, of course, because mooring trees are always found in "safe" places. The person does not automatically die but, once he is comatose or in pain, he will need proper medical care to stay alive.

Mooring Tree Adventure Seeds

Mooring trees are enigmatic creatures that reveal the darker side of humans. Even if someone is not a murderer, he may carelessly describe a murder fantasy to the tree, thus striking the deal.

In an adventure, the setting around a mooring tree is important. Other details to consider are its size, age, apparent species and how many other people know it is supernatural.

Autumn Leaves. In a wooded glade near a port town, there is a mooring tree. In the autumn, a young criminal named Roger finds the tree while drunk and converses with it. He blusters about how he would like to kill 20 people in the winter, just to see their blood on the snow. Roger's godmother, an old sorceress, knows about the mooring tree. In talking to Roger she discovers what he did.

A day later, construction crews enter the glade. They are going to clear out part of it before the snow falls. The

tree is sure to be uprooted. Roger's godmother, fearing for his life, explains the situation to him. He doesn't believe it, and he's scared because she keeps telling him to travel north and kill 20 strangers.

The player characters might meet Roger and hear his story, or they might meet his godmother first. They could end up investigating a series of murders — either some construction workers in the glade are killed, or a number of people in the north, where the snow is deep and white.

Gehenna Grove. In occult circles, the name "Gehenna Grove" refers to a secluded copse of trees in the park of a major city. Serial killers are known to meet there. The few leads the group pursues point to this park. This grove is full of mooring trees, the rare few that will cater to a killer multiple times.

A shadowy figure comes to the investigators with important information. If they destroy the grove, dozens of killers will be wracked with pain and fall into comas. The heroes will be able to identify some of the country's most nefarious killers — but do they really want to? According to the shadowy figure, some powerful and well-known individuals are in this secret society of killers.

The party members will have to decide how to deal with this situation. They can hide out by the grove and snatch killers as they appear. They could uproot one tree and then scan the newspapers for reports of famous individuals who have suddenly become very ill. But no matter what they do, they risk alerting the Gehenna Grove killers to their presence.

THE MATCHLESS

Some human freaks can live forever. Many of the pitied, misshapen individuals who populate sideshows and sanitariums are members of a secret brotherhood. They call themselves "the matchless" and "the brethren."

To rise from common freak to matchless, a freak must commit murder. Normally, the freak is invited by other matchless to join. They encourage him, talking about the better life that will follow. If that doesn't work, they try intimidation. If he still refuses, the matchless will shun and neglect him until he joins.

In rare cases, his change to matchless status comes without encouragement (or even contact) with the brethren, when he kills either from his own motives or accidentally. Once it happens, though, he will soon find odd abilities surfacing. He may soon find the brethren — or they'll find him.

ST: 2d+3	Move/Dodge: *	Size: 1
DX: 2d+2	PD/DR: 0/0	Weight: 30+ lbs.
IQ: 1d+7	Damage: use ST	Habitat: sideshows
HT: 2d+4	Reach: C	Other Names: The brethren, pariahs

*use attributes

The matchless look like normal genetic freaks, but murder causes at least two inherent supernatural qualities to surface: longevity and the ability to sense others of its kind. They age very slowly, and may live for centuries. Also, every matchless can tell at a glance if a misshapen human is one of them or just a common, uninitiated freak.

Other abilities can emerge. Some acquire simple advantages such as Night Vision. Others realize latent

Magery and instantly know how to cast a dozen spells. Their long life span allows them to perfect and improve on these powers.

The principal problem of the brethren is to disguise their special qualities. They work together to forge documents (especially birth records) and to coordinate lies to maintain the secret. Their longest-lived, the Elders, are the self-appointed leaders, offering guidance, synchronizing efforts to protect members, and making major decisions. The Elders' names are known to all matchless. The Elders do not appear to be any different from the others.

The matchless enjoy feeling superior to normal humans, whose life spans are so much shorter. The matchless like to manipulate events from behind the scenes. They enjoy relative anonymity, as few people who look at them will actually see them instead of their deformities.

To stay in the brethren, a matchless must commit at least one murder a year. The victim must be a human who is free of deformities. A mole or bent digit is not a deformity; a misshapen face or bent spine is. Those who fail to meet their quota are expelled, both physically and supernaturally. They are banished from the ranks and lose their longevity and other powers.

This requirement is the primary reason for these creatures to maintain contact with normal humans. Years of being mocked and ostracized from the human community turns some so bitter that they are glad to have a justification for seeking revenge. Some matchless kill more than once a year. A few hate the practice. Of those, some avoid contact except for the unavoidable deed, and some are tempted to turn their matchless brethren in. The matchless are always vigilant of potential traitors. Of course, traitors are rarely believed — a human torso telling tales of a secret brotherhood of sideshow denizens has difficulty being taken seriously.

If several matchless work together to commit a single murder, they all benefit. Such murders are always carefully planned and brutal. The matchless devise ways to make the murder appear accidental while using methods that destroy the victim's prosaic form. For example, a victim's limbs could be amputated or his face could be horribly disfigured.

Killing for a Cure

Once a freak becomes a matchless, supernatural forces will prevent any potential cure for his original deformity from succeeding. Experimental drugs are inexplicably tainted, medical sponsors die in strange mishaps and healing spells misfire. In all cases, the individual who administers the cure will be maimed, killed, or denounced. In some cases, the matchless suffers, too. When these events are mundane, they can be linked to one of the Elders. Otherwise, only fate or the "curse of the brotherhood" can be blamed.

The only way for a matchless to be cured is to murder another matchless. Such an act (whether premeditated or accidental) results in instant expulsion from the brethren. The matchless becomes an ordinary freak: it resumes aging (at a slightly accelerated rate), and loses its matchless sense and any supernatural abilities. Other matchless hate it forever. If the murder was premeditated, the brethren may hunt, terrorize and possibly kill their former brother. If the death was accidental, the brethren will hound the freak for awhile and then simply banish him.

The former matchless can now be cured, however, although there is no guarantee of finding a potential cure (let alone a successful one). A matchless who discovers a sure thing will be tempted to murder another matchless for the chance to become normal. This is particularly likely since matchless encounter other supernatural individuals, travel extensively, and live incredibly long lives. To avoid temptations, the Elders "protect" the brethren from knowledge of potential cures and from meeting brilliant physicians whenever possible.

Deformities

The matchless (and all freaks) are defined by their physical disadvantages — Dwarfism, Fat, Gigantism, etc. Give each of these disadvantages an "extreme" version that doubles the condition and increases its value by 50%. Thus, Extremely Fat quadruples the weight derived from the ST chart on p. B15 and is worth -30 points. Some deformities may have minor benefits. A freak with enormous eyes might have better Night Vision, for example. All benefits, however, are subtle, and unknown to the casual observer.

In addition to the disadvantages in the *Basic Set*, use the deformities below. Some are taken from previously-published *GURPS* books.

Hideous Appearance (Scrambled Features). -20 points: as described on p. B15. You have an extra eye, multiple facial scars, a pinhead, etc. -4 on reactions. Extremely Hideous (an extra face on the side of your head, a completely-burned face, no mouth and two extra eyes, etc.) has a reaction penalty of -8 and a value of -30.

Hideous Appearance (Scrambled Body). -20 points. Bought separately from Scrambled Features. You have an extra arm sprouting from your back, a curved spine and massive clubbed feet, etc. Characters who have this *and* Scrambled Features have an Appearance penalty of -6, not -8. (The Elephant Man had extreme versions of both, a -12 penalty.) Feel free to use limb rules from *GURPS Fantasy Folk* or *Roleplayer 20*.

Human Torso. -50 points. You have no arms or legs.

Inconvenient Size. -10 for over 8 feet tall. -15 for under 2 feet tall. -10 for over 1,000 pounds. These can only be taken if no other disadvantages can be used for the deformity.

No Fine Manipulators. -30 points. You are incapable of actions requiring manual dexterity, from holding something to turning a knob. One Fine Manipulator is -10 points. The extreme version is No Manipulators (-50 points): you can only push things with your body or head.

Sessile. -50 points. You cannot move under your own power. The extreme version (-75) means you are physically attached to something that is very difficult to transport.

Siamese Twin. -60 points. This is one creature with two IQs. The difference in IQs must be 3 or less. The value includes Ugly Appearance (-2 to reactions). This can be bought off. If treated as a full-fledged character, use the guidelines for Split Personality (p. B37) but ignore the stress switch. Extreme Siamese Twin (-90 points) has a -4 reaction, up to six levels difference in IQs, and adds the Scrambled Body disadvantage (but not its value). In this case, the twins are joined in a grotesque and unusual manner, and the Appearance cannot be bought off.

Adventure Seeds with the Matchless

The matchless can be treated as creatures or characters, depending on the needs of the adventure. As creatures, use the attributes above and the game effects of their deformities. Don't bother to add quirks, skills, or a character point value. If a matchless is going to deal with player characters as an NPC, fill out a character sheet.

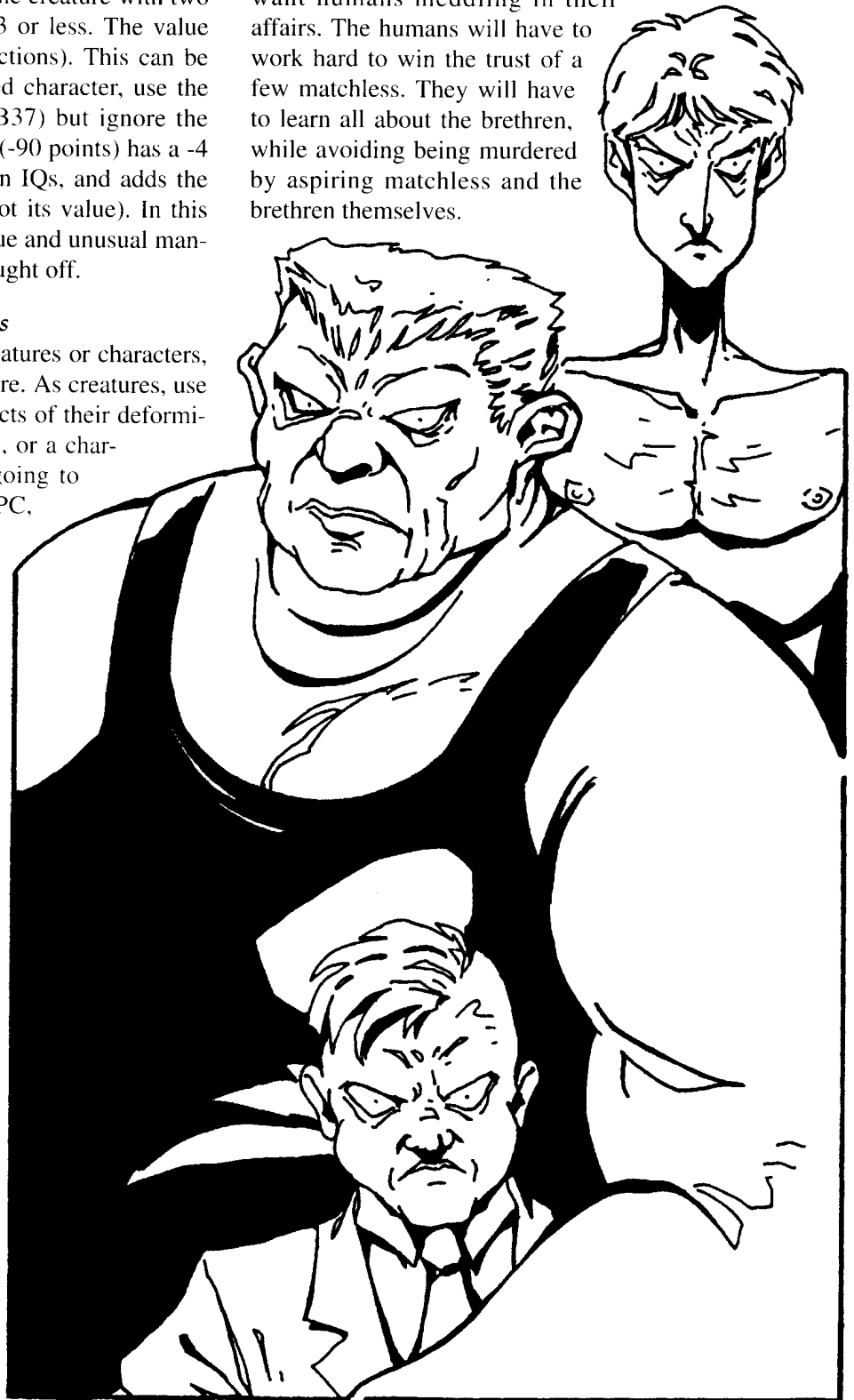
The Broken Spectacles. A horrifying entertainment troupe, the Broken Spectacles, has come to town. Their logo is a pair of shattered eye glasses. They are the matchless, each a different type of freak. They put on shows in theaters and on street corners. Watching them is not unlike watching an auto wreck — fascinating but chilling.

Soon after the Broken Spectacles arrive, a series of murders takes place. The troupe suddenly has two new members. As the PCs investigate the grisly deaths, clues lead them to the entertaining freaks.

The Matchless Pill. Decades ago, a drug called thalidomide was given to expectant mothers in the U.S. and Britain. Thousands of children were born with horrible deformities before the drug was removed from distribution. The Elders at the time supported the drug's creation and marketing. They feared that the matchless would die out and they saw the drug as a salvation. The Elders later changed their minds and denounced the whole affair.

But thalidomide is being reissued under a new name. The PCs begin receiving anonymous documentation of the drug, past and present. There are allusions to a secret brotherhood of freaks in the documents, but nothing obvious.

If they investigate, they will find that one maverick Elder is secretly pushing for thalidomide's return. The investigators will have trouble stopping him, however — the matchless protect their own and don't want humans meddling in their affairs. The humans will have to work hard to win the trust of a few matchless. They will have to learn all about the brethren, while avoiding being murdered by aspiring matchless and the brethren themselves.



Like vampires, mockers fear holy symbols. They will leave an area in which holy symbols are displayed, and will not attack anyone who protects himself with one. The source of this aversion is unknown. Perhaps the mockers were once the pets of demons . . .

Every other month, a mocker must hibernate for two weeks. If it does not have a full belly at this time, it will die during hibernation. A mocker who cannot find a full meal on the eve of its hibernation period becomes reckless and ferocious — it makes no defense rolls, attacks at +4, and its ability to sense supernatural beings increases to a base 20 or less. Mockers always make sure they hibernate in a safe place.

Mockers have a special feature seemingly unrelated to their other abilities. When motionless, they appear to be statues. The mocker's hide takes on the hue of stone and its eyes glaze. If other statues are nearby, it takes on their color and texture like a chameleon. An IQ-10 roll is required to notice that the mocker is a living creature. Once it moves, it regains the color and texture of its current form. This ability can cause confusion when a mocker is motionless and near a mage or psi.

Mockers are created by catastrophes in supernatural forces — dimensional rifts, miscast spells of great power, supernatural battles, etc. Normally, only one mocker will be created by such an event. It is possible, however, that some great event in the distant past caused the creation of many mockers, creatures who are still alive and hunting today . . .

Mocker Adventure Seeds

Mockers can be encountered alone or in packs. They can be pets, wild creatures, or confined to a particular area (“Don’t go onto the moors — the mockers prowl there at night”). Even if the PCs have supernatural abilities, this does not automatically make them targets — they might be needed to save a much more powerful supernatural being, a feast for the mockers.

Contract Claws. One or more of the group badly needs a supernatural power: a new spell, a heightened psionic ability, etc. They meet a sage who will bestow the new powers upon them, but only if they prove they are worthy. They must sign with their own blood a contract stating that they will find and kill a mocker in payment. They are not told what a mocker is, or where to find one.

The petitioners receive the new powers and are immediately stalked by several mockers. The beasts are the sage’s pets. The mockers are near their hibernation period and the PCs’ new powers make them tender morsels indeed . . .

The Museum. The local museum is showing artifacts recently discovered at a special archeological dig. Some of them are significant, even vital, to the interests of several occult groups and individuals. The protagonists may want the artifacts for themselves, or to protect them from being stolen by others.

But they needn’t worry. Some of the statues in another wing of the museum are actually mockers. A few thieves have arrived, but they had supernatural powers and they were devoured. The PCs may be called in to investigate, or they might sneak inside and find out for themselves.

MOTES

A mote is a spirit that possesses a human eye. The victim must be alive. To him, the eye has become blind. The mote, however, can use the eye to see and to curse others. Once possessed, the eye takes on an eerie appearance. Although it’s hard to determine why, it just doesn’t look right. It may be overly dilated or a color that is just outside the usual range.

If the eye was already blind, the mote magically heals it and makes it usable for sight . . . but only as long as the mote remains inside. Close examinations reveal nothing — the moment a doctor or other examiner inspects it, the possessed eye will act as it did before the mote arrived. It will return to the mote-infected state as soon as it is safe from scrutiny.

ST: n/a	Move/Dodge: n/a	Size: n/a
DX: n/a	PD/DR: n/a	Weight: n/a
IQ: 7	Damage: n/a	Habitat: a human eye
HT: n/a	Reach: n/a	Other Names: Eye mites, the evil eye

The mote has total control of the eye. It can open and close both upper and lower lids and quickly alter it to look identical to the other eye. The victim cannot feel the possessed eye as the mote uses it. A mote will use the eye to look around at any time, even when the victim is sleeping.

Anyone whose eye is possessed will have occasional visions of death. He will see an image of someone dying

violently, often in a strange manner. The vision will either become reality within a day, or have already happened in the last 24 hours. The death always occurs within (the person's IQ×100) yards of his location. Some visions are brief and surprising. Others come on slowly and take several minutes to experience.

A mote can cause brief insanity in anyone who looks into it. Roll a Contest of the observer's Will vs. (2 × the mote's IQ). If he wins the contest, he will instantly forget his encounter with the eye (unless his roll was a critical success). If the mote wins, the person develops two major Delusions, or a Phobia, worth at least -10 points. These effects last for (HT×10) minutes. The acquired dysfunctions are never random — they are either related to or exaggerations of his Quirks and minor fixations. Many victims develop eye-related disorders, from a feeling that everyone is staring to a fanatical fascination with eyes. The person carrying a mote can become afflicted with temporary insanity if he looks in a mirror.

If someone lives with a mote in his eye for more than a year, he will start to grow extra eyes on his head. The first extra eye will emerge in the middle of the forehead. It

looks normal except for its placement — it can look around, blink, and so forth. Additional eyes will grow in the back of the neck, around the skull, on the tongue, behind the ears and under the chin.

Motes are created when someone dies from a severe eye injury. Roll one die for anyone touching the eye at the moment of death. On a 1, that person instantly grows a mote in one eye. On a 2, both eyes are afflicted (one mote in each). If the sufferer injures someone else's eye, the mote can transfer to a new victim.

A mote can be removed by the Remove Curse spell, or by surgery using a blessed scalpel. If the scalpel makes a light incision on the cornea, the mote will drift out in a cloud of sooty smoke. The incision can then be healed using spells or psionics, thus exorcising the creature.

Another way to destroy a mote is to prevent an envisioned death from occurring. The possessed person must assume that the vision is precognitive — if the vision was of a recent death, he will not know until he arrives on the scene. In the unlikely event that a death is prevented, the mote instantly dissipates, forever extinguished.

If someone dies while cursed with a mote, the eye can crawl away. Within a day of death, the mote can force the eyeball to dislodge itself and slither to a new location. The mote will not slither very far. Instead, it will infect the person who discovers it — if that person touches the disembodied eyeball when he finds it, the mote can instantly transfer to the eye of the discoverer. Thus, the mote will slither to a place such as a drawer or a coat pocket, where it can be found when it is accidentally grabbed.

Mote Adventure Seeds

Motes can inflict player characters, NPCs, or animals. They are best used to cause confusion, to create a premonition of a death, and to make a seemingly harmless NPC very dangerous. They are also useful when any sort of eye-related technology, magic, or characters enter the campaign — a visit to an ophthalmologist, for example, becomes much more frightening when a mote is involved.

Eyewitness. The investigators hear about a blind man who has been institutionalized for making panicked descriptions of future or recent deaths. Both of his eyes are possessed by motes. When the PCs get involved, they find evidence that the mental illnesses of everyone else in the institution — including the latent disorders of some staff members — are getting much worse. A security guard develops acute paranoia one day in the presence of the blind man, who escapes in the ensuing confusion. The PCs need to find him before he envisions *their* deaths.

Canned Madness. A covert government agency had a possessed eye in a glass jar, kept alive in special fluids. A rival government stole it. It is up to the PCs to locate the eye before it can be developed into a weapon.



MURDER CROWS

A murder crow is a supernatural raven. Its beak is narrow and slightly elongated. Its eyes are of deepest ebony and shine with a spectral luminescence. Its call is a rasping cackle, a sound with an unsettling human quality. Each murder crow has a single, simple, unique mark or feature — a red or white stripe, a twisted leg, a bald spot, rotting feathers, etc.

Anyone who encounters a murder crow risks being cursed. A victim begins to age rapidly, and will die of the complications of old age just seconds before the next dawn.

The trigger of the curse is different with every murder crow. With one, merely looking at it will cause the victim to age. With another, the curse begins only if the murder crow is awakened. Other causes include causing the murder crow to take flight, watching it land, hearing its call, looking into its eyes, looking away from it and touching it.

To calculate the aging process, first decide at what age the person's "natural" death will occur. Subtract his present age, then divide the result by the number of hours between the cursing by the murder crow and dawn. Halve the result. This is the number of years the victim will age each half-hour. For example, at midnight a murder crow curses a 33-year-old man whose life expectancy is 72 years. Dawn breaks at 6:30 a.m. The man will age three years every half-hour. Use the aging rules (p. B83) to chart his rapid decline. If the victim is still alive just before dawn, cheat. If death by dawn is not guaranteed, the murder crow is not frightening.

There are a number of ways for the victim to avoid his fate. The first is to kill the murder crow; the subject quickly reverts to his original age. This also happens if he kills an innocent person or a loved one. These escape tactics will become obvious to the accursed one — when he looks at the murder crow, an innocent person, or a loved one, he will have murderous visions.

Murder Crows are intelligent, strong and fast, and they enjoy taunting their victims. If it gets the chance (if anyone comes too close), it will attack with its rapier-like beak, always aiming for the heart or eyes. This is an impaling attack.

The murder crow is part of the myths of many cultures, particularly Native American legends. The murder crow's feathers and eyes, which are said to have special powers, are invaluable to cults for spell recipes.

ST: 5

DX: 15

IQ: 7

HT: 15

Move/Dodge: 20/8 Size: <1
(flying)

PD/DR: 0/0

Damage: 1d-1 imp

Reach: C

Weight: 30 lbs.

Habitat: the night sky

Other Names: The
fachnaris, harrowers,
nightbirds



The GM may require Occultism (Reanimation) as a prerequisite. He can also require that the reanimator gather the necessary apparatus (and bodies) — such a task makes the skill rolls seem easy. If this procedure is performed on a living human, it will permanently destroy the brain; it must occur after death. There are rumors of a few necroids who were created accidentally. One case involves a paralyzed man in a metal harness who was struck by lightning.

A necroid “lives” through artificial electrical impulses. These impulses replace the natural chemical reactions within the brain and nervous system. But because the replacement is unnatural, it is difficult to install, has limited effects, and causes devastating consequences (see below). The flesh is held in stasis by the electricity, neither decaying nor growing. The impulses must have the right voltage and frequency to work their way through the dead flesh. In effect, all muscle movements and thoughts are brought on by a “brute force” substitute.

The method of necroid creation, their appearance, their behavior and their place in society change with every tech level. In the Roaring 20s, wires are embedded under the flesh, making the necroid appear vaguely normal (except for the scars). In the 1950s and 1960s, the apparatus becomes much more sophisticated, involving body cavities for battery storage and manual control of the impulses by the necroid. By the year 2100, necroids have superconductive metal bones and implanted braintape computers.

Inside the Dead Mind

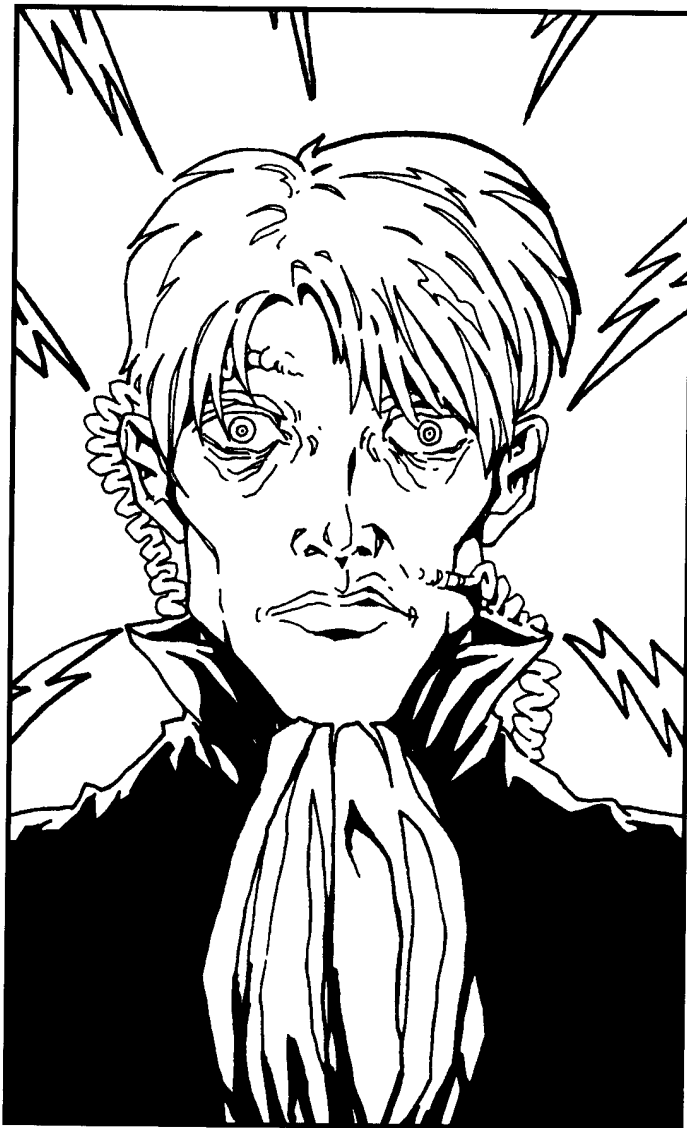
The stats above refer to a new necroid. Roll for each attribute at the moment the corpse is reanimated. The necroid retains (its original IQ/2) skills at two-thirds their original levels. All other skills are lost. The GM decides which skills are retained. All advantages and mental disadvantages are gone. They retain physical disadvantages.

Their artificial life allows their minds to develop without the barrier of living flesh. As a result, necroid intelligence develops much more quickly than that of normal humans. They do not sleep. They cannot heal naturally. Many are hyperactive and violent.

They develop a view of the world that lacks the subtleties of human perceptions. This includes superficial mental baggage such as compassion, the value of life and emotions. Their minds are identical at first. But they soon develop unique, terrifying perceptions of their environments. A few can hang on to vestiges of their former personality by forcing memories of their lives. In these cases, they regain a few of their former advantages and mental disadvantages. But most succumb to an entirely new, cold mentality.

The Life of a Necroid

No matter what tech level a necroid is created in, there have always been problems. These problems make



necroids unique, different from any other kind of zombie or android.

At the end of each week of a necroid's life, roll against $2 \times (\text{its tech level} - 2)$. Thus, at TL6, the roll would be 8. A critical failure adds an advantage worth 10 character points. These points can be split or saved, allowing a necroid to develop advantages of any value. If the roll fails, the necroid permanently loses one point of ST, DX, or HT (GM's choice). If the roll is a normal success, the necroid develops a mental disadvantage worth 10 points. These points can be split or saved, as well. If the roll is a critical success, increase the creature's IQ permanently by 1.

The low-tech, Victorian-era necroids were created by a crude science that could create unfathomable, miraculous breakthroughs — these experiments usually fail, resulting in deteriorating bodies with occasional benefits such as Night Vision or Absolute Timing. The high-tech, modern necroids come from an exact science that creates more subtle and entrenched problems — these attempts usually succeed, resulting in smart but deranged creatures.

The exact cause of these effects and their relation to tech levels are not known. There is plenty of room for experimentation, refinement of the technologies and study. Industrious Game Masters can add twists using new and weirder science. For example, the weekly roll could be changed to a daily roll. Or, a necroid could develop a specific, related set of advantages and disadvantages totally unlike its former self. All of these effects could be caused by new developments in necroid technology.

Necroid Adventure Seeds

Necroids are a varied lot. They can be reanimated children, women and members of any ethnic group. When using them, play havoc with technology. Use the most horrifying surgical and mechanical ideas from the past, present, or future. Necroids can be mindless zombies covered in wires, powered by caged lightning. Or, a necroid could look normal but display an cold and unearthly logic . . . with inhuman intentions.

Choosing the right skills to retain is important. Scientific and technical skills give the necroid the ability to understand and improve itself. Combat skills are obvious choices, but useful to keep the necroid alive during a violent adventure. And a few skills (such as Singing, Animal Handling and Sex Appeal) can be downright chilling if handled properly — imagine a necroid singing beautifully alone in a dungeon cage. Or a necroid who hates humans but gets along with snakes, rats and wild dogs.

Deadtime. The protagonists meet a necroid which has retained some memory of its life. He was reanimated by a neo-scientific cult. He escaped, but they are hot on his trail. He needs the PCs to keep him alive and save him from the cult. He gets scared and runs, but now the cult knows about them. The helpers have to find him to save themselves.

With each passing week, he is changing. If the heroes take too long, he might develop evil traits and turn on them. If they learn the secrets of creating necroids, they may develop a serum that alters the frequency of changes — the weekly roll could be stalled to every other week. If the serum is poorly made, the changes could increase to daily. Meanwhile, the cult is closing in.

T3: The Stalkers. A group of necroids (one per party member) has been sent from the past to kill them. This group was created in the early Victorian era and left unattended until now. They seem to be pre-programmed for their mission.

They are hit men who stalk through the shadows, killing anything that gets in their way and relentlessly hounding the protagonists. Each necroid assassin wears a large black trench coat and a wide-brimmed hat. They buzz and spark when they become angry or violent.

The PCs need to find out why they have been targeted, and how to stop the necroids. The answers lie just outside of London, where the necroids seem to have emerged.

NEEDLERS

ST: 15	Move/Dodge:*	Size: variable
DX: *	PD/DR: 0/10	Weight: *
IQ: 5	Damage:*	Habitat: any
HT: *	Reach: C	Other Names: Spores, nettlings
* see below		

A needler is a ball of mummified flesh covered with stiff bone needles. On its surface are subtle features vaguely resembling faces, eyes, closed mouths, or flattened limbs. The needles can be retracted into the body (all at once) or extended. Retracting and extending both count as a single combat action. The needles cannot be shot — in fact, a ST-4 roll is required to remove one from the creature's body.

The length of the needles depends of the size of the needler. The bodies of these creatures range in size from 4 inches (the size of a baseball) to 2 yards in diameter. Their needles are approximately half that diameter in length. Thus, a 1-foot-diameter needler with extended needles would measure 2 feet from needle tip to opposite needle tip.

Anyone stabbed by a needler takes 1 die of impaling damage for every foot of diameter (round up). The exceptions are needlers less than 9 inches in diameter — they inflict half a die of damage, with a minimum of 1 hit before the damage multiple. This damage is per attack, not per needle. The needles are incredibly sharp; damage resistance is halved against them.

Some needlers float in the air, flying with a Move of 6. The floaters' Dodge is equal to (their diameter in feet — 10), with a maximum of 9. Other needlers can only roll.

The rollers have a Move of 8 and a Dodge of 5. Rollers never roll while their needles are extended. Both types must make successful DX rolls to negotiate sharp turns at top speed; when moving at 75% of Move or less, they need no roll.

The DX of a needler is its Dodge + 2. Its HT score is its diameter in inches. They can sense their surroundings as well as the average human. This sense is magical, so a needler in a low-mana area is effectively hard of hearing and nearsighted.

Needlers drink blood to survive, by coating a needle and retracting it into the body, like a lapping tongue. If a needler is immersed in blood, its needles extend and retract swiftly as it drinks. If the needler is pressed against a human or animal victim, the needles stab repeatedly.

A needler will drink a volume of blood equal to its own volume; at that point, it is full. A full needler oozes blood from its needle holes for a few hours. A needler needs half this amount per year or it will die. The blood does not have to come all at once.

The volume of a sphere is approximately equal to its diameter cubed, divided by 2. So, an 18-inch needler has a volume of about 2,900 cubic inches. A human body holds about ten pints of blood, equal to 280 cubic inches.

Building a Needler

Needlers are created using Create Needler, a Mental/Very Hard spell. The creator decides at the time of the casting whether he is going to create a floater or roller. Only one can be created at a time. For each inch of needler diameter, the spell takes one minute to cast, and the energy cost is 10.

Choose prerequisites appropriate to the campaign. Create Warrior and Create Servant (p. M46) are possible, as are Air-Golem (p. M61, to create floaters) and Zombie (either type, p. M64). The spellcaster should also have an Unusual Background worth at least 10 points — this is a very special spell. Mages with aichmophobia (p. B36) should not be allowed to use the spell.

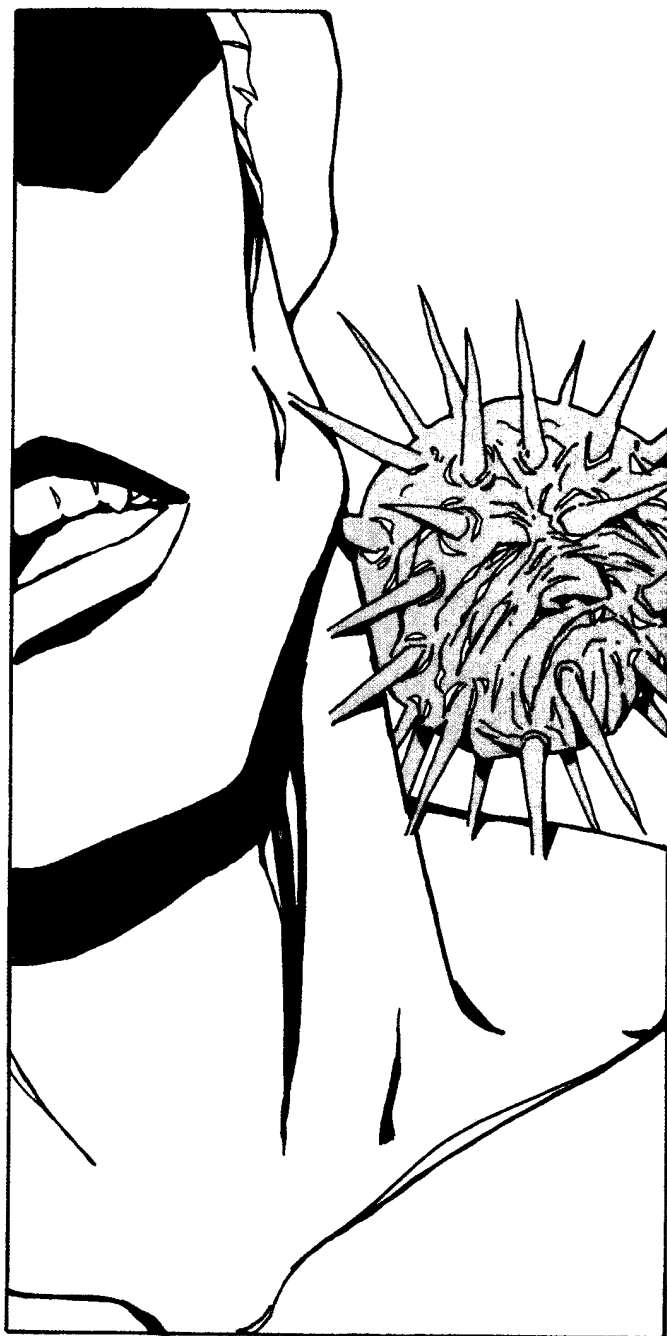
Intact humans, alive or dead, are needed for raw materials. The human body weight determines the size of the needler. A human body has a volume of 37 cubic inches per pound. Newborn humans weigh an average of 13 pounds, two-year-olds tip the scales about 29 pounds, five-year-olds average 44 pounds, and nine-year-olds hover around 62 pounds. By 13 and 16 years of age, humans are up to about 100 and 120 pounds, respectively. At 19 and over, males weigh an average of 154 and females 125. Humans who are Skinny, Overweight, Fat, or particularly muscular will alter these average values.

So to make a 24-inch needler, first find its volume. This is $(24 \times 24 \times 24) / 2 = 6,912$ cubic inches. The creator takes $(6,912 / 37) = 187$ pounds of human flesh. This could be a single Fat adult, two 13-year-olds, or 15 newborn infants.

The process works better with fresher material, so the spell roll is penalized by one-quarter of the age (round down) of the oldest specimen involved. Thus, there is no penalty when all of the material is younger than four years old. If a 40-year-old is included, the penalty is -10!

Before casting the spell, the caster must drain the blood from the human(s) and then submerge the body (or bodies) in the blood. When the process begins, the blood is absorbed into the flesh as it balls up into a needler. The needler is born full of blood.

The interior of a needler is strange and foul. The human source material can be found inside. This disgusting mass of flesh is pulped from the retraction of the needles. The flesh can be used to identify the source(s) of the needler and to cast the Resurrection spell.



Feel free to add special benefits and requirements to the creation of needlers. For example, the energy cost might be halved if the process is performed with alchemical assistance. Or, the caster may receive a bonus to his skill roll if he slew or captured the raw material himself.

Needler Adventure Seeds

Needlers are usually encountered as pets or guards of evil spellcasters. Witch doctors use floating needlers as sentries. Necromancers may have a handful of baseball-sized needlers for chasing victims. Needlers can be trained with the same degree of success as dogs — they can fetch, warn, stay and kill.

Brainwreck. A new drug in the streets, called brainwreck, can only be obtained by being stabbed by one of the greenish needlers floating in the shadows of the neighborhood. They emerge from the sewers at dusk, injecting junkies all night long, and retreat back to the pipes by dawn. The junkies seem to know where to find the brainwreck needlers. The few junkies who have tried to capture one have been stabbed to death.

How is this happening? A secret cache of toxic waste has been leaking into the ground a few miles away. The

chemicals seem to create special needlers on their own, without the need for spellcasting. But how? Where are the bodies used to make the needlers coming from? To find out, the investigators will have to spy on junkies. They may have to explore the sewers to get to the waste site. If one of them gets hooked on brainwreck, he will be able to sense the site and lead the rest of the group to it . . .

The Pluto Group. “Pluto Group” is the name of an incorporated circle of mages who are creating an undead army. They use needlers to kill and fetch new recruits. Some of the victims are used to create new needlers. Others are raised as undead soldiers and armed with the latest high-tech weapons. The Pluto Group headquarters is located in the Arctic Circle. Member mages ship corpses using teleportation devices and spells. The PCs have only a week to stop them before the army begins marching.

But the needler servants are temporarily confused by the teleportation process. The searchers can steal the needlers’ obedience from the circle with spells or psionics. If the searchers gain control they can find the headquarters. They might be able to use the needlers to destroy the undead army and the Pluto Group.

NETHERPUNKS

ST: 14	Move/Dodge: 7/7	Size: 1
DX: 11	PD/DR: 0/2	Weight: 60-150 lbs.
IQ: 10	Damage: weapon	Habitat: urban lairs
HT: 15	Reach: C	Other Names: Hellions

Toughness, and the Youth disadvantage. Wealth and Status are lost because the netherpunk has dropped out of general society. Netherpunks do not age. They can be created as full-fledged NPCs, or they can be treated as creatures using the attributes above.

Every gang is a brutal family. A netherpunk has a name (Little Adolph, Mephisto, Deadboy, etc.) and a rank in the gang. The leader is always the longest-surviving member. The gangs also have names and, occasionally, trademark “colors.” Each gang also has its own *modus operandi* — some are dedicated arsonists, some attack only on nights of the full moon, and others leave a trademark “calling card” in their wake.

They spend their time looking for fresh flesh to eat, securing hideouts for the gang, and attacking or desecrating churches and clergymen. They are responsible for most priest murders, nun rapes and church vandalism. The older netherpunk gangs are more thorough than the young ones. While young netherpunks are content to splatter blood on altars and shatter stained-glass windows, older netherpunks hatch plots to torture and defame priests, burn churches to the ground and terrorize entire congregations.

Netherpunks are undead adolescents. They are always encountered in gangs, four to 20 strong. At first glance, they do not seem to be undead. At close range, however, their pallid skin and dead stare make their true nature terrifyingly clear.

They are created when adolescent humans are scared to death — most are created on purpose, by other netherpunks. Three days later, roll 3 dice. On a 7 or less, the corpse rises as a netherpunk.

A new netherpunk will retain all of the advantages and disadvantages it had when it was alive except Bad Sight, Blindness, Clerical Investment, Extra Fatigue, Honesty, Longevity, Pacifism, Status and Wealth. All netherpunks have Allies (their gang), Night Vision, two levels of



Netherpunks are urban by nature. Each gang has one or two places to hide out, usually an abandoned building, junkyard, or sewer cavity. A few gangs have hideouts in forested areas just outside of town. The favorite hideout of all netherpunks is a graveyard. Most urban graveyards will be claimed as turf by a particular gang.

Their torsos are empty and their throats are unusually flexible. By dislocating their jaws (like snakes), they can (and do) carry small objects inside their bodies. To retrieve an object, the netherpunk regurgitates it.

Netherpunks also speak backward. They understand this perfectly. To others, they seem to have their own, strangely familiar language.

Netherpunks have three basic vulnerabilities. First, they need a steady diet of fresh flesh to stay alive. They prefer their meat to be so fresh, it's still kicking. They

lose one point of Fatigue every day they go hungry; at 0 ST, the netherpunk dies. Second, they are blind in daylight. If they wear sunglasses, their vision is equal to the Bad Sight disadvantage. Third, if a netherpunk is isolated from its gang, it will become very nervous and defensive. If threatened, it will run or go berserk.

Netherpunks attack with their hands and teeth. They use weapons only when they must. They cannot cause injury to anyone who is truly pure of heart. If, for example, a netherpunk attacks a faithful priest, the netherpunk will lose his strength at the instant of impact. If a netherpunk fires a pistol at an innocent virgin, the bullet is sure to miss.

Netherpunk Adventure Seeds

Netherpunks seem at first to be ordinary street vandals. They will use this to their advantage. Adventures can feature them as henchmen of a deeper power, as scattered undead hooligans, or as tightly-knit gangs warring with one another.

The Dissection of Father Michael. The Unholy, a 20-member gang of netherpunks, has embarked on an evil crusade to destroy the sanity, reputation and health of a reputable clergyman, Father Michael Osbourne. They know about Father Michael's one great moment of weakness years ago, a rather uneventful night with a local prostitute.

Father Michael comes to the PCs for help. He is shaken and confused. He can't ask anyone else — if he did, he would be hounded by the media and possibly transferred out of his church. The Unholy continue their crusade. Father Michael's car is filled with pornography while he is giving a sermon, his church is defaced with graffiti, his dog is butchered and he receives threats over the phone.

After the investigators begin searching for and combating the Unholy, they find out the experience with the prostitute years ago was only a setup. The whole event was coordinated by the Unholy: no money changed hands and no sex was involved, but Father Michael believed he had sinned anyway. Although it was not the priest's finest moment, it wasn't enough to make him vulnerable to netherpunk attacks: he is still "pure of heart." At this point, the observers may notice that the Unholy have never made a direct assault on Father Michael.

After the party members have defeated the Unholy, they go to tell Father Michael that his troubles are over. They find him naked in a small room in his basement, drawing pentagrams on the floor. He turns to them with an insane cackle . . .

Hell on Wheels. The *real* hell's angels are a gang of netherpunks with motorcycles. They are traveling across the country to find a dark entity when the PCs meet them. Some of the travelers feel compelled to find this entity. Others are just along for the ride. If the associates are able to stop them (or follow them), they will escape or try to lose the tail.

PRAYER WOLVES

The prayer wolves hunt desperate people. When a person's hopes, dreams or wishes become urgent, a pack of prayer wolves may arrive. The wolves first appear in the distance, in the peripheral vision of their prey, or silhouetted on the horizon. Within a few hours, however, they will be in full view.

Prayer wolves are slightly larger than normal wolves. Their coats are jet black (except in snowy settings where they are silvery white). The pack can number as few as five or as many as 25 (roll 4d+1). They are always slaving and growling. During a chase, they bark and foam at the mouth.

Normally, the pack's prey is a single person, the one whose prayers and desperation summoned the wolves. If those prayers and feelings are intimately shared by others, all of them are considered "prey." The rest of humanity is safe as long as it does not attack — outsiders who oppose the wolves instantly become prey as well. Prayer wolves will only hunt and attack people who meet these requirements.

The wolves can close in for the kill only when their prey is looking at them. Staring at a prayer wolf as it charges forward will allow it to strike. If their prey is able to look away, the wolves stop in their tracks, frustrated and hungry. Each time their prey looks at them, they get closer. This limitation ends once a prayer wolf touches its prey.

They have other powers and weaknesses. They heal 1 hit point per minute. A single attack worth four times the wolf's current hit points is needed to kill one permanently. Reducing a prayer wolf's HT below 0 only leaves the creature unconscious until its HT heals to 1.

They will not forcibly enter any sealed area. As a result, their prey is safe inside a house as long as all doors and windows are closed.

The prayer wolves cannot cross water during daylight hours.

If any member of the pack is killed or separated from the rest for more than ten minutes, it will fade into nothingness, never to return. The entire pack will fade once their prey has died, has given up all hope of having his prayer fulfilled, or has not looked at them for 50 continuous hours.

Demons or Angels

Prayer wolves have been attributed to religious sources. In some cultures, they are looked upon as a test for those who request divine assistance — if the person survives this ordeal, what he so desperately needs is granted. The GM must decide if this is true. If it isn't, and the praying person thinks the wolves were a divine ordeal, his faith will be severely challenged.

Other cultures explain prayer wolves as a penalty for those who have permanently forsaken God and yet have the audacity to ask Him for favors. This is a likely explanation if the investigators (who have undoubtedly been permanently tainted by their careers of dealing with the occult) become prey.

Of course, the prayer wolves could come from a non-religious source. At least one occultist claims that they manifest

ST: 1d+12	Move/Dodge: 10/7	Size: 1
DX: 13	PD/DR: 0/1	Weight: 150 lbs.
IQ: 6	Damage: cut by ST	Habitat: any terrain
HT: 25	Reach: C	Other Names: Damning dogs



from another dimension; the portal through which they travel is created by the emotional emanations of the prey. If this is true, perhaps the creatures can be banished by dimension-spanning spells, or controlled using tools such as pentagrams.

Prayer Wolf Adventure Seeds

Adventures with prayer wolves can involve a number of very different elements. The terrain of the hunt will play a major role, especially if it includes bodies of water. The size of the pack matters if the prey wants to fight back — five quick-healing wolves are not much of a threat to a gang of well-armed PCs, but a pack of 25 is. The religious aspect can come into play as well; these creatures could be used to justify some much-needed *deus ex machina*.

Gluttons of Faith. In a small town there are two churches. The Community Revival Church is peaceful and traditional. The New Dawn followers are different; they worship in the hills and fields outside of town, often at sunset.

A conflict erupts between the two, instigated by the leaders of each congregation. The New Dawn is accused of being “pagan,” even Satanic. The New Dawn responds by calling the Community Revival Church fascist and reactionary. The congregations pray for the elimination of their rivals.

Two packs of prayer wolves, one all white, the other all black, arrive the night after the player characters come to town. Each pack was summoned by one of the churches. They soon slaughter a few members of each congregation. The observers will have to think fast and work hard to resolve this sticky situation.

The Cover of Darkness. The player characters enter a large abbey. One of the monks, Brother Joshua, is blind and black-hearted. He prays day and night for the damnation of his fellow brothers. He has even dabbled in witchcraft to attain this goal. This has drawn 25 prayer wolves to the edge of the abbey grounds. They have come for Brother Joshua, but his blindness prevents them from closing in.

The abbey has its secrets. In the courtyard is a large pool which has been blessed by the Pope himself. It is said that, when filled with holy water, it can cure the ills of those who immerse themselves in it. The PCs will have to talk to other monks to learn this.

Since the monks and the visitors oppose the prayer wolves, and so qualify as prey, the prayer wolves will kill anyone who is in the abbey or on its grounds. When they first arrive, they do not get inside. It is up to the guests to make sure they stay out.

To save themselves (and the other monks), the heroes must fill the pool with water, have any high-ranking monk bless it, and immerse Brother Joshua in it. When he rises, he will be miraculously cured . . . and then the wolves will devour him. The group may find another way to give Brother Joshua sight (spells, technology, etc.).

This adventure does not have to take place in a medieval abbey. It could take place in a futuristic abbey or a modern monastery. It could even occur in a non-religious place that has a religious staff, such as a Victorian sanitarium.

PROTEAN POOLS

ST: n/a Move/Dodge: n/a Size: see below
 DX: n/a PD/DR: 10/50 Weight: see below
 IQ: 4 Damage: special Habitat: pits, ponds and wells
 HT: 10/cu. ft. Reach: C Other Names: Gene-splicers, shapers

Protean pools are intelligent blobs of fluid that cause mutations in other creatures. Anyone who swallows or touches a protean pool will become infected by its gene-scrambling toxins. The victim soon acquires a second physical form, one he cannot easily control.

Protean pools are found in the typical locations of substantial bodies of water. This includes lake beds, river beds, wells, ditches, swamps, canals and swimming pools. Most protean pools lie within a body of water, but a few *are* the body of water.

A protean pool looks exactly like water except that, no matter what its shape or depth, its upper surface is clear and its bottom is dead black. The space between shades uniformly from clear to black. To make this quality as inconspicuous as possi-

ble, they seek deep, still waters such as lakes and wells for their lairs.

The smallest protean pools are about 70 cubic yards. This would be a small well-dweller, a cylindrical shape 10 yards deep and 3 yards wide. The largest are about 2,000,000 cubic yards — a lake-dweller in the shape of a hemisphere 200 yards across.

Protean pools can travel to other bodies of water. They leave when they feel threatened, or when the food supply wanes. They usually pass from one body of water to another through rivers, inlets, sewage pipes and subterranean waterways. Rarely, a protean pool will slither across the land on moonless nights. Any witness to this second method of travel must make an immediate Fright Check.

A protean pool cannot freeze. Cutting and impaling weapons have no effect. They take damage from explosions, bullets, fire and crushing weapons such as clubs, but their high Damage Resistance and PD minimizes this.

If a piece of a protean pool is separated from the larger body, it will die. The “dead piece” (a volume of liquid) reverts to normal water within seconds. If a protean pool is split into large pieces, all but the largest die.

Protean pools are always hungry, for genetic material and for

psychic energy in the fear/anger frequencies. They have no regard for life and no control over their mutating effects. If attacked, they are as likely to flee as to retaliate. They attack by buffeting the water around them, capsizing small boats and drowning swimmers.

Despite their low intellects, protean pools can deliberately scare prey. They use tactics such as regurgitating bones that are floating through them, creating whirlpools, causing huge waves and destroying masses of sea life. They can even use sea-floor formations and pieces from wreckage to create decoys — investigators may think something in a nearby underwater cave is the source of the protean pool's effects. Or, a shiny item from an old ship near the creature may be mistaken for a cursed magic item. The protean pool will lie in wait when they come for it . . .

Infection

The liquid form of a protean pool can scramble the genes of creatures that touch it. If even one cell is infected, the infection rapidly spreads to the entire body. In addition to the scrambling effect, the protean pool secretes a venom that tricks the victim's brain. The brain thinks that the new genetic code is normal. It immediately adjusts, using the right hormones, impulses and chemical reactions to create the physical form dictated by the new code. Fortunately for victims, there is another effect — the nerves are dulled, making the shift irritating but not painful.

To see whether someone is affected, roll 3 dice any time his skin comes in contact with a protean pool. Modify the roll for any of the following conditions:

- Immunity to Disease (+6);
- contact of ten seconds or less (+3);
- already infected (-4);
- swallowed part of the protean pool (-5).

Self-contained suits offer large bonuses — TL6 sponge-diver suits, for example, are good for at least +7.

If the modified roll is 10 or less, the contactee is infected. If the touch is continuous, he is re-infected every five to 20 minutes (3d+2). Make the infection roll again each time.

The Shift

The shift occurs within a day of the infection. It is often triggered by the victim's own subconscious reactions to things such as full moons, storms, or superstitions. From the first transformation, a pattern develops; the

body regularly changes during the same time or condition. The shift from one form to the next takes ten seconds and costs 1 point of Fatigue.

Each change can be resisted with a successful Will-10 roll. The subject reverts to the primary form when the condition ends or in 1d+2 hours, whichever is greater.





The secondary form differs from the original by 20 points; the Game Master chooses the disadvantages. Always include at least one physical change. Choose interesting and unlikely combinations for frightening effect. Some examples include: Albinism and Lecherousness, Bloodlust and Ugly Appearance, a Delusion and Paranoia. Adjust attributes, if desired.

Each additional incident of infection adds 20 more points of disadvantages — the secondary form gets worse. It can even develop nominally advantageous traits (claws, for example) but the total must be -20 points after each infection.

If the individual keeps being infected, his secondary form may be worth 100 or more points less than his original form. For example, the secondary form might be Hideous, Cursed, Delusional and Legless. This hapless form is not necessarily disabled just because it is legless, however — it might be an aquatic form, or winged.

The second form may look like a known creature. For example, the following form could be recognized as a werewolf: hairy and feral (Ugly Appearance), with Claws, increased ST, Toughness, a Weakness to silver, Berserk and an Odious Personal Habit: eats humans.

Once the second form has been established, anything can happen. The sufferer can anticipate the change if he notices the conditions that usually bring it on. The original form could begin to fade — each period in the primary form becomes shorter than the last! Or that could be reversed, pushing the second form into remission — until it shows up in his offspring . . .

Controlling and Changing the Shift

A person might also learn to control the shifts. If the Will-10 roll to resist is successful, he gains a +1 to all further resistance rolls. Each additional success adds +1 until (after 15 successful attempts) the roll is at Will+5. Any roll of 17 or 18 is a failure, no matter what the bonus.

Either form can use the resistance roll. The mutant can resist the shift to the secondary form *and* the shift back to the original form. For example, a survivor of a protean pool changes to a Paranoid, Skinny, Albino Mute in complete darkness. While in complete darkness with his girlfriend, he tries, with a Will of 15, to resist the change. With his chances at 5 or less, he rolls a 4. He succeeds, and all further resistance attempts are at 6 or less now. The next day, he tries to resist turning back into his normal, primary form, with a chance of 6 or less.

The same progression applies to *forcing* a shift. In this case, the initial roll is the same (Will-10), and bonuses accumulate in the same way. As a result, the infected person has two Will rolls to keep track of — one to resist a shift, and one to force a shift.

Forcing a change alters the shift pattern. The shift is caused by the conditions of the forced shift as well as by the previous cause. The previous cause disappears after three successful resis-

tance attempts. For example, suppose someone normally shifted at midnight, but has successfully forced a change while in the water. Now he shifts under either circumstance. If he can resist the midnight shift three times, he only shifts while in water.

Cures

There is always the possibility of a cure, by drugs, hypnosis, spells, psionics or magic items. Perhaps one of these remedies only offers aid to the Will rolls to control the shift.

If the protean pool is well-fed, it may save the victim's original genetic makeup in a small egg-like orb floating at the bottom of its body. If the mutant can retrieve this egg and consume it, he may be cured.

Protean Pool Adventure Seeds

The focus of protean pool adventures will be on the victims as much as on the creatures themselves. Player characters can deal with protean pools, their lairs, those they infect and cures for the infection. Most adventures start with mutated victims and end when the source is finally found.

When dealing with the mutants, a variety of strategies are available. Secondary forms can be subtle (behavioral changes) or obvious (inhuman physical changes). In the middle ground are physical changes that are still human, such as dwarfism. Secondary forms can also reveal someone's subconscious nature — an accountant might turn into an impulsive lecher, living out a secret desire. If *GURPS Supers* or *GURPS Aliens* are available, use the disadvantages listed there as well. If not, make up disadvantages and assign them character point values.

The special rules for controlling and altering shifts were included for major NPCs and player characters. Discovering and fighting new forms can make a great night of roleplaying.

Fleshswimming. Resting in the middle of Lake Rollins is a protean pool. At least a dozen people have disappeared there. When the PCs dive, they find all those people floating in it, just above the bottom. Some are dead. Others are drowning, continuously on the edge of death. It seems that this pool is able to keep them alive, causing shifts to prevent them from drowning.

If the heroes try to remove the captives, the protean pool reacts violently. But it does not protest when they swim through it, or stay inside. It does not seem to detect the slow movements of the PCs or the prisoners. The protagonists need to secure safe, full-body suits to avoid infection. They will have to communicate with each drowner, waiting for the right moment to swim slowly to freedom.

Playing Army. The water tower has a protean pool in it. Children swim there in the summer sometimes, at night when their parents sleep. All the children develop a special set of mutations: increased willpower, a slight increase in IQ, Bloodlust, Gigantism and Fanaticism. They come out of the water tower as adults, looking like they should be 18 years old. Their Fanaticism manifests as militant patriotism. The increased willpower allows them to control the shift.

And then the country goes to war. Soldiers are being drafted. The children present themselves to the world, ready to enlist. Their parents suddenly find themselves face to face with the young adults they expected to see ten or 12 years from now. The parents try to cope with the horror while their children secretly persuade other kids to swim in the water tower.

PUMPKINS

Sometimes finding out the truth about an apparently ordinary object can be the most chilling experience of all . . .

Few people know that every pumpkin represents a dead child. Resting in the orange rind and stringy innards of each of these Halloween vegetables is the soul of a human who died too young. Pumpkin patches always grow best where a child's death has occurred; once the soil drinks the child's spirit, the ground becomes fertile for pumpkins. Anyone alone in the patch at night will hear faint cries of infants and children.

If a pumpkin is picked and brought inside a house, the cries can be heard coming from outside on moonless nights. These cries are often confused with cats or howling wind. They are never heard by more than one person at a time.

A child's soul can be removed using the Exorcism spell. This frees the soul and sends it to its final destination. Any telepathic contact (through spells or psionics) will offer a distant, haunting communication — the child's voice will be timid and hollow, as if it were trapped in a bottomless well. If a pumpkin is turned into a jack-o'-lantern, these spells and psionic powers have twice the chance of succeeding . . . but the child's psyche may be damaged. A child resurrected from a jack-o'-lantern may be comatose, retarded, or autistic (a 4-in-6 chance). Once a pumpkin rots away, the soul is freed.

Pumpkins are best left alone. The children trapped inside only cry out when a single person is near. If disregarded, the souls simply (and painlessly) pass through on their way between life and death.

Pumpkin Adventure Seeds

These creatures should be used delicately. They are very appropriate to the Halloween flavor of most horror adventures, but dealing with dead children requires a certain degree of maturity in the game. Obviously, pumpkins will not be used as threats of any kind, but they can add an eerie touch to an adventure.

The Twins. Jennifer Craft's identical twin sister, Kate, died 20 years ago. They were just four years old. Jennifer was traumatized and needed medical care to get her life back on track. She doesn't remember exactly what the doctors did, but it worked. Until now.

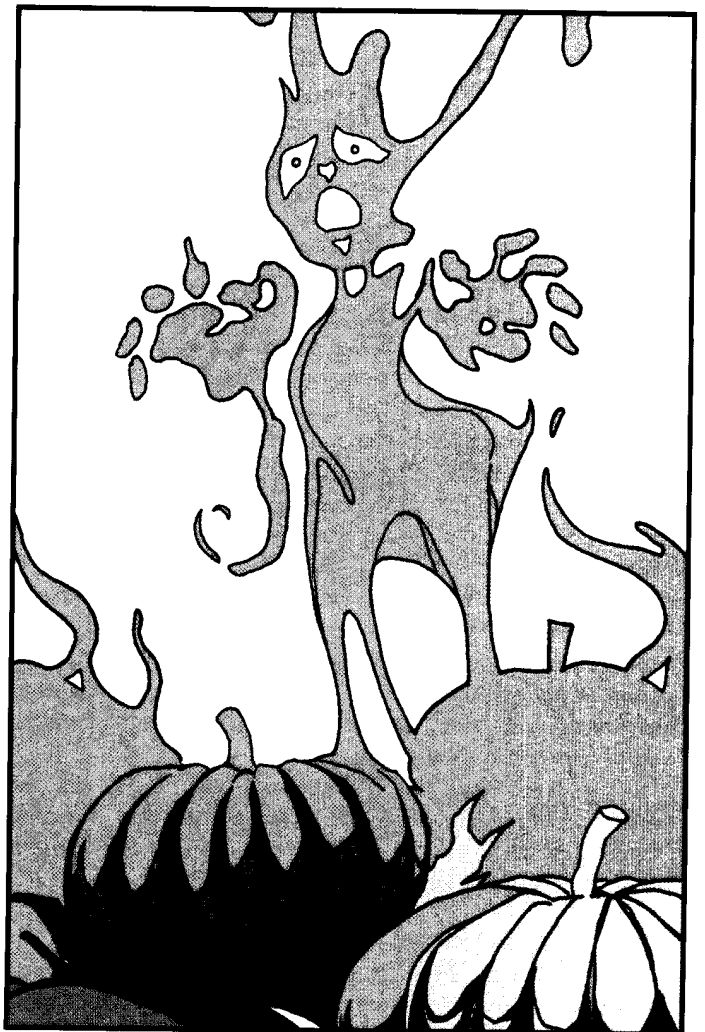
While searching for a good pumpkin a few days ago, just two weeks before Halloween, she heard Kate's voice. And then she woke up, a day later, in another place, wearing different clothes. Jennifer is very scared. She needs the PCs' help.

The "cure" Jennifer received 20 years ago gave her the ability to spontaneously exchange bodies (as in the spell of the same name, p. M27) with her sister. Now that her sister's soul has been discovered, the power has come into use. For the next few days — until Kate's pumpkin rots — the twins will exchange bodies every night at midnight. They can't control it. Kate is still a child, of course.

ST: n/a	Move/Dodge: n/a	Size: < 1
DX: n/a	PD/DR: 0/2	Weight: 5 to 20 lbs.
IQ: 1d+2	Damage: n/a	Habitat: autumn gardens
HT: 4	Reach: n/a	Other Names: Jack-o'-lanterns

The investigators need to secure (and maybe preserve) the pumpkin. They also need to find out how Kate died, why her spirit took so long to pass through a pumpkin, and what happened to Jennifer when she was "cured."

Hooky. There is a large pumpkin patch located about 100 yards from the highway. On the other side of the highway, past eight lanes of speeding traffic, is a playground. Many kids run across during recess or at lunch, hiding from the teachers. Some are hit but reach the patch anyway . . .



PUPPETEERS

ST: 5 Move/Dodge: 1/4 Size: < 1
DX: 5 PD/DR: 0/1 Weight: 5 lbs.
IQ: 13 Damage: special Habitat: hapless humans
HT: 12 Reach: n/a Other Names: Clutchbacks, pinchminders

A puppeteer is a living hunchback. It is a small, slimy creature that controls its human victim (its "carrier") by nesting in the carrier's back. The puppeteer manipulates the carrier by censoring his memories. In return, it gives the carrier a tougher body.

The puppeteer's own body is a jumble of gray-blue cartilage and sinewy skin. Eight disjointed legs radiate from a soft, globular torso. Its head, mounted on a serpentine neck, is a wrinkled lump dominated by one leering eye and a circular mouth. The whole creature is about the size of a cat.

Its initial attack is secret and silent. The puppeteer's bite numbs the skin. It chews and digs quietly, working its way into the area between the back of the neck and shoulder blades. It takes the puppeteer 5d minutes to get inside. Puppeteers attack sleeping, paralyzed, or unconscious victims. If a victim suspects something, make a roll against HT; success detects the puppeteer before it is too late. A visual or physical search by any character will detect the puppeteer automatically.

As soon as the puppeteer is inside the skin, it fastens its nervous system to the carrier's spine. The carrier automatically makes a HT-5 roll at this time. If successful, he detects the puppeteer. If the roll fails, the carrier will find out through a future incident (someone else sees his upper back, he looks in the mirror and sees the puppeteer looking over his shoulder, etc.). Roll a Fright Check. Once affixed, the puppeteer controls the carrier's memories and has casual control of additional parts of the carrier's brain. The puppeteer also instantly knows the carrier's native language.

The puppeteer will avoid being detected by the carrier as long as possible. Once discovered, the puppeteer will converse with the person by sticking its head up out of the skin and whispering in his ear. It speaks in the carrier's voice, and uses his slang terms and accent. The first time the puppeteer speaks, the victim must make another Fright Check.

If discovered by someone other than the carrier, the puppeteer will dig its claws into the carrier and demand protection. Puppeteers are smart and very vulnerable to attack, so they ruthlessly avoid this situation.

The Secret Symbiosis

At any time, the puppeteer can block memories. It can block any amount of memory, from trivial memories to total amnesia.

The puppeteer can also block sections of memory — all memories of a particular person, one complete year of the carrier's life, etc. It cannot alter memories or create false ones.

The puppeteer feeds off the carrier's calories, requiring the carrier to eat twice the normal amount to stay healthy. At the same time it begins secreting strange proteins into the carrier's body. These proteins make the host body more resilient to damage and able to heal faster. The carrier gains DR+2 and the Rapid Healing advantage (p. B22). Puppeteers do not need sleep; the carrier gains this ability, as well.

A puppeteer craves secrecy. It will demand that the carrier hide it under bulky clothing to disguise the slight hunchback. It knows it needs him to survive, so it will remain passive as long as it is well-fed and safe. When it becomes angry or feels threatened, it will threaten the carrier. If he ignores the threats, it begins manipulating memories. As a last resort, it clenches its muscles, causing extreme pain (1d-1 impaling damage).

They delight in manipulating others through the carrier; if he has any authority, the puppeteer will demand that he use his power to benefit himself.

The carrier can try to regain control in a number of ways. First, he can try to kill the puppeteer outright. This is risky because the moment the puppeteer is aware of the carrier's intent, it will attempt to kill him. Second, he can try to subdue it, using drugs, spells, psionics, or something tricky like hypnosis. Third, the carrier can persuade (and help) the puppeteer to take control of someone else . . .

A puppeteer can leave a carrier, in much the same way it got into him. It takes 5d minutes for the puppeteer to unfasten its nervous system from the carrier's and wriggle its way out of the opening in the skin that it made. The creature can leave more quickly, but the faster it moves, the more damage it does to the carrier. If it takes only 4d minutes getting out, it does 1d damage to the victim; an exit taking 3d minutes does 2d damage, and so on. The quickest escape it can make takes 1d minutes, and does 4d damage to the person *and* 1d damage to the creature!

This matters when someone negotiates with the evil passenger to leave peacefully. A human *can* attack a puppeteer during this process, but until it completely disengages it can do its 1d-1 damage every turn. On the other hand, the beast must have a reason to trust its victim not to attack it *after* it removes itself.

Puppeteers reproduce by mitosis while inside a carrier. This takes a week to ten days. During this time, the carrier will be in great pain (all skill and attribute rolls at -2). A puppeteer will reproduce once every month, but only after it has been in the same carrier for at least that length of time.

A puppeteer does not necessarily die when its rider dies, but every full hour it stays within a corpse will do it 1d-2 damage. A puppeteer *can* animate a corpse, but only as a way to move around . . . The body twitches, crawls at a speed of only 2, and in general looks just like a dead body animated by some evil power!

Torso Puppeteers

A rare breed of puppeteers infects the torso instead of the back. They enter the carrier in the same manner, but they crawl through the rib cage and then hibernate there for several days. During this time, the carrier will become ill, suffering from dizzy spells, nausea and occasional fits of rage. When the puppeteer has finished hibernating, it has transformed; its body has spread throughout the torso, manifesting itself as a face on the carrier's chest and abdomen.

The carrier will open his shirt one day and find eyes where his nipples should be, a flat nose mounted on his sternum, and a mouth stretching from side to side through the navel. Each torso puppeteer's face is different. Most are ugly and disfigured; a few are recognizable or strangely beautiful.

Other than its appearance, the torso puppeteer's only major difference is its defense to attack — it cannot clench its muscles but it can convulse, causing severe pain in the carrier's internal

organs (1d-1 impaling damage). Like a normal puppeteer, the torso variety talks to the carrier and controls his access to memories.

Puppeteer Adventure Seeds

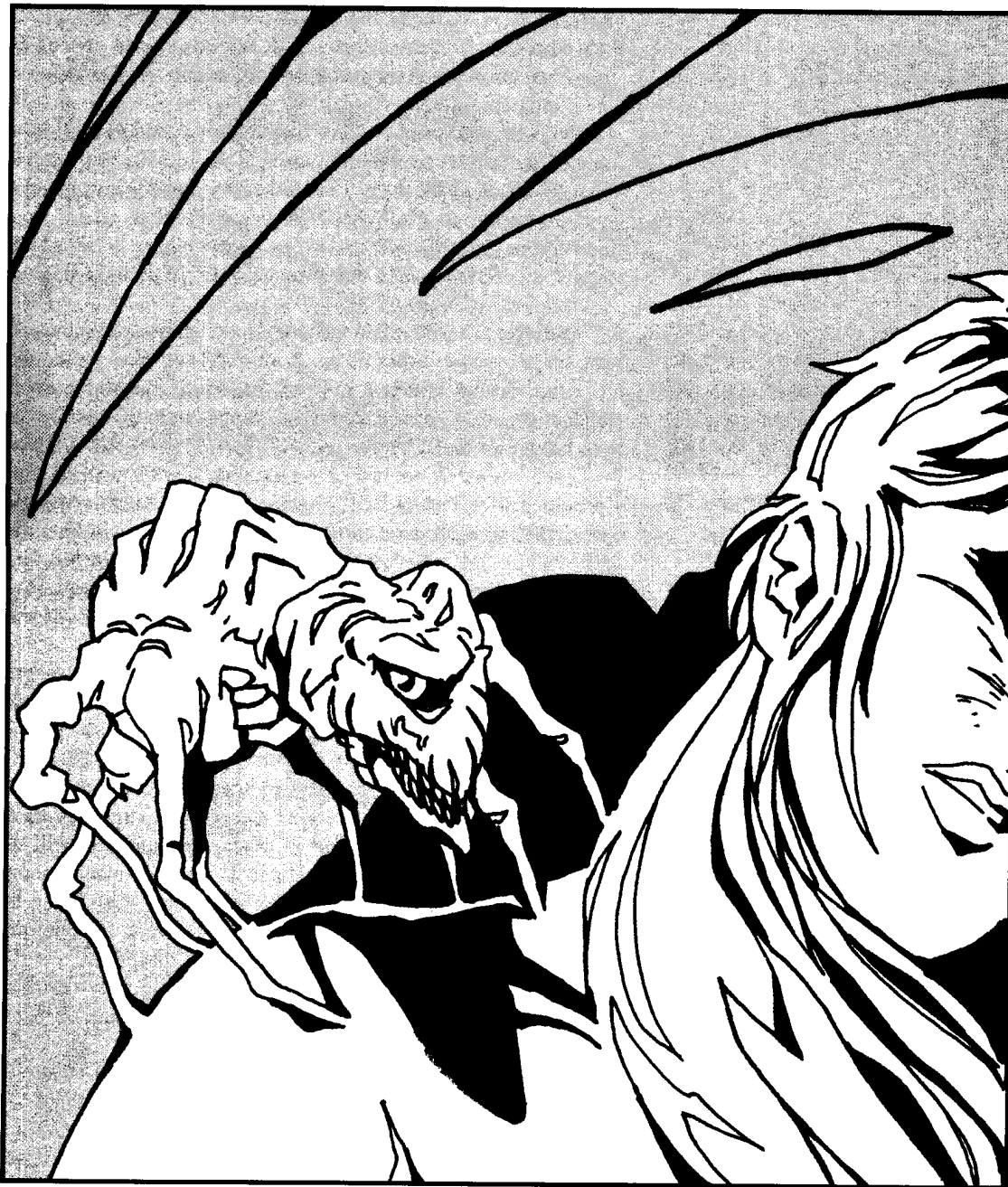
A wide range of adventures are possible with puppeteers. Carriers can be player characters or NPCs. The occupation of a carrier will have a dramatic effect on the adventure. Consider these professions as carriers: police officer, doctor, prison warden, astronaut, general, cult leader. Remember that puppeteers stay out of sight as long as possible. A carrier's memory loss and strange actions should be a mystery for much of the adventure.

The Enforcer. A local police sergeant becomes a puppeteer carrier. He gets a message to the PCs, asking for help. (Either they are known for helping people with weird, occult problems, or they were picked randomly.) The puppeteer finds

out. Now the sergeant has to lock them up . . . or harass them until they agree to be silent.

It starts slowly, with the sergeant making veiled threats. But, if the PCs do anything other than flee the area, the puppeteer becomes paranoid and makes the sergeant start harassing them, or even trying to frame them. The PCs will realize that they have to stop the sergeant and the puppeteer — reasoning their way out will not work.

The Flesh Menagerie. The PCs meet a man who has seven puppeteers in his body: two torso puppeteers and five more in his back. He is a willing slave of these creatures. He follows their (sometimes conflicting) orders, always looking for new victims to infect. When he finds the PCs, he asks for their help in finding a lost friend. He then tries to get each PC alone to attack and restrain while one of his puppeteers crawls inside the victim.



they rarely eat. Some develop pyrotechnic psionics. All are pyromaniacs to some degree.

The firekind generally dislike humans. They feel a need to aid or free any quietkin they can locate.

The quietkin have a life expectancy similar to that of humans. They only age, however, when they are visible. Thus, a quietkin who appears, on the average, for only a few minutes a year is effectively immortal. The exception to this rule is the quietkin who has temporarily taken the form of someone cremated. In this form, a quietkin ages ten times as fast as a normal human. As a result, a quietkin who regularly takes the forms of cremated victims will not live long.

The quietkin portrayed in Native American myths stood on hillsides near ceremonial bonfires. They did not want to leave, and survived on small offerings of food from the villagers. (Children were both terrified and entranced at the idea of feeding a "ghost.") In modern times, quietkin are more likely to be serial arsonists, traveling and setting fires to satisfy themselves.

Quietkin seem to be similar to hexmutes (p. 52). Many occultists who know about both creatures have tried to explore the link between them, but have made no progress so far.

Quietkin Adventure Seeds

The quietkin can be played with great subtlety. A pair of old, wise quietkin could answer questions by nodding, always wary that the questioners kept their distance. Or a quietkin can be played as a tortured, starving beast, a serial arsonist who must be caught and destroyed.

A key factor in using quietkin is *who* sets the fires. A quietkin could roam freely among campfires in a campground, for example. If the quietkin can travel far before it is out of the firelight, it has no need to set new fires.

Contained. A huge coastal oil field is burning. The refineries and wells are blazing. Several quietkin have emerged near the blaze. One remembers enough of his old life to remain a pacifist. The others are spreading the blaze. The PCs find out that firefighters are being dragged away suffering from terror as well as exhaustion. They babble about being attacked by ghosts.

Then things get worse. Oil has spilled along the coastline. If the fire is not contained soon, the spill will catch fire, too. At this time, the investigators encounter the single pacifist quietkin. It shows them a message it has written for them — if they guarantee it will not be captured, it will help them fight the other quietkin. It knows how to contain the fire, as well.

The Old Manor. A murderous old woman has turned into a quietkin. She is a ghost in a mansion with six fireplaces. When any one of them is lit, roll a die. On a 1, she appears.

She loves the mansion but hates the current residents and wants to kill them. She also wants to travel around the mansion, to reminisce in each room and make sure the residents are treating it properly. Occasionally, she has to light small fires on a rug or furniture so she can travel to another fireplace room. She regrets this, but must do it to ensure that she survives long enough to defend her home.

The Flame Trail. The player characters investigate an old Indian legend. In troubled times, it is customary for scouts to locate an old spirit known as Koutinou. Koutinou has great healing powers and godly wisdom. After the scouts use the old rites to find this grand spirit, they must lead it back to the tribe so it can work its healing magic.

Koutinou is a powerful quietkin, a mage with mastery of over three dozen spells including all those in the Healing college. It is also highly intelligent and has Area Knowledge of the local land at level 20.

Once Koutinou is located and summoned properly, it will aid the tribe of those who call it. To reach the tribe, it must walk along a trail of campfires. The light from each fire must blend into that from the fires before and after it. If one of the fires is extinguished when Koutinou needs its light, Koutinou will disappear, and will not return for at least five years.

The PCs learn about this ceremony and this creature as it is about to be summoned. If the PCs are friends of the local tribe, they might be allowed to observe. If they are members (honorary or otherwise), they will be able to take part. If not, they are outsiders and must stay away.

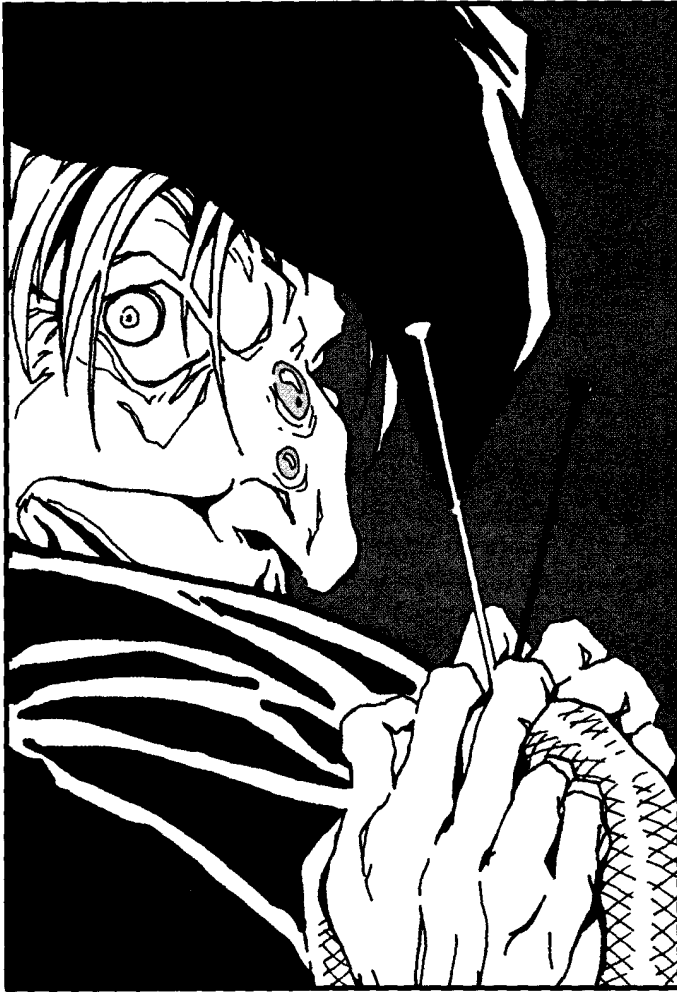
The GM must decide where the trail of fires will lead, why Koutinou is being summoned, and who (if anyone) would want to interrupt this rite.

RIFT HAGS

Rift hags are ugly crones who spend their time spinning, weaving and mending cloth. Each is an incredibly powerful supernatural creature — their cloth represents the fabric of time and space. As they work, they repair holes in the temporal landscape and weave new bolts of cloth for mankind to live in. Any old woman who sews, spins, or weaves by trade might be a rift hag.

All rift hags are ugly, so ugly that they often cover their faces. Many are twisted, bloated and filthy as well. They are

ST: 50	Move/Dodge: 1/0	Size: 1
DX: 15	PD/DR: 10/40	Weight: 150+ lbs.
IQ: 14	Damage: see below	Habitat: sewing sanctuaries
HT: 17/120	Reach: C	Other Names: Weave witches



never seen traveling, but some will mysteriously arrive or depart from their communities without warning. Each has a cover story to make her existence sound legitimate.

Their primary job is to make new fabric and to repair damage. Each rift hag is fully aware of what she does, but unable to explain it. She can do nothing else. Rift hags are powerful . . . but disinterested in capitalizing on their power for personal gain. It is possible that they serve a higher or darker power. If so, they appear to be neutral in any battle between good and evil. Their only other interest is in punishing those who cross them. Their punishments often revolve around trickery and manipulation.

They can be killed but their power cannot be stolen. Their magic is inborn — if anyone else tries to mend or spin their cloth, there is no cosmic effect. If a hag's spinning wheel, sewing machine, or piece of cloth is stolen, however, the rift hags will stop at nothing to get it back. The thief cannot use the stolen goods, but the rift hags' work will be delayed until the goods are returned.

They are dangerous only when mistreated. More than anything, they hate seeing someone repulsed by their appearance. They demand respect and do not enjoy being pestered. If someone knows what they are and threatens to tell others, he will regret it.

They do not know spells, but their occult knowledge is vast. They can describe the dimensions, recite tales of necromancers and demons, and identify most supernatural beasts. They can

also use the rifts to pass through time and space; this gives them nearly limitless power.

They cannot transport others through the rifts of time and space directly. They can, however, give simple directions that will help. They know basic rituals that, when performed in the proper conditions, allow an observer to see into other times or places. In rare cases, he can also travel to the new time and place.

Such a journey is often temporary and always dangerous. If the ritual was improperly performed or the conditions not quite right, the traveler may find himself in trouble. He could be transformed or cursed upon arrival, instantly detected by foes in the new setting, or arrive at the wrong destination. If the rift hag was feeling mean, she might have given him false instructions to achieve just such an effect.

Rift hags occasionally resort to violence. Physical attacks include punching (which could fell an ox), crucifying someone with needles, and skinning a foe alive. At ST 50, they do 5d+2 with a thrusting attack and 8d-1 with a swing. They are not above a little torture to make their point.

On the other hand, a rift hag can become a temporary ally. People who treat them with charm, respect and a few well-placed compliments will not be harmed. The rift hag may even help them. This civility won't last long, however — she will soon become suspicious, assuming she has been duped. If anything happens to proves her right, the con artist is doomed.

Rift Hag Adventure Seeds

Rift hags have many parallels in mythology. They are particularly suitable in campaigns with an Asian or Russian background — such cultures have horrible tales about mythic, ugly old women such as the Russian witch Baba Yaga. Rift hags can also be found in modern American campaigns, from the oldest seamstress in a sweatshop factory to a clothing-mending crone on an Indian reservation.

Obviously, these are powerful creatures. They are most likely to be treated with extreme caution when the adventure has the feel of a fable or nightmarish fairy tale. This makes the old crones seem like the mythic witches they are, rather than mortal witches who cast spells and fear adventurers.

The Old Coat. An old, battered coat falls into the hands of the party members. It was made (and was supposed to be mended) by a local rift hag. She wants it back. But there is obviously something special about it. Mages and psis feel a powerful and dark aura emanating from it.

Little do they know that the old coat represents the security of sleeping souls in the area. If its holes were patched, none of the spirits in the area would be active. As long as the coat is tattered, each new death releases an insecure spirit — an active, angry and confused ghost. Soon, the PCs will be desperate to return the coat to the rift hag as more and more ghosts are sighted and the community becomes panicked with hauntings.

The Time Man Was Not Meant To Know. Through a rift hag, the group is able to journey to one of Earth's earliest eras: the primordial age when the Old Horrors come. They can observe, but risk being noticed by the arriving creatures. The watchers can't stop the entrance, but they may learn something valuable that will help the resistance in their own era.

RIVER WRETCHES

When a person who is deeply in love drowns, the corpse may rise as a member of the undead. If so, it will try to hide along the bank of a river, pond, or lake. It will remove its clothing and wither. When the corpse is no more than wrinkled, pale skin on bone, it re-enters the water and becomes a river wretch.

Each river wretch has parallel slits along the base of its gaunt neck; these are gills. The river wretch can survive in water indefinitely. Out of water, it begins dehydrating within a day. The limbs become brittle as the flesh evaporates. The river wretch crumbles to ash 3d hours later.

River wretches live along the banks, hunting and building traps. Many have a cache where they store clothing, weapons, or other modest personal effects. They know their surroundings and neighbors, often by spying from the safety of deep water. They have a swimming Move of 8. On rare occasions, a river wretch will venture inland in disguise or under cover of darkness. They eat carrion and humans; if starving, they may resort to live fish. Their eyes glow pale green when they are hungry.

They use water for safety and for a weapon — they catch most human prey while swimming. They prefer to attack and feed at night. River wretches kill in strange ways; most techniques involve drowning the victim. Notable methods include luring sleepwalkers into the water, dragging prey into the water with barbed wire, anchoring a victim up to the neck and waiting for high tide, and forcing a victim to swim until he drowns from exhaustion.

Every river wretch is intelligent enough to converse and scheme. When they speak, their gills vibrate; this gives some a gurgling voice and others a hauntingly rhythmic tone. Older river wretches are full of lore and lies. They also have personalities. The young ones are one-dimensional in purpose and attitude. When more than one river wretch is present, all adopt the personality (if any) of the most dominant. This like-minded quality offers river wretches a sort of limited telepathy.

It is rumored that the kiss of a river wretch causes instant sleep *and* freedom from the need to breathe. As long as the sleeper is not awakened, he can survive underwater for hours, even days.

The Deep Shadow

River wretches worship an eerie entity which manifests as a great, amorphous shadow just under the surface of the water. When it arrives (usually once a month, always at night), any river wretches nearby will sense it. All wait along the shore as the shadow approaches and then board it. It slowly glides to the opposite shore with its riders. This is why river wretches do not live near large bodies of water — a sea or ocean would require too much time to cross, forcing them to ride after dawn.

Any river wretch that fails to ride across will dissolve within a day. It can avoid this fate only by being killed by the person it loved when it was alive. If this happens (and the body is reasonably intact), the creature will rise again as a river wretch in 3d minutes. It will be ravenously hungry when it rises.

ST: 14

DX: 8

IQ: 9

HT: 10

Move/Dodge: 5/5

PD/DR: 4/2

Damage: variable

Reach: C, 1

Size: 1

Weight: 50 lbs.

Habitat: at the

water's edge

Other Names: River

gaunts, lake gaunts



Shrill Rat Adventure Seeds

Shrill rats are a hungry horde that hides among humans. They can be used as pets of a mad scientist, as a living barrier to the PCs' destination during an adventure and as predators in a specific area (in a burned-out building, in a swamp, etc.). They should never be used to attack more than a few humans at a time — if they are seen by a crowd, they are no longer secret. This makes them less frightening.

The Brimstone Effect. Government agents ask the investigators for help. The Brimstone Nuclear Facility, a secret nuclear plant in the mountains, is in danger of melt-down. Some of the reactor's cooling mechanisms emit a high-pitched squeal. It is barely audible to humans, but animals hear it easily.

A horde of shrill rats has interpreted it as the scream of a very large, very terrified human. They have multiplied rapidly and threaten to gnaw the cooling system apart. Dozens of people at Brimstone have been devoured. Some are trapped inside shelters, safe from the rats but running out of food and air. The heroes need to find a way to destroy the rats.

The Elevator. An old hotel has a large service elevator. Unlike the passenger elevators, the service elevator reaches into the basement. It is run by an old man, a mute, who has always been at the hotel. No one knows his name. The rest of the staff thinks he's weird or ugly, so they ignore him.

The old man lives in the basement. He knows that the hotel is full of hungry shrill rats. In the past month, the horde has grown. Two women have been eaten — stripped to the bone, leaving just skeletons and large bloodstains on their beds in the morning. The old man knows he is safe. He can't convince anyone that he knows the source of the problem. Now he is happy they will all die.

The player characters might stay at the hotel, track a rumor about supernatural creatures in the area, or investigate the deaths. As they become involved, many more deaths occur — the shrill rats are multiplying rapidly. The old man may be able to save the PCs by taking them to the basement. He may also be framed for the deaths because he is mysterious and no one will defend him.

The Piper Returns. A horde of shrill rats invades a town. Then a stranger arrives, claiming he can send the rats away. Of course, he will only do it for a price . . .



live longer than normal dogs, so the maximum size is about equal to a large van.

Large slaver dogs have the appropriate ST, HT, Move and damage — use the upper end of the attribute ranges above. Beyond that size, extend the range. A van-sized slaver dog, for example, might have a ST of 40 and a HT of 50. Larger slaver dogs can also grow smarter, possibly due to their greater experience.

Large slaver dogs stay out of sight, roaming only at night. They might use their unnatural size to intimidate people, but

only when the encounter is isolated. These large creatures also need large places to sleep and hide — as they grow larger, they will locate and secure these locations.

Old slaver dogs become fetid and disgusting before they die. Their decomposition starts before death. A dead slaver dog rots quickly, within an hour of its death.

Slaver Dog Adventure Seeds

The size of a slaver dog and the nature of its captives will define the adventures in which they are used. Large slaver dogs will be hidden, but might be encountered roaming in forests or alleys at night. Victims can be secretly plotting to escape the slaver dog's control, its willing slaves, or a combination of the two. Their occupations and skills will make a difference when they seek outside aid or try to defend their masters.

Another factor is the role of the dog — watchdog, lap dog, show dog, sled-puller, drug-sniffer, police dog, wild dog, hunting dog, etc. Each of these roles provides a wide number of plot choices.

Early Anna. Early Anna, an old woman who owns a kennel, gets her name from her habit of starting her morning walk just before dawn. She often finds stray dogs during these walks. Early Anna has a strange supernatural aura that attracts nearby dogs and makes them obedient to her.

A few of the dogs in her kennel are slaver dogs. A few others that have been sold within the last few years from her kennel are now the masters of the people who bought them. A single slaver dog has recently grown beyond a natural size. It lives in seclusion near Early Anna's home.

The PCs encounter some of the enslaved victims. They also meet Early Anna. When they decide to take action, they can ask Early Anna for help. She will aid them, but with reluctance. She doesn't trust them.

The huge slaver dog that lives near her home meets her during her walk. It tries to control her, but it cannot. Her heart goes out to it, however — the two share an unspoken understanding. If the investigators find out about this event, they may become suspicious of Early Anna.

And they should be: Early Anna will secretly work against them from this point on. By the time they find out, it may be too late.

Edgetown. Edgetown is a sooty manufacturing community, a planned town centered around a deep network of mines. Edgetown could exist in the near future, on another planet, or perhaps in a known setting such as the Kentucky valleys. The miners work in obedient silence. Their bosses, a large pack of slaver dogs, roam inconspicuously in the streets.

When the player characters arrive, the miners immediately press them into slavery. Most miners silently serve their masters, but a few will talk to the PCs. When the outsiders find out that the miners are enslaved by dogs, they may be able to organize a revolt or an escape.



ual is too defensive, the slitherwen may decide to kill him and find another fleshing later. The passage is painful — both people (the entrance and the exit) lose one hit and are *stunned*. They can make recovery rolls after the slitherwen has passed through. If the creature is bloated from eating, the damage is 5 hits or more; the passage could easily kill both humans.

The venom will preserve a fleshing-laden person who dies. The body will not decompose for at least one week. After that time, it must be injected again with venom to be preserved for another week. A simple bite from a slitherwen will do. In this way, the slitherwen can keep the corpse's fleshing(s) available with only a little maintenance.

There are rumors of a slitherwen cult. Apparently, a few humans have sworn to serve the slitherwens, believing the creatures to be intelligent beings from another planet. The mark of the cult members is, obviously, one or more fleshings. If this cult exists, they surely know something about slitherwens that others don't.

Slitherwen Adventure Seeds

Slitherwens are meant to be disgusting and vicious. Although they are not as smart as the average human, they are cunning enough to have interests other than simple survival. What these interests may be is unknown. The creatures might serve a darker power. They might have a special few in their number with high intelligence levels. They might be able to use

certain kinds of technology. slitherwens can appear as simple combat monsters, or something more complex.

Samuel Suffers. A young man named Samuel Suffers, bitten by a slitherwen, has reacted badly to the venom — it has given him a pituitary and thyroid disorder. As a result, he has become Fat and developed Gigantism. He also grew 1d more fleshings. Samuel is now the nexus of travel for slitherwens in the area. He is on the edge of a nervous breakdown. He finds a way to contact the PCs for help, but is too afraid to describe his plight.

Loving the Alien. The slitherwens come from space; their home is a strange nest on the dark side of the moon. A secret mission from the United States placed three astronauts there in 1968. All of them grew fleshings after being attacked. Only one escaped the moon.

The slitherwens reached Earth by passing from one of the corpses left behind to the surviving astronaut. They had to concentrate for days to detect the planetside fleshing. The government has tried to clean up the situation. The surviving astronaut has escaped the government quarantine, half-mad and scared. When he runs into the player characters, the action begins.

This adventure can improve upon the *Alien* films. The slitherwens can be encountered in their weird nest on the moon and on Earth. The PCs will also have to deal with a vengeful and powerful government agency that wants the whole situation kept quiet.

STORMBAIRNS

A stormbairn is a child who dances in the night with other stormbairns. Their dancing summons storms.

Any child aged four to ten can become a stormbairn after being severely traumatized. The likelihood increases with the amount of trauma and the youthfulness (innocence) of the child. At age four, the chance is 9 or less on 3 dice after a failed Fright Check. The chance decreases by 1 for every year of age thereafter. Thus, at age nine, the chance is 4 or less. No matter what the chances, no child will roll to become a stormbairn more than once per month. This condition lasts until puberty.

The change takes place at night, usually after midnight. The child instantly develops Night Vision; its hair turns white, and it acquires the statistics above. Each is still recognizable as the child from which it came, but this is not easy — make a Vision-3 roll, with an additional modifier for familiarity (from -2 for a casual description to +7 for close personal ties).

As a stormbairn, the child wants to dance outside, howling and running free like a wild animal. With its newfound intelligence, it will be able to escape parents and other adults with relative ease. It will sense other stormbairns in the area and dance with them. They will return to their former selves when the sun rises. They are often confused, but refreshed and strangely calm.

ST: 7	Move/Dodge: 6/7	Size: < 1
DX: 12	PD/DR: 0/0	Weight: 40-70 lbs.
IQ: 14	Damage: 1d-2 cr	Habitat: the safety of storms
HT: 10	Reach: C	Other Names: Banes, darque dancers, the ire muse

Anyone who chases one will experience a strange sensation. The landscape will stretch out too far. If the chase leads through a field, the field will suddenly extend to the horizon. If they run through a maze of alleys, the alleys will twist and turn endlessly. If the stormbairn is chased up a tree, the tree will suddenly extend miles into the sky. Of course, the stormbairns make good use of this running room — they almost always escape. Once a stormbairn is safe (or caught), the pursuer will have a moment of dizziness . . . and then the landscape returns to normal.

Stormbairns must have music to dance. This can come from any source — tribal drumming in the distance, the calliope from a carnival over the hill, a concert nearby, even wind chimes — but they will not create their own music by playing instruments or even by singing. A stormbairn may bring a source of music.

from a music box to (in high-TL settings) a portable radio or CD player. No matter what, the music must come from a source other than the stormbairns themselves.

As they dance, the storm will come. The wind begins to howl and the rain starts to fall. The ferocity of the storm depends on the degree of trauma the children suffered, the number dancing and the dynamics of the music. Two stormbairns

from a broken home dancing to wind chimes will bring a sudden downpour and rumbling thunder. Two dozen escaped slave children, dancing to tribal rhythms or a Classical overture, will bring forth a hurricane.

The moment the music stops, the stormbairns stop dancing. The storm will recede immediately. The spell is broken — even if the dancing resumes, the storm abates. A new storm cannot be called until the following night, by different stormbairns.

Local animals are affected strangely when stormbairns dance. As the storm rises, the animals become active. Rather than cowering or hiding, birds, dogs, cattle, fish and all other fauna will move with the storm. Through a special sort of magic, the animals are never harmed by the storm — they are always able to get out of the way of falling trees, lightning, flooding, etc. When the storm ends, the animals return to their normal nature.

Stormbairn Adventure Seeds

Stormbairns can be found in any setting with both children and music. They can be pre-adolescents outside a punk rock club, tribal children dancing on their own at the edge of a village, or even Boy Scouts twisting by the fire. In every case, the source of the storm is the pain and trauma the children have suffered.

The Music Box. A young girl has been on the run for years, carrying her music box with her. She is very bright, with an incredible ability to fend for herself and to talk her way out of trouble. Every month, she winds the music box and turns into a stormbairn, trying to find relief from the pain that has built up since the last time she danced. When the PCs find her, they will realize that the only way to help her is to find the source of her trauma. Their best clue is the music box.

The Burial. Archaeologists in Pompeii have been hiding a secret for years. It seems that Pompeii's children were severely abused and neglected. One day, the children spontaneously rebelled and danced to rhythms from an unknown source. The result was the destruction of Pompeii. What caused the rebellion, and what music did they dance to? The PCs will have to explore Pompeii to find out.

The Orphanage. The player characters visit a dreary, brutal orphanage. Only days before, some of the children found a hidden room filled by a crude musical contraption, a giant rack of bells, chimes and cymbals. Each has its own striking hammer. The hammers are connected to a complex set of gears, powered by a small crank motor. When the motor turns, the machine plays music.

The children have suffered for years. They are tempted to crank up the music machine. If this happens, they might bring a storm powerful enough to devastate the area. The PCs have to find the machine and figure out a way to help the orphans without causing a storm.



TATTLERS

Tattlers look like humans with incredibly long tongues. Their tongues can stretch from a normal length to as much as 4 feet long. Their tongues are as strong as their limbs and can be used for striking and choking. They cannot grip objects or wield weapons; each tongue's manual dexterity is equal to the tattler's DX-5. In all other ways, tattlers look human — they can be young or old, male or female, and come from any ethnic group.

Each tongue is tipped by a nearly-invisible venomous burr, a bundle of sharp taste buds that secrete a toxic chemical. Anyone injected with the tattler's venom acquires the Truthfulness disadvantage (p. B37) for 3d hours. If the person already has that disadvantage, his Will is temporarily halved to resist it. A compulsive liar (p. B32) is in trouble . . .

Tattlers are not immune to their own venom. In fact, they suffer its effects 24 hours a day. They never lie. They love to tell traumatic truths. A "traumatic truth" is something that causes a Fright Check just from hearing it — "I know your secrets," "I just killed your friend," or worst of all, "I'm going to kill you now." The modifier to the Fright Check is based on the listener's belief that the statement is true. If the statement came from an authority figure or powerful being, there would be a penalty of -3 or more. If a child or a harmless-looking stranger says it, the modifier would be +3 or better.

Tattlers enjoy beating the truth out of people who hold their tongues. They love to interrogate, hunt and hurt people. Most carry a weapon of their era; some also wear armor, if appropriate. They gravitate toward violent and subversive professions, from enforcers to political shock artists.

To hurt a tattler, tell it a lie. Every tattler has the Detect Lies skill at IQ+3 (10 to 15). If it detects a lie, it will be stunned (p. B127). Due to their high HT, tattlers usually recover immediately. A tattler who has been lied to will become enraged; it must make a Will roll to keep from lashing out at the liar immediately. If it holds back, it will punish the liar later. This punishment can be a physical attack, telling the liar's secrets and exposing his lies, or something else.

A severed tongue regenerates in 1d weeks. During this time, the tattler is without the effects of its venom and is unaffected by lies (though it still hates them).

They love to divulge secrets to all the wrong people. They use their knowledge of intimate secrets to create social turmoil and to make life hard for liars. There are rumors of a tattler union, a group of tattler intellectuals who use their abilities and nature to cause social changes and wrest control from established powers.

Tattlers are born to parents who have been contaminated with chemicals that affect their iodine levels. If the delicate balance of iodine in the brains of a man and a woman is upset by chemicals, their offspring are likely to be tattlers. There is no known explanation for this strange effect. The young tattler's venom develops during puberty. Its maximum tongue length is established during the subsequent growing spurt.

ST: 2d+4	Move/Dodge: varies	Size: 1
DX: 1d+6	PD/DR: 0/0	Weight: 50-250 lbs.
IQ: 1d+6	Damage: variable	Habitat: among humans
HT: 2d+6	Reach: C, 1	Other Names: Lashers, soothsayers, lie-finders, lickers



Tattler Adventure Seeds

Tattlers function best as a background element of an adventure, not as the focal point. Any NPC, from a mad scientist to a thug, becomes a lot more interesting (and just plain weird) if he is a tattler as well. Tattlers are especially useful in a horror/cyberpunk world. They also make good hermits, gypsies and sages.

Fools Are Made to Be Broken. A group of tattlers has created a secret society. Their headquarters is an apartment building in London; they bought it using funds from a secret sponsor. They are plotting to infiltrate the government, using their powers to extort influence. The PCs find that the tattlers already know a few incredible secrets. The companions need to find the secret sponsor, the key to the society's power.

The Serpent Psyche. A young doctor has isolated the chemicals that create a tattler. The primary ingredient of the chemicals is similar to the venom of a rare poisonous serpent. He thinks the venom is linked to a primal part of the brain, what he calls "the serpent psyche." He contacts the group for help.

The doctor wants them to travel to a Third World jungle to collect more venom. They will have to survive the terrain, avoid ferocious wild animals and deal with savages. They might also attract the attention of a few tattlers or other supernatural creatures along the way.

As they get closer to the habitat of the serpents, they will be reduced to savagery for survival. To stay inconspicuous, they will have to shed their clothing. When they run out of bullets, they must use the weapons of the locals to defend themselves. By the time they reach their destination, they have been reduced to their natural, primitive selves: their own serpent psyches are in control.

As they go about capturing serpents, they meet a bald, fat tattler. He is supported by his own personal tribe of serpent-psyche warriors; they worship him. He will allow the intruders to live only if they are honest with him. If they survive the adventure, it will take months to return their minds to their former state.

TOMB MOTHS

ST: 0 **Move/Dodge:** 10/20 **Size:** < 1
DX: 14 **PD/DR:** 0/0 **Weight:** negligible
IQ: 1 **Damage:** n/a **Habitat:** tombs
HT: 1 hit **Reach:** n/a **Other Names:** *Flesh flutters*

Tomb moths are pale, white-green moths. They are the same size as normal moths, with a wingspan of about 1 inch. Tomb moths are encountered in swarms of 20 to 1,000. They wait quietly along tomb walls until they are discovered or until they begin to starve. Although they do not have a collective consciousness, their simple minds think identically.

Their wings are covered with tomb dust and crematorium ash. In a breeze or when the creatures fly, the dust becomes airborne. If it enters a human or animal's bloodstream, a strange illness can develop.

The dust from tomb moth wings normally enters a human or animal's bloodstream through the lungs. It can also be liquefied and injected, swallowed, or absorbed through direct contact with an open wound. The victim makes a HT roll after contact. On a critical success, the dust has no effect. A critical failure means the victim is infected and will begin to mummify. On any other result, the Game Master decides on the effect.

The process of mummification takes 1d+1 days. Each day, make a HT roll; every success adds a day to the process, buying the sufferer more time. Cures can come in the form of spells, drugs and rituals — see the introduction of this book for details.

During the process of mummification, the victim becomes pale, haggard and dry. The change is gradual. It starts with weakness and flaky skin on the first day. Just before the last day the victim's limbs are rigid, his eyes are glazed, and his breathing is shallow. The skin develops a natural DR of 2 in the first day, increasing by 2 every day thereafter. Midway through the process, all Fatigue costs are doubled. By the final day, the victim barely has the strength to walk across the room.

The mummified victim is in a suspended state. Medical examinations indicate that the body is dead. Supernatural examinations show that it is alive. To revive the body, it must be laid to rest underground. It must remain there, unmolested, for at least 6d weeks (roll separately for each victim). After that time, it will rise, terribly changed, if it is moved or attacked. It can also rise if it is addressed by its formal name.

There are legends of tomb moths bringing mummified victims to a final resting place. Apparently, they gather around the corpse and cling to it. They then lift it, exerting more strength with their wings than is naturally possible, and carry it to a suitable tomb. Other legends tell of a single, extremely large tomb moth that performs this function. If this actually occurs, it is very rare and has never been documented.

Tombwalkers and the Larvae

Tomb moth mummies are called tombwalkers. They are sentient and free-willed. They need the tomb moths to survive — they subsist on tomb moth larvae.

The larvae grow when tomb moths lay eggs in the ashes of corpses. Tombwalkers must live close to tomb moths and provide them with urns, bowls, or piles of crematorium ash to produce a steady supply of food. Once a month the moths lay thou-

sands of eggs in each container. The eggs grow into hard, light-green worms.

Each of the tombwalkers needs a few of these worms each day to stay strong and healthy. Each permanently loses one hit point each day that it goes without. They know not to eat them all except when they are starving to death. If they did eat all the larvae, the tomb moths would soon be extinct. Invariably, one of the tombwalkers will drop a larvae somewhere away from the tomb moth swarm. This is how new tomb moth swarms are born.

Tombwalkers have the same attributes and physical disadvantages they had during their previous lives. They know their names. They have a basic knowledge of the most prominent aspects of their previous lives. They do not have any skills, quirks, or mental disadvantages. Important skills can be relearned by a few — if a tombwalker spent his entire life as a fisherman, for example, he could quickly relearn how to fish.

Some of the tombwalkers retain motives and goals from their former lives. One with a vendetta against an old foe might continue to seek revenge. There are more peaceful and subtle possibilities, however. The fisherman example above is just such a case — the creature simply continues to fish, perhaps with a strong urge to defend its fishing hole, as well.

Another rumor refers to Egyptian tomb moths, which were said to create tombwalkers as sentinels.

Tomb Moth Adventure Seeds

Investigators can deal with people who are slowly succumbing to their fate, with tombwalkers, and with resting mummies who have yet to rouse from their slumber. Or they can work with tomb moths, from catching them for research into an antidote to tracking them as they find new swarms in the area.

On the Wing. A vast swarm of bats has succumbed to the dust of tomb moths. The bats hang along the walls of a giant cave just outside of town. When the cave is discovered, the bats awake. They are tough, hungry and ghastly pale. To survive, the bats need an incredible amount of larvae hatched in an equally incredible amount of corpse ash.

This adventure can go several different ways. The cave could be connected to a deep tomb full of hundreds of urns. If this is the case, the PCs need to sneak through the cave to the tomb. Or, the bats could snatch humans and somehow cremate them. They might have human help in this endeavor, or they might be unusually smart and able to do it on their own. A final idea is to introduce the “mother moth,” a single, huge tomb moth with some strangely human features. It is responsible for the situation.

Sobibor. Tons of human ash were either carried or dumped in a network of tunnels under the concentration camp Sobibor. Tomb moths began to thrive there just as World War II ended. Now the tunnels are full of mummies, dust and moths. If they are discovered, what will happen? Have some of the mummies already awakened?

Entombed. An old sage from centuries ago deliberately made herself a victim of tomb moths. She used alchemical potions to regulate the change. As a result, she is immortal

and has fully retained her memories, identity and skills. But she is confined to her tomb.

Anyone who discovers her tomb will be awed. It is an ornate sanctuary, filled with alchemical apparatus, books and artifacts. If she feels threatened by those who discover her, she will use her considerable powers for defense. But if her discoverers cooperate, they may escape alive . . . or even gain her as a patron.



WAR-WIGHTS

ST: 1d+10 **Move/Dodge:** varies **Size:** 1
DX: 1d+8 **PD/DR:** varies **Weight:** 150+ lbs.
IQ: 1d+7 **Damage:** varies **Habitat:** any
HT: 1d+13 **Reach:** varies **Other Names:** Twilight soldiers, eidolons

A war-wight is a forgotten soldier from another time. Each has an uncompleted mission, and knows exactly how to complete the mission in its new surroundings. A war-wight will stop at nothing to be victorious.

Any conceivable military mission is possible — saving a comrade behind enemy lines, assassinating an enemy agent, escaping to safety over the border, taking out an enemy installation, etc. Draw parallels between the war-wight's original era and the present day. For example, to a World War II war-wight, City Hall in a large town 20 miles away could be an enemy installation (perhaps a secret bunker). Some parallels will be strangely close. If, for example, the World War II war-wight needs to protect a train with special cargo, the train could be one that was actually running during World War II. Or, the parallels can be more remote — say, an Arabian soldier from the Crusades on a mission in the Arctic.

The mission always involves one or two human targets to capture, interrogate, kill, or rescue. This can be a side effect of a greater goal (such as assassination as a result of destroying an installation) or it might be the mission's exclusive goal. The target can be well-known, or evil (justifying assassination), or innocent, chosen seemingly at random by the war-wight.

The war-wight will know something that links the target to the war-wight's time. Perhaps the target's ancestor was the war-wight's nemesis, or the target may have served in the war-wight's war. Any careful investigation of a target's background will reveal striking and eerie links between the target and the war-wight's mission.

The war-wight divides the world into allies, enemies and bystanders. Everyone except the mission's target (if any) starts out as a bystander. Those who help become its allies; the war-wight manipulates them, but never trusts them. Anyone who poses a threat to the war-wight and actively impedes its progress becomes an enemy, to be destroyed, usually as brutally as possible.

When the mission is complete, the war-wight disappears. The damage it has caused remains. Careful examination of history books will show that the soldier, once anonymous, is now mentioned (at least parenthetically). There may even be a reference to the mission, described in the context of the war-wight's era of origin.

Twilight Soldiers

Each war-wight is different. Some look perfectly human. Others look like zombies or have inhuman features. Most have only natural abilities (though often at high levels). A few have supernatural abilities. Some are violent and aggressive. Others are so quiet that it is nearly impossible to notice that they are even on a mission. Most act alone, but a rare few will find strength in numbers.

A war-wight will always hide its face — behind a gas mask, under the shadow of a helmet, etc. Only the most trusted ally or tenacious enemy will find a way to see it.

All war-wights will try to locate weapons, vehicles and equipment from their time. For 20th-century war-wights, this is relatively easy. War-wights from earlier eras, however, may have to burglarize museums or private artifact collections to assemble an arsenal. They might also build their own.

War-wights operate in secrecy. Although the final moment in a mission may attract attention (explosions, firefights, etc.), the events leading to it are carried out with maximum silence and subterfuge. Some war-wights are better at this than others. A Russian intelligence agent from the Afghanistan battles will stay inconspicuous longer than a war-wight from an ancient Celtic war.

They are fanatical and tough, with Danger Sense, Toughness DR 4, Immunity to Disease and Night Vision. Those with supernatural abilities hide their special powers as best they can. War-wight mages generally have combat-oriented spells, information-gathering spells and disguise spells. Those with psionics normally have psychokinetic powers, telepathic powers, electrokinesis and ESP. Other possible abilities include shapeshifting, special senses, rapid healing, creating or gathering allies and communion with dark forces. Some may have supernatural pets — imagine a war-wight with a pet deathwing (p. 00) and a cooperative puppeteer (p. 96). War-wights with supernatural powers always have one or two supernatural weaknesses as well.

During the day, their attributes, spells, skills and advantage levels are halved. War-wights spend this time resting, contemplating, receiving orders (see below), healing and studying available mission information. They are active at night.

All war-wights are soldiers who actually lived, with identities, personal histories and skills appropriate to their era of origin. They also have the misconceptions and prejudices of their era. An individual's ability to aid, influence and fight a war-wight increases with the individual's knowledge of the proper era.

As a mission wears on, a war-wight may become desperate. A war-wight who has struggled for weeks and is still far from his goal will become more violent, savage and fanatical. At this point (and in the moment before the climax of a mission), the

war-wight becomes superhumanly resistant to outside influences. This gives it a +5 at least to resist psionic suggestions, mind-control spells and other such tactics.

The Hidden Sponsor

Each war-wight regularly receives helpful, even essential, information and orders from a special source. Every war-wight has a different receiving method. It could be a radio, a walkie-talkie, written notes that appear in the war-wight's equipment, spoken words from a shadowy figure, etc. The war-wight will keep these transmissions secret. Outsiders who discover them will find the orders to be cryptic . . . and the information horrifyingly true.

Investigators of this source will have limited success. They may be able to block the messages temporarily, or even create fake messages, but they will never be able to learn the identity of the war-wight's backer. If the examiners persist, it will soon become obvious that they are dealing with a very powerful and evil force. They would be well advised to leave this secret alone.

War-Wight Possession

Normally, a war-wight arrives in its new era in its own body. But a rare few may arrive by taking possession of someone's body. Rather than experiencing a total personality switch, the person will adopt some of the mannerisms, knowledge and skills of the war-wight. The victim will begin receiving orders from the sponsor, hiding his face, and acting nocturnal. Before long, he embarks on the war-wight's mission. This progression is complete, with the war-wight in total control, just before the mission climax. If the mission is completed, the victim's personality is permanently restored.

In this situation, the possessed individual's link to the war-wight is represented by a small object. This could be an old gun from the war-wight's era, dog tags, or some other significant item. He will become increasingly protective of the item as the mission wears on. If the item is taken away, the war-wight will become frenzied in its efforts to recover it. If the item is destroyed, the war-wight is exorcised.

War-Wight Adventure Seeds

War-wights are best used for action-oriented adventures. There are hundreds of possibilities; entire campaigns can be created around war-wights. A thorough examination of *GURPS Timeline* and other worldbooks will offer dozens of ideas.

When creating a war-wight, first make sure it is scary. Then concentrate on linking historical facts with campaign-era realities. Use the players' favorite historical battles, from the Trojan Wars to Vietnam. But the war-wight does not have to be from a familiar war — imagine meeting an Arabic warrior from the Crusades, a Spanish conquistador, a medieval pikeman, or even a soldier from a war no historian ever heard of.

If an adventure involves investigating a war-wight's sponsor, the GM may need to devise an explanation. If the campaign already has an entity of this kind, feel free to make that entity the sponsor. To avoid this aspect of war-wights, simply make sure that all such investigations yield dead ends or eerie but hollow solutions — the mystery remains.



Anti-Hero. A casual associate, a pilot, tells the protagonists about the theft of a World War II bomber from an air show. One bystander, a teenager working for the promoter, was attacked by the thief. The teenager is in shock, babbling about a horrific creature in military fatigues.

The thief is a war-wight, a pilot who crashed in 1943 while making a midnight bombing run on Germany. The pilot was once a hero, but his name was smeared by a rival. It is now a mean, slaving creature with several powerful supernatural combat abilities as well as the ability to raise the dead and convey skills to them, making them into competent bombardiers and co-pilots. With the help of its backer, the war-wight plans to assemble a crew, load the plane with bombs, and complete its mission.

Revenge. An Indian on a reservation has purposely made himself the host of a war-wight, the spirit of a powerful warrior who was going to assassinate President Hayes. The assassination would have symbolized the Indian's revenge on white men for destroying the Indian people and culture. But the Indian warrior was killed on his way to Washington . . . a random murder by bored bison hunters.

Now the possessed Indian is going to complete the mission by killing the current president. He has the ability to heal quickly, several spells and a magic charm that lets him change shape into a raven. A local psychic contacts the PCs, saying that the president will be assassinated soon.

If they catch the assassin, he will try to escape and return to the reservation. The investigators will have to follow to make sure this doesn't happen again.

Watchtower Adventure Seeds

Watchtowers are intelligent and powerful. They should be overlords of their surroundings, beings who cannot be fought without considerable casualties. Make sure the players realize that their local watchtower knows about them. They should approach it with extreme caution.

The Obelisk. At the South Pole there is a tall, narrow pyramid of black stone. It is a watchtower, banished to this place by some unknown force. It needs assistance to be placed among humans, where it can collect information and meddle in the affairs of men. The player characters may find it and be asked to help. Or, they might learn that a cult is trying to transport the obelisk. If they investigate further, they may discover what powerful force banished it.

The Millennium Mind. In this TL8 adventure, the PCs hear rumors about a company called Millennium. Millennium collects data from the global net — any data on any subject. Its computer databases are said to be the most efficiently organized, factual and diverse in the world. The company's headquarters is a skyscraper in the heart of the largest city. The building is a watchtower, a powerful one almost 1,000 years old.

On the top floor rests Millennium's CEO, Agatha Arachi. She sits at the heart of her worldwide dataweb, communing with the watchtower. Is she its partner, its servant, or its master? The employees of the company are synthetic human clones. They have two functions: to man and repair the massive databases, and to sneak through the night acting as the eyes of the watchtower.

The protagonists may find valuable information in the Millennium building. If they gain the upper hand, ready to destroy Agatha Arachi and her watchtower, they could be bribed with sensitive data. Agatha Arachi might even know something they don't want anyone to hear . . .

The Totem Lord. An oil company has begun drilling near an Indian reservation. They plan on knocking down a huge, solitary petrified tree. The Indians have warned against this — they know the tree is a watchtower, an entity they call the "totem lord." If the oil company topples the tree, the watchtower's presence may shift to one of the oil rig towers. From there, it can take revenge. It may want to destroy the Indians for failing to save it. Or it may want to destroy the oil field workers.

WAX WEIRDS

Wax weirds are strange shapechangers made of living wax. The weird can alter its approximately 100 pounds of wax to any humanoid form. If the form is man-sized or larger, the wax weird is hollow. If the form is child-sized or smaller, the weird is solid. A wax weird that has not taken someone's appearance looks like a generic mannequin.

A wax weird is a skillful mimic. The initial change takes about ten seconds. The wax weird must be looking at the copied person during this entire period. The person being copied must make a special Fright Check if he watches, at -2. If he has seen this before, the modifier is +5. If the check fails, he is mentally stunned until the ten-second period is complete. At the end of that time, he can begin rolling against IQ to snap out of it.

After the ten-second transformation, the resemblance is only superficial — the wax weird's features are crude with a waxy sheen. For the next five minutes, its appearance becomes more accurate. During this stage it does not have to watch the copied victim; it is working from memory. At the end of this second period, the wax weird is nearly identical, requiring a Vision-7 roll at close range to notice something is wrong. The wax weird's movements, mannerisms, speech patterns and expressions change at the same rate as its appearance.

The mimicry does not extend to its texture. No matter what form it takes, or what textures it appears to have, it feels waxy to the touch. This can be very eerie if the wax weird is mimicking other textures. For example, a wax weird that appears to be a weathered old man in a wool jacket will have a uniform waxy

ST: 12	Move/Dodge: 5/5	Size: 1
DX: 9	PD/DR: 0/8	Weight: 100 lbs.
IQ: 9	Damage: 1d+1	Habitat: any
HT: 12	Reach: C	Other Names: Slipforms, shifters, wax imps

feel to both his skin and clothing. Anyone who touches a wax weird should roll a Fright Check immediately.

At the end of each initial ten-second transformation, the wax weird loses 1 point of Fatigue. This loss is regained while resting, at a rate of 1 per minute. A wax weird will instinctively take the form of anyone it sees unless it makes a roll vs. its current ST. Once it reaches the end of the five-minute transformation period, it will always roll to avoid instinctive transformations.

A wax weird cannot take a new form until the ten-second period has passed. If it sees a group of people, it may steal all of their appearances in quick succession. If it can resist, the wax weird must shield its eyes, turn its head, or escape to avoid transforming again. For this reason, wax weirds avoid crowds.

Wax weirds recognize each other on sight, no matter what appearance they may be wearing. They never talk to each other, take each other's appearance, or assist each other. Two wax weirds can be exposed by forcing them to look at each other — they will not take each other's appearance or even acknowledge each other.

They avoid extreme temperatures. In an environment close to freezing temperature, the shifting periods are multiplied by five. Below freezing, they cannot transform. In addition, their Move, Dodge and DX are reduced by 2. If the temperature is too high, they have trouble holding their form. Next to a roaring flame, for example, they must make a Fatigue-4 roll to avoid combining the new appearance with the old. If surrounded by flame, set on fire, or held in a hot environment such as a greenhouse at noon, they lose their appearance in seconds, melting into a puddle until the area cools off.

The Impostor Paradox

Wax weirds are slightly mad. Each thinks it *is* the person it looks like. It assumes that the mimicked human is an impostor, a creature that can steal the appearance of others. The wax weird reacts the same way a copied individual would, only with much more malice and rage. It will become frightened . . . and then attack.



The wax weird is further enraged by its inability to remember anything about itself. It does not steal memories, skills, or knowledge from those it mimics, so it will think it is suffering from amnesia. It will try to find out how it lost its memories. Anyone who stands in its way will be seen as a nuisance, an enemy or even an agent in a conspiracy. The wax weird will quickly go from frustration and curiosity to bloodthirsty rage and violence. Its search will be irrational and covert. It avoids crowds and employs weird tactics to learn about itself.

The extent of the wax weird's madness becomes apparent around mirrors. When a wax weird sees its reflection, it reacts as if the reflection were a copy. It will lash out at the mirror and scream for it to stop mocking everything it says.

They attack by smothering and striking. They can kick, punch and use hand weapons. They rarely use sophisticated or ranged weapons such as bows, pistols, or lasers. If a wax weird gets close, it will use its hands and arms to envelope the target's face and smother him (see the sidebar on p. B122). If the wax weird is attacking someone it thinks is an impostor, it will go *berserk* — All-Out Attacking, with no stun penalties to attacks or Move, and a +4 to HT rolls to stay alive.

The high DR of a wax weird reflects the ability of its soft flesh to absorb damage. Its DR is doubled against cutting and impaling weapons. It has a DR of 0 against heat-based weapons such as lasers and torches.

Wax Weird Adventure Seeds

Wax weirds can be encountered as henchmen, enforcers, pets, nuisance monsters, or as the principal features of an adventure. A small army of wax weirds can be used as a strange breed of walking dead. They can add a lot of fun to a conspiracy-based horror game. There may even be room for a wax weird NPC in the campaign. And imagine what you can do with wax weirds and a wax museum . . .

Drake Fletcher. A young man named David Foster met a wax weird one night while walking home. The wax weird took Foster's appearance, beat him within an inch of his life, and stole his identification. The wax weird has been able to keep Foster's appearance for several weeks now by roaming the streets alone at night.

The wax weird's madness has caused it to develop a new persona. It looks like a hardboiled-detective version of Foster. It calls itself Drake Fletcher. It sees everyone on the streets as a criminal or a crime suspect. Unlike most wax weirds, it carries a gun.

The player characters accidentally find a connection between two of the city's strangest cases — the beating of David Foster and the crime spree of the vigilante named Drake Fletcher. When they discover that the principal subjects look nearly identical, they have a real case on their hands.

Mirror Man. There is a man on the edge of town who collects mirrors. His old house on the hill is full of them, in all shapes and sizes. When a group of wax weirds fixates on the PCs, the old man finds the heroes. He tells them to come to his house where they will be safe. If they go, the wax weirds follow. They chase the group members and the old man through the house, stealing the humans' appearances and being driven mad by their reflections.

To add a twist to this adventure, the heroes might discover the old man's alchemy lab in the basement where he built the wax weirds . . .

WERESHADOWS

Wereshadows are silhouettes. As a werewolf can transform from man to beast, the wereshadow can change from human form to two-dimensional shadow. The shadow form slides along surfaces, moving slowly and retaining its humanoid shape. The wereshadow can still sense its surroundings and speak in this form.

They live among humans, always in the background. Their human personae are usually meek and fearful of attention. But if pressed, they will lash out, plot revenge, or leave destruction and death behind when they flee. They often take abuse or intrusions while in human form, and then kill when they turn into shadows.

To take shadow form, the wereshadow must first cast a shadow while in human form. Its body can then disappear as its consciousness enters the shadow. To return to human form, the body must reappear in an appropriate location between the shadow and a light source. The human form cannot materialize before witnesses — if the spot where it must materialize is in view of any human, it is trapped in its shadow form.

Except for their clothes, they leave all objects behind when they turn to shadow. They cannot manipulate three-dimensional objects, but they can physically attack anything their shadow forms cover. For example, if the shadow form passes over someone's body, the wereshadow can attack him. Targets of the creature's attacks need to place themselves behind the light source that illuminates the creature's shadow form. Wereshadows often choose indirect methods of attacking, such as pushing a person through a window or into oncoming traffic.

The shadow form can be attacked as if it were alive. Violent attacks will damage the surface upon which the wereshadow appears, of course.

In shadow form, the creature has a Stealth skill equal to its IQ+1. Some wereshadows have training or experience that raises this level to IQ+3. A Contest of Vision vs. the creature's Stealth is required to see a wereshadow. Modify the rolls for the contrast of light and darkness in the area, for the searcher's familiarity with these creatures and for the setting.

Some wereshadows cannot control the change. Any time a wereshadow feels reclusive, shy, or defensive and there is an opportunity for it to cast a shadow, it feels the urge to change to shadow form. Older wereshadows have greater control over their change than young ones.

Their origin is unknown. They seem to be a separate race, perhaps a special strain of supernatural humans. There have been rumors of humans cursed with this type of lycanthropy, as well.

Caught in Darkness

If a wereshadow in shadow form is caught in total darkness, the darkness will dilute its form. If this goes on too long, it will die. As it dilutes, the wereshadow's mind and body become

ST: 2d+4	Move/Dodge: varies	Size: 1
DX: 2d+4	PD/DR: 0/0	Weight: 100+ lbs.
IQ: 2d+4	Damage: by ST	Habitat: anywhere
HT: 2d+5	Reach: C, 1	Other Names: The shadowkin, the dusken, silhouettes



One other cure is for the netrunner to get on the Net in an Environment Module and find the Whisper's representative symbol there. If the symbol is destroyed, he is free from the Whisper. For example, in the Castle Perilous Module, the Whisper might appear as a moaning ghost. Allies of the victim can log into the Module to help. The Whisper is easier to find if the Module has a sinister quality — for example, the R'yleh Module (*Roleplayer 19*), a Lovecraftian labyrinth of glowing green tunnels, alien entities and flickering monsters, offers a greater chance of success than the Retrorock EM.

Whisper Adventure Seeds

The Whisper is intended for cyberpunk games that need a little horror. Making it known that the Whisper exists will put everyone on the Net a bit more on edge. The Whisper could always be a rumor, of course — if the PCs have never actually seen someone affected by it, they might think it is a myth. If so, who started it, and what do they have to gain from it?

Inside Outland. The PCs are hired to help a victim of the Whisper, a genius computer scientist, Dr. Alice Inchanes. Luckily for them, Dr. Inchanes prepared a special Environment Module, "Outland," just in case this happened. Unfortunately,

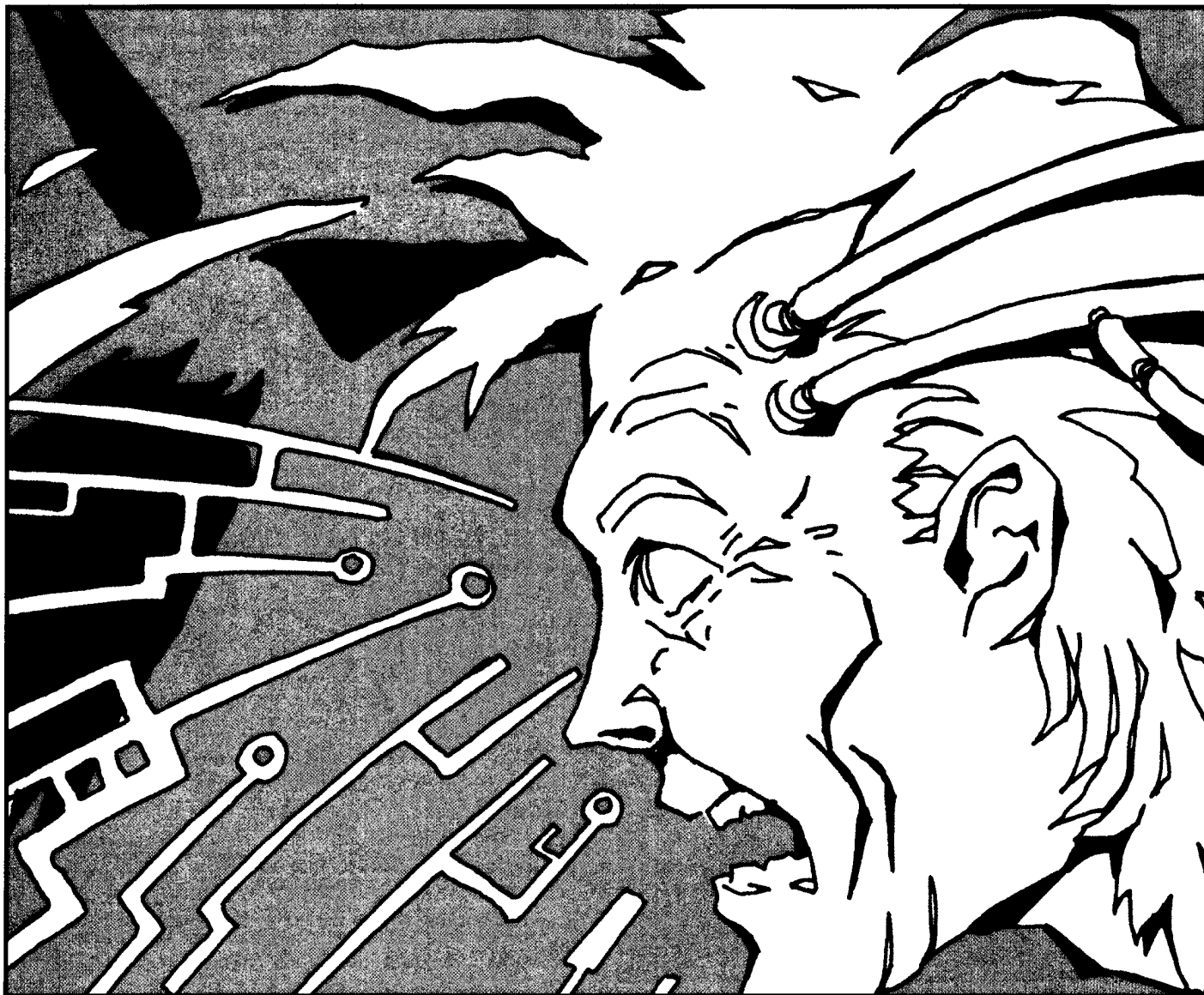
Outland was designed for maximum horror to ensure a maximum chance of success.

Outland appears as a nightmarish village on top of an impossibly high plateau. The air is full of headless bats, the streets are cobbled and full of potholes and the buildings are rickety towers full of emaciated slaves chained to desks. The allies first need to locate Dr. Inchanes, then find and destroy the Whisper. The Whisper takes the form of a corpulent businessman sitting on a bed of corpses at the top of the tallest building.

The greatest surprise, however, is the special feature the good doctor designed to ensure her rescue: the intruders cannot escape Outland until the Whisper is dead!

Enigma. The origin of the Whisper has been tracked to a "presence" called the Enigma. Some other netrunners have "felt" it on the Net, particularly when they accessed information on secret cults in Eastern Europe. The Enigma manifests in some Environment Modules as a huge shadow on the horizon.

As the PCs continue their adventures, the Enigma comes up more and more. Soon, they realize that it knows who they are. They gain more information: a city name, the name of a secret group, and a few other strange clues. Will they try to contact the Enigma, or travel to its source?



Wildermasque Adventure Seeds

Wildermasques are an extension of the headless horseman in "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow." Make the horseman one of a breed, rather than a unique creature.

To make a wildermasque more interesting, start with the terrain haunted by the creature. Next, come up with an appearance and talisman. Finally, devise a method of travel that can be supported by stealing from the local populace.

Death Nellie. In Victorian London, a wildermasque in the form of a little girl ties down her talisman, a skull, where her head should be, with a white bonnet. She arrives on the pagan holidays and steals a horse-drawn carriage. She then rides through the midnight streets, careening into shops and passers-by.

No one has the nerve to stop her. The heroes are needed to catch her and put her to rest.

The Bogeyman. In the swamp, a filthy, naked, headless man steals boats on moonlit nights. He is a wildermasque. His talisman is a mummified head that hangs on a chain around his

neck. They call him the bogeyman.

The player characters are in the area when the bogeyman appears. A group of teenagers searching for something in the swamp ran into the creature. It drowned and mutilated them. The locals know that the interlopers have occult ties, and blame them for the event. They will have to talk fast to avoid being chased into the swamp. They may run into the bogeyman or find what the teenagers were searching for.

The Barrow Witch. The barrow witch, a wildermasque that haunts graveyards, is part of the folklore of Old Russia. Her talisman is a kettle full of hot, delicious stew. She travels by stealing snowshoes or skis from locals.

The protagonists find themselves in Russia in the winter. They need to explore a graveyard just outside a village. A storm comes up and they hide by a hillside tomb for shelter. At night the storm dies down and the barrow witch arrives. She holds her kettle over the freshest graves, summoning the corpses to feast. If the investigators blow their cover, she will deal with them.

WITHER PUPPETS

A wither puppet is a strange breed of zombie, a former human whose body has been taken over, limb by limb, by an evil force. Wither puppets seem to exist for the sole purpose of creating more wither puppets.

In daylight, the wither puppet has the appearance and mannerisms of the human it once was. In darkness, a strange transformation occurs. Dozens of thin, white, web-like strands slither down from above and attach to the wither puppet's limbs, head and spine. The strands are taut and extend directly skyward, making the wither puppet look like a living marionette. The source of the strands cannot be found — they disappear in the darkness above. The creature's face then grows pale and gaunt; the eyes sink and take on the glazed sheen of black pearls.

Any body part that makes significant contact with a wither puppet will weaken, shrivel and decay within an hour. Three to six hours later, the limb will be useless and ghastly — a dry, fetid lump of flesh. Firm contact — a handshake or the equivalent — is needed to transmit the curse.

The following body parts can be affected: arms, hands, legs, feet, ears, jaws, tongues, noses, genitals, scalps and eyes. The withering is not painful or deadly. The victim feels only a dull throb from the crippled limb. Eyes will go blind, ears become deaf, noses will lose their ability to smell, tongues will be unable to taste or be used to speak, jaws will be useless for eating or speaking, and a withered scalp may expose the top of the skull. Withered genitals will be useless for sex, but will still function for urination. This condition cannot be cured by conventional medicine.

Once the limb has withered, the person becomes strangely attracted to that particular body part on others. Someone with a

ST: 20	Move/Dodge: 5/5	Size: 1
DX: 9	PD/DR: 2/1	Weight: 100+ lbs.
IQ: 7	Damage: 1d+1 cr	Habitat: among unsuspecting humans
HT: 19	Reach: 1, C	Other Names: Skein-kin

withered hand, for instance, will find himself gazing longingly at other people's hands, admiring their rings and wristwatches and studying handshakes. It will soon be obvious to him that he could replace his withered limb with a fresh one. The fresh limb could come from a living victim or from a corpse that has been dead a week or less. The longer he waits to do it, the stronger the urge grows . . . and the more opportunities arise to do it.

Replacing the limb is easy. The victim feels no pain from removing the withered limb or attaching the new one. A few hours after being stitched or bandaged into place, the new limb will look and feel normal. The limb will shape itself to match his skin color, age and proportions.

Once the unfortunate individual replaces a withered limb, strange things begin to happen. The new body part will occasionally act on its own. New eyes and ears will sense strange things undetectable to others, a new hand will twitch or make weird gestures, etc. These complications will be eerie, but not life-threatening.

After that first limb is replaced, the wither puppet will return to its victim to wither more body parts. Once all of the applicable limbs have withered and been replaced, the person is forever lost — his body becomes the host of a new wither puppet. In

human form, the wither puppet will shun society, staying hidden and alone until it is time to hunt.

There are a number of ways for someone with a withered limb to avoid becoming a wither puppet. The first is simply to resist the temptation to replace the withered limb — if it is removed and not replaced, a healthy limb will grow back in three or four weeks. Another way is to kill the wither puppet; this will restore the limb to full health within a day. Other methods come from magical sources: some witches and cults have spells and talismans that can ward off wither puppets or heal the injuries they cause.

Wither Puppet *Adventure Seeds*

These creatures can be patient predators or marauding zombies. They can be encountered alone, in small groups, or in large packs. The number encountered depends on where they come from. If, for example, a small group of people is transformed, piece by piece, at the same time, they are more likely to stick together as wither puppets.



The Cutup Club. In the town of Dervish, six teenagers were attacked by Old Man Hacker, a former local derelict who is now a wither puppet. The attack resulted in a withered limb for each kid. In their obsession to replace the limbs, they formed the Cutup Club: they murder townspeople for replacement parts. Then they wait for Old Man Hacker to come back and wither another of their limbs. To the Cutup Club, it's all a rebellious thrill.

The Shadow of the Widow. Several dozen wither puppets have been seen in the area. People are getting scared — the PCs investigate. They find that all of the wither puppets go to a hillside just beyond the graveyard before dawn. As the first rays of sunlight break through, a vaguely spider-shaped shadow is seen in the air above them. Their strings then disappear, they return to human form, and the shadow fades.

The key to unlocking this mystery is to wait on the hillside until dusk. When the sun goes down, the shadow emerges. It hangs in the air as the wither puppets move about the town. If the investigators can understand or communicate with this shadow, they may be able to stop the growing wither puppet population.

ZERO ZOMBIES

ST: 15	Move/Dodge: 6/4	Size: 1
DX: 7	PD/DR: 0/1	Weight: 100+ lbs.
IQ: 7	Damage: 2d+1	Habitat: among computers
	or by weapon	
HT: 15	Reach: C, 1	Other Names: Drones, terminal roamers

Zero zombies are the undead of the computer age. They are created when a human soul is trapped in a computer when it is turned off, though the body lives. The body can roam free as a zero zombie, seeking more computer hardware or staying by its computer to protect it.

When someone causes a death through the use of a computer, the murderer's soul might become trapped in the machine. If

it was a single, accidental death, the chance is very low (a 3 on 3 dice). If the death was intentional, or over a dozen people were killed, the chance increases (7 or less on 3 dice). The soul transfer is almost automatic if hundreds were killed, especially if the user did it intentionally and the victims were innocent. The chance can also be affected by (or limited to) curses and other special supernatural situations.

* The actual transfer is quick. The user feels a tingling sensation . . . and then his computer screen comes into sharper focus. If the person suspects something is wrong, make an IQ roll. If successful, he realizes his consciousness is inside the machine.

The consciousness will pass into the circuits of the first CPU it encounters. If the user is at a stand-alone machine, his consciousness stays in that computer. If the computer is linked to another, the result is the same. If, however, the computer is merely a dumb terminal (a screen and keyboard linked to a

remote computer), his consciousness moves into the remote computer, not the terminal.

As long as the computer is on and the body is within 20 feet of it (or its terminal), the trapped consciousness can control the body. This is a form of telepathy, allowing the consciousness to simultaneously sense the computer circuits *and* use the body's senses. The consciousness cannot contact or use the senses of another body. If the body strays too far, or the computer is turned off, the link is severed — the body becomes a zero zombie. The consciousness remains in limbo until it can resume contact.

The trapped consciousness has an intuitive link to its prison. As a result, all skills used to operate the computer are increased by 50% or by +5, whichever is less. The remote-controlled body is still needed for operation: the consciousness needs its body to use the keyboard, a mouse, or other input devices. Casual observers will not automatically know that anything is wrong, of course — the user appears to be a normal operator until the link between consciousness and body is severed.

Zero zombies instinctively protect the computer that holds their souls. They will carry it or, if it is too big or delicate, hide it (as well as an IQ 7 creature can hide a computer). They can then roam, searching for programs, locating better computers for their souls, collecting weapons and generally ensuring their survival. Zero zombies are, however, prone to violence and easily tricked — some never return from roaming and their consciousness stays trapped forever.

Among the general population, zero zombies are often thought to be retarded or on drugs. Many zero zombies will draw a circle on their foreheads, or wear a shirt dominated by a zero character: 0. The reasons for this are unknown, but it happens more among those that have been out of contact for a week or more.

All zero zombies are fascinated by computer hardware, from state-of-the-art monitors to battered old floppy disks lying in garbage cans.

The Ghost in the Machine

If *GURPS Cyberpunk* is available, use the rules for cyberspace to allow the trapped consciousness to explore the inside of the computer. It could “swim through the circuits” to other, linked computers, or use environment modules to better manipulate its own. This adds a new dimension to the game, bringing it fully into the cyberpunk genre while maintaining its horror.

Zero Zombie Adventure Seeds

Zero zombies can be encountered as single individuals or as a group. They can be mindless drones or slow-witted but dedicated sentinels. The difference is all in the setting in which they are encountered — in the cluttered office of a hacker, in a spotless lab, along rows of terminals in a high-tech intelligence center, in any vehicle with an on-board computer, scrounging among digital debris in the basement of a corporation or military base, or even in the computer lab of a school.

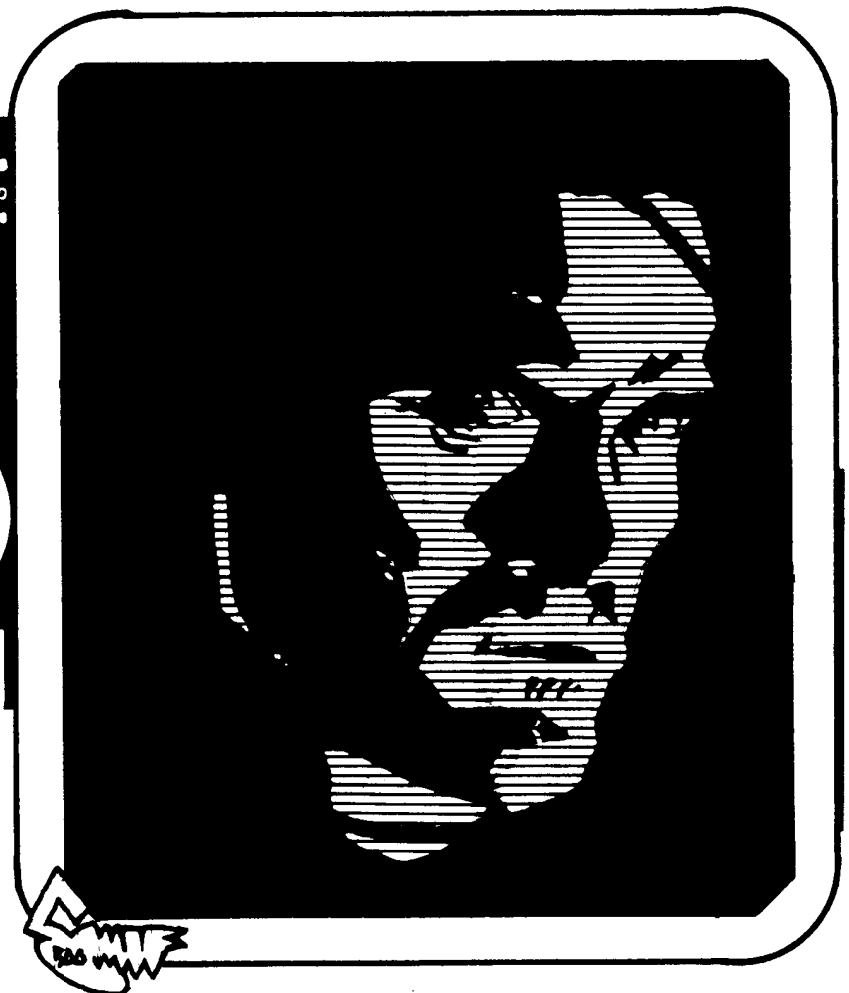
The Circle Jerks. On the high-tech side of town, a gang of zero zombies dig through dumpsters every night. Gang members wear circles on their foreheads, the backs of their hands, and on their shirts. The dumpsters are located behind computer company warehouses. The PCs realize that the salvaged trash is being sequestered somewhere.

They could follow the zero zombies back to their lair, a hidden complex full of computers and tons of computer materials. The zero zombies will attack the intruders here, so the meddlers need to stick to the shadows. They need to find out why the Circle Jerks are collecting this stuff, and how many of them have a consciousness in one of those computers.

Terminal. A lonely computer programmer, a master of the computer network, discovers she has six months to die a slow and painful death. After hearing about zero zombies, she realizes that would be the perfect way to slow her demise and get relief from the pain. But she doesn't want to kill anyone.

She contacts the PCs, asking them to help her become a zero zombie by some less diabolical means. But she keeps her distance, contacting them through cryptic messages, videotaped monologues, and other high-tech methods.

If they can't help her soon, she will kill hundreds to save herself. The operatives need to find her or to comply with her demands before it is too late. Or they can try to find out how she will kill hundreds from her computer, and thwart her plans.



TERROR IN THE DARKNESS

Huge buildings that eavesdrop on unsuspecting guests. Hideous fish whose songs drive villages insane. Obscene voices whispering madness through the Net. Gruesome gardens full of living human organs. Crystalline creatures floating between our atmosphere and the starry depths of outer space. And things that look like vampires — but aren't . . .

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