

G U R P S[®]

CREATURES OF THE NIGHT

Sixty-Seven Original Horrors to Haunt Your Dreams

BY SCOTT PAUL MAYKRANTZ

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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 . . .

This book describes a host of the most macabre, chilling and downright disgusting creatures that ever peered from the shadows or lurked just out of sight — or right in front of you. Some are microscopic, others too large to imagine. All will haunt your dreams.

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- ✿ Complete information on attributes, size, habitats and alternate names.
- ✿ Descriptions of motivations, feeding habits and social patterns.
- ✿ The creature's origins — and what it takes to get rid of it.
- ✿ Ideas for introducing it into a campaign, and adventure seeds — lots of ideas for storylines.

You'll never feel safe again, anywhere. From the worlds of high fantasy to those of high tech, these creatures will make your skin crawl — literally . . .



Written by Scott Paul Maykrantz
Edited by Susan Pinsonneault
Cover graphics by Jeff Koke
Back cover art by Dan Smith
Illustrated by Malcolm Hee



STEVE JACKSON GAMES



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By Scott Paul Maykrantz

Edited by Susan Pinsonneault

Cover Graphics by Jeff Koke

Illustrated by Malcolm Hee

Additional Illustrations by Laura Eisenhour,

Scott Maykrantz and Dan Smith

GURPS System Design by Steve Jackson

Loyd Blankenship, Managing Editor

Page Layout and Typography by Jeff Koke

Interior and Color Production by Jeff Koke

Print Buying by Andrew Hartsock

Dana Blankenship, Sales Manager



Playtesters: Mark Maykrantz, Linda Hinshaw, Tim Carroll, Laurel Halbany, Dan Smith, S John Ross, Bill Collins, Ray Lockwood, Troy Leaman, Karen McDonald, Lee Graham and Lowell Stouder.

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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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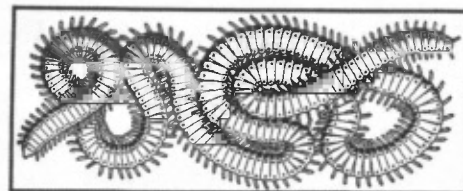
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Page References

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 bestiariums 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.

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?

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 . . .

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.

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.

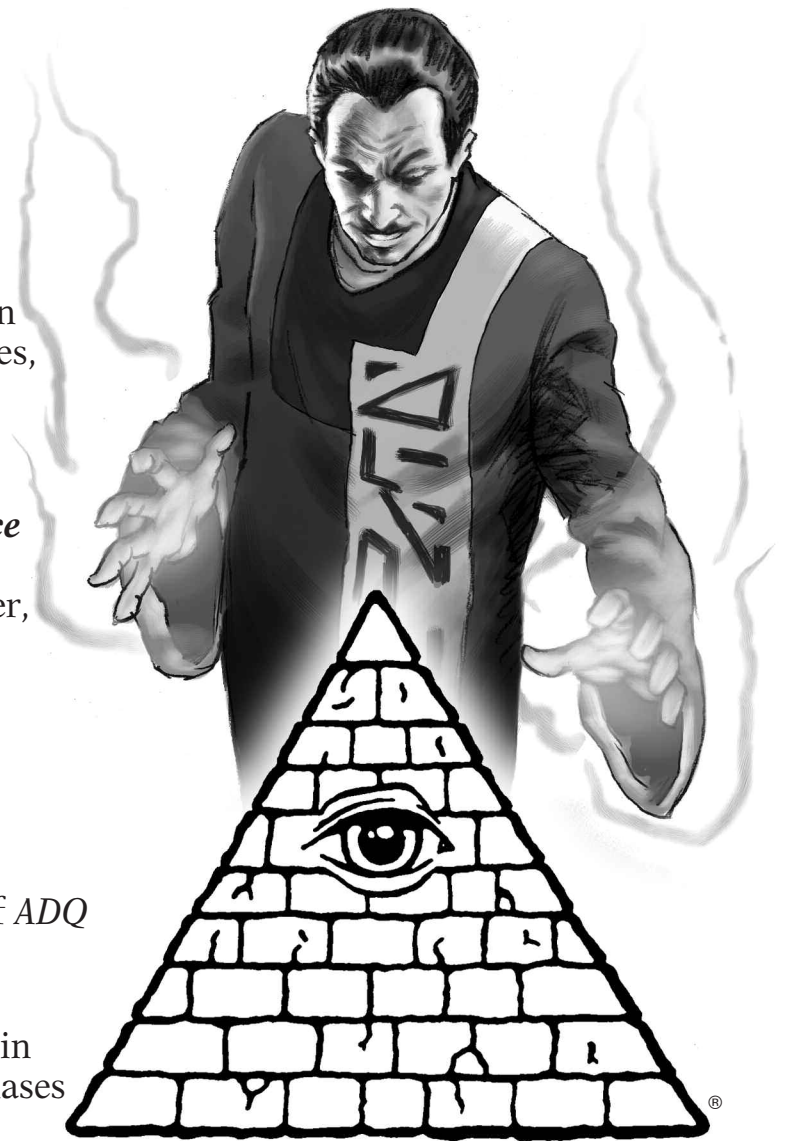
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