

G U R P S[®]

GREECE

THE AGE OF GODS AND HEROES



BY JON F. ZEIGLER

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

MYTHS, GODS AND HEROES

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GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition Revised and Compendium I: Character Creation are required to use this supplement in a *GURPS* campaign. The information in this book can be used with *any* game system.

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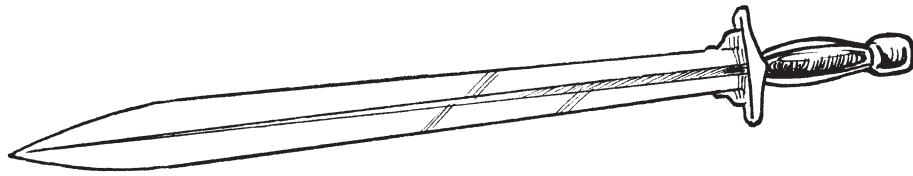
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INTRODUCTION

ABOUT GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of the **GURPS** system. Our address is SJ Games, Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! Resources include:

Pyramid (www.sjgames.com/pyramid/). Our online magazine includes new **GURPS** rules and articles. It also covers *Dungeons and Dragons*, *Traveller*, *World of Darkness*, *Call of Cthulhu*, and many more top games – and other Steve Jackson Games releases like *In Nomine*, *Illuminati*, *Car Wars*, *Toon*, *Ogre Miniatures*, and more. *Pyramid* subscribers also have access to playtest files online!

New supplements and adventures. **GURPS** continues to grow, and we'll be happy to let you know what's new. For a current catalog, send us a legal-sized or 9"x12" SASE – please use two stamps! – or just visit www.warehouse23.com.

Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata sheets for all **GURPS** releases, including this book, are available on our website – see below.

Gamer input. We value your comments, for new products as well as updated printings of existing titles!

Internet. Visit us on the World Wide Web at www.sjgames.com for errata, updates, Q&A, and much more. **GURPS** has its own Usenet group, too: rec.games.frp.gurps.

GURPSnet. This e-mail list hosts much of the online discussion of **GURPS**. To join, point your web browser to www.sjgames.com/mailman/listinfo/gurpsnet-l.

The **GURPS Greece** web page is at www.sjgames.com/gurps/books/greece/.

PAGE REFERENCES

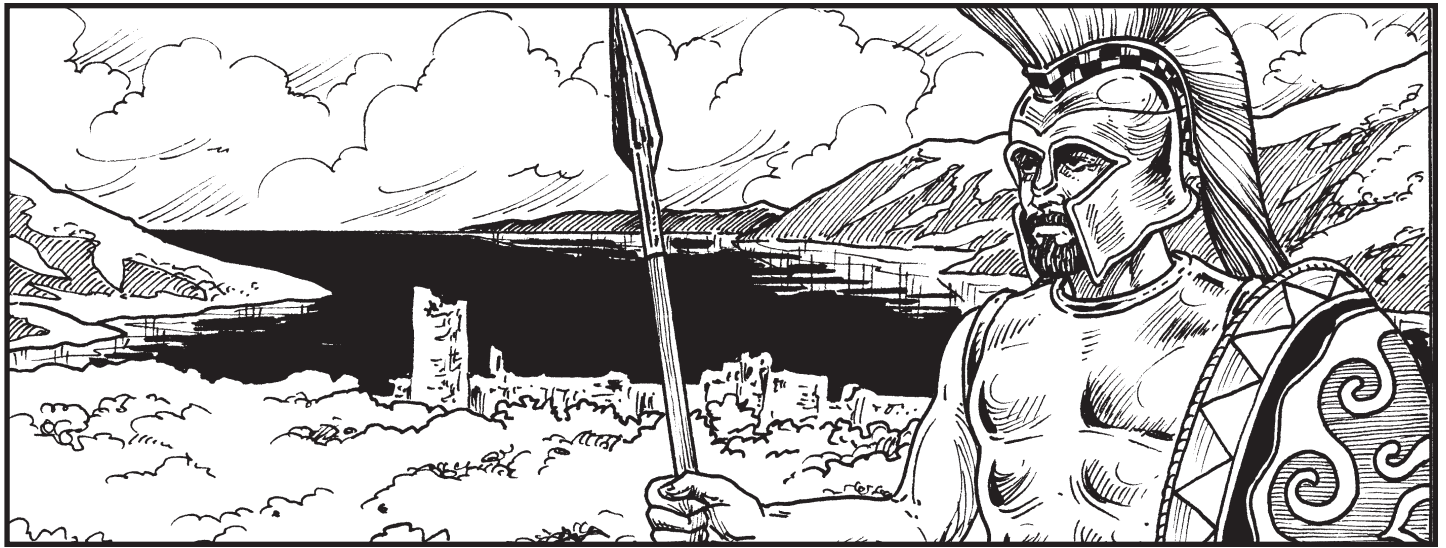
Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the **GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition**. Any page reference that begins with a B refers to the **GURPS Basic Set** – e.g., p. B102 means p. 102 of the **GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition**. Page references that begin with CI indicate **GURPS Compendium I**. Other references are MA to **GURPS Martial Arts**, M to **GURPS Magic**, and R to **GURPS Religion**. The abbreviation for *this* book is GR. For a full list of abbreviations, see p.CI181 or the updated web list at www.sjgames.com/gurps/abbrevs.html.

*Sing to me now, all ye Muses who dwell in the halls of Olympus,
Sing of the deeds of the Hellenes, who mastered both battle and wisdom.
Once tall Agamemnon, the monarch of men, and Achilles the godlike
With bronze-armored comrades sailed eastward, to topple the towers of Ilium.
Well-founded ships carried men on the wine-dark waves washing the shoreline,
Seeking new country for trade and for building the wealth of their cities.
Pericles, statesman of Athens, rebuilt his city's high places,
Raising its temples to heaven to stand as great beacons forever.
Citizens lowly and noble debated alike in assembly,
Every man's right was unquestioned to help in the weighty decision.
Sagest of Hellenes was Socrates, best of all questioning teachers,
Earning both hatred and love by his unequalled humor and wisdom.
Muses, sing of their lives so today's men and women may know them,
And live them again for a moment, for pleasure and also for learning.*

This worldbook covers two important periods in Greek history. The *Heroic Age* runs from about 1600 B.C. to 1150 B.C. The fantasy roleplayer will find all his favorite trimmings here – meddling gods, terrible monsters and epic wars. While the modern fantasy genre owes much to the Greek mythos, the world of the Heroic Age has its own unique twists. The heroic myths are also rooted in the actual events of the late Bronze Age, a time we have few records from but have learned much about from archeology.

The book also examines the Hellenic culture known to us through architecture, literature and philosophy. The era this book calls the *Classical Age* stretches from the emergence of the Greek city-state, about 800 B.C., to the death of Alexander in 323 B.C. Historical times were less romantic than the Heroic Age, but roleplayers need not fear boredom on that account. A bold and talented individual could make his mark in philosophy, in politics, or on the





field of battle (and often did all three). There is plenty of latitude for both thoughtful and action-driven roleplaying.

Most of the problems that the Greeks wrestled with still plague us today. They did not find all the answers, but they were the first to even ask many of the questions. In doing so they began European civilization as we know it. So enjoy the dawn of Western history, when the Greeks saw the world as if everything was new.

A NOTE ON SPELLING AND PRONUNCIATION

The Greeks used a script of their own, and there are at least two ways to transliterate any Greek word into English. Many Greek words come to us by way of the Romans, who transliterated them using the Latin alphabet. English speakers in turn apply English pronunciation rules to the Latin transliterations.

In this book, proper names are written using the familiar Latin forms. Make most consonant sounds hard rather than soft. *G* is usually pronounced as in *game*, never as in *general*. *C* is always pronounced as *k* when alone, never as *s*. The double consonant *ch* is usually pronounced as in the German *ach*. Some vowel sounds should be pronounced differently as well. The diphthong represented by *ae* should be pronounced *ai* as in *aisle*. The letter *-e* is not silent when it ends a Greek name, and does not change the pronunciation of any other vowel sound in the name. Say the letter *-y* like the French *u* or the German *ü* (try saying *ee* and *ooh* at the same time). Pronounce *a* as in *father*; and make *e* short, as in *get*; pronounce both *i* and *j* as in *meet*. *U* is “ooh” as in *loot*.

For example, the name *Mycenae* should be pronounced “muh-keh-neye” and not “mye-see-nee.” *Centaur* should be pronounced “ken-tawr” rather than “sen-tawr.” *Achilles* should be pronounced “a-khee-lehs” and not “a-tchi-lees.” *Aphrodite* is pronounced “a-fro-dee-teh” and not “a-fro-dye-tee” or “a-fro-dite.”

Greek words other than proper names are written using a transliteration common in modern studies of the classics. Essentially the spelling is phonetic and can be pronounced as it appears. Remember that final *-e* is not silent. Hence *arete* is pronounced “a-reh-teh” and not “a-reet.”

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jon F. Zeigler is a science-fiction writer and amateur historian. He and his wife and two children live in Maryland, where he works as a computer security consultant. He has written or contributed to a dozen books for *GURPS* or *GURPS Traveller*, and currently serves as the *GURPS Traveller* Line Editor for Steve Jackson Games. *GURPS Greece* was his first published book.

ACHAEANS, HELLENES, OR GREEKS?

What did the Greeks call themselves? In the beginning of their history, there is no evidence that they had a name for themselves as a nation. Homer calls the Greeks “Achaeans,” “Argives,” or “Danaans,” all names belonging to individual tribes or regions.

During the Greek Dark Ages and the overseas migrations, the Greeks came into contact with other peoples all over the Mediterranean basin. In southern Italy, the colonists included a number of tribesmen from an obscure Thessalian district called Hellas. The Italian hillmen came to call all Greeks “Hellenes.” This name, given them by a foreign people, apparently gave the Greeks their first sense of national identity. Within a few generations, all the Greeks were proudly calling themselves “Hellenes,” claiming the formerly-obscure hero Hellen as the ancestor of their whole people. The whole Greek homeland therefore became “Hellas.”

The name “Greek” also comes from Italy. One of the small colonial towns in central Italy was called Graecae, and the early Latin tribes called the inhabitants “Graeci.” Later, the Latins and Romans applied this name to all Hellenes.

CHARACTER TYPES

Most Greeks, particularly in the wealthier city-states, have a fairly extensive education. Soldier, athlete and aristocrat types are specifically listed below, but almost all Greeks get at least some training in military, athletic and cultural skills.

AMBASSADOR

Greek city-states do not exchange ambassadors as modern nations do. Instead, each city is represented abroad by its *proxenoi*. The *proxenos* is a native of the city he lives in, but has business or family connections with the city he represents. A *proxenos* is normally of high Status and involved in politics in his home city. If relations go sour with the city he represents, he might become less than popular with his fellow citizens.

Advantages: Status 3+. Other possibilities include Charisma, Empathy, Reputation, Voice and Wealth.

Disadvantages: Honesty and Sense of Duty (to represented city) are appropriate.

Skills: Acting, Administration, Bard, Detect Lies, Diplomacy, Heraldry, History, Law, Merchant, Politics and Savoir-Faire. A number of others might be useful, particularly other Social skills.

ARISTOCRAT

Even in the most democratic cities, the old aristocracy remain important all through the Classical period. Society expects good aristocrats to serve the *polis* faithfully and live morally upright lives in exchange for their wealth and privileges. Some fail to live up to this ideal, of course, and live lives of luxury and vice. Many aristocratic youths are notorious for their freewheeling lifestyles.

Advantages: High Status and Wealth. "Good" aristocrats will have Strong Will. Younger aristocrats who have not yet inherited might have their fathers as Patrons instead of a great deal of Wealth. All aristocrats have Literacy.

Disadvantages: Sense of Duty (to the *polis* or the family) and Honesty are appropriate for "good" aristocrats. Decadent aristocrats could have Alcoholism, Compulsive Carousing, Compulsive Gambling, Greed, Lecherousness, or other character flaws.

Skills: The usual Combat/Weapon skills (see p. 74), one or more athletic skills (see below), Literature, Musical Instrument (Lyre) and Singing are practically required in an aristocratic education. Aristocratic youths also learn Riding and Lance. Administration, Bard, History, Leadership, Philosophy, Politics, Savoir-Faire and Tactics are also appropriate. Carousing, Fast-Talk and Gambling are good for decadent aristocrats.

ATHLETE

The Greeks love athletic competitions of all kinds. Between events, everyone who can spare the time exercises to keep fit. Those who excel in sports become famous all over the Greek world, and often win great honors in their home cities. Almost all Greeks have basic athletic skills.

Advantages: A good Reputation is quite common for successful athletes. Highly successful ones might have their home city's governments as Patrons (providing stipends and other support). Combat Reflexes, High Pain Threshold and Toughness are appropriate for practitioners of the martial arts. Strong Will would also be appropriate, for any sport.

Disadvantages: Depending on the time period, *pankration* practitioners may have bad Reputations as bloodthirsty brutes.

Bloodlust or Sadism fit if this reputation is deserved. Many athletes had Overconfidence or Glory Hound.

Skills: The primary athletic skills are Boxing, Driving (Chariot), Jumping, Riding (Horse), Running, Swimming, Spear Throwing (for the javelin), Throwing (for the *diskos*) and Wrestling. Many athletes will have some Theology, since they must take part in religious ceremonies and offer sacrifices after winning. Social skills are also appropriate. (See also *Pankratium*, the Roman form of *pankration*, p. MA94.)

BARBARIAN

To the Greeks, anyone who doesn't speak Greek is a *barbaros*. In game terms, this character type represents *non-civilized* non-Greeks. Such folk often enter Greek society as slaves, but occasionally free barbarians visit the great cities or serve as mercenaries. The usual barbarians encountered in the Greek homeland are Macedonians, Thracians and Scythians.

Macedonians are a sturdy coastal people, living north of mainland Greece. Their language is closely related to Greek, and their society resembles that of the Greek Heroic Age. They are warlike, often defending themselves against less-civilized tribes.

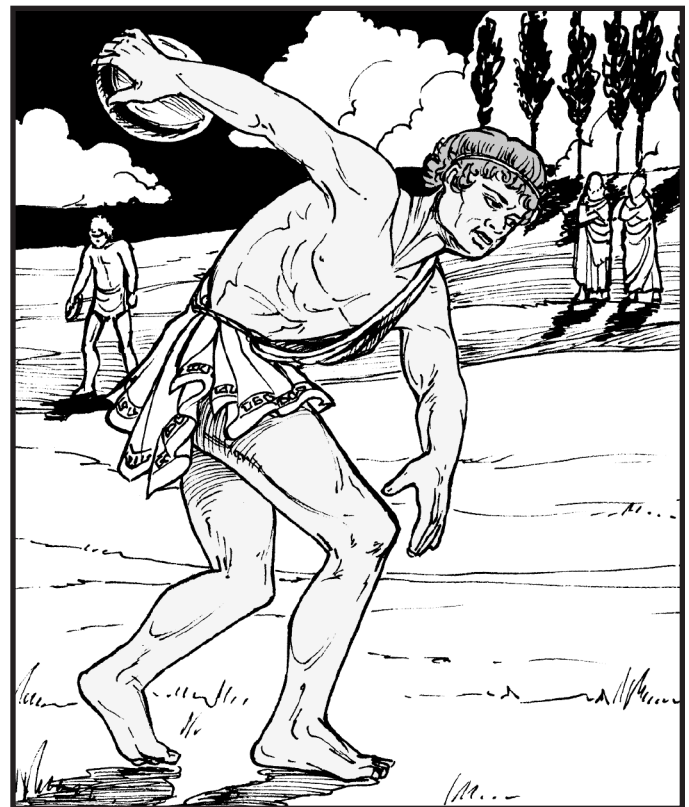
Thracians are a non-Greek people who live in the hills and forests northeast of Macedon. Greeks despise them for their brutality and warlike nature. They often provide light-armed mercenaries for Greek armies. Other hill tribes in Macedon and the surrounding country are similar.

Scythians are horse nomads, living in the vast open plains of Eurasia. The Greeks have many odd legends about these nomads, although they are seldom seen in Greece itself.

Advantages: Combat Reflexes, High Pain Threshold and Toughness are all common in stereotyped barbarians. Leaders might have Ally Groups.

Disadvantages: All non-civilized barbarians have Social Stigma: Barbarian for -15 points while in Greek society.

Skills: Survival skills and the Combat/Weapon skills appropriate to the home culture. Thracians and Scythians probably have Riding even if they are not of the upper classes.



CLERICAL MAGIC

GMs who have a copy of *GURPS Religion* may wish to use aspects of the clerical-magic system in that book. If so, it should be kept in mind that Greek cults are not well-organized above the community level. Every community worships the gods independently. In general, any rule in *GURPS Religion* which assumes an organized church will not apply.

One possible exception to this is the pre-Greek religion practiced by the Minoans during the Bronze Age. It is possible that these goddess cults were organized across the Minoan culture's territory. If the GM decides this is so, actions taken by one priestess may be recognized by all the others.

If the Clerical Investment rules from *GURPS Religion* are used, few cults will have more than one rank of priest. Only the largest and most important temples will have "high priests" who would be of second rank (10-point advantage).

Any of the non-shamanistic systems (pp. R100-R115) would probably be appropriate to a Greek setting. The major exception is the Excommunication spell (and the corresponding character disadvantage). Greek cults were not organized enough to make an excommunication stick.

As with normal spellcasters, priests should not generally have long spell lists. Most priests, even in a highly-magical setting, will likely have no Power Investiture at all.



MAGIC ITEMS

The heroic myths are full of enchanted objects. Here are some of the more famous items. Many more exist – consult a reference of Greek legends for ideas.

APHRODITE'S GIRDLE

The goddess of love wears this magical sash to enhance her already-stunning beauty. Any goddess or mortal woman wearing it becomes irresistible to the opposite sex. No change of appearance takes place, but the wearer gains a +3 bonus to her Sex Appeal skill. Only women can use this item, and it can only be used to enhance Sex Appeal against men.

Component Spells: Unknown.

Asking Price: If this item ever fell into mortal hands, it might fetch as much as \$40,000.

ATHENA'S SHIELD

This magical shield, also known as the *aegis*, actually belongs to Zeus. He usually entrusts it to Athena's care, however, and it has been loaned to mortal heroes on occasion. The *aegis* is a goat-hide shield, fringed with golden tassels. After Perseus's great adventure (see p. 31), the Gorgon's head was placed on its face. The Gorgon's face is usually covered. The shield acts at all times as a medium shield, and has Deflect cast on it for +4 to PD. When the shield's cover is removed, however, the Gorgon's image can be used to cast the Flesh to Stone spell (see p. M32). This casting can be done at range, with the usual skill penalties, and has the usual energy cost to the shield's user.

Component Spells: Deflect, Flesh to Stone (variant).

Asking Price: This item might sell for as much as \$250,000.

DAEDALUS' WINGS

Daedalus used these great wings to escape from Crete after being imprisoned by King Minos. They are real wings, made of birds' feathers attached to a frame by wax and thread. The user straps the wings to his arms and flaps them like bird's wings. He controls his own flight and has a flying Move of 10, reduced by encumbrance. He cannot effectively fight or cast spells while flying, since he must continually flap or spread the wings. The wings are large enough to use in soaring, however, so their use is not too fatiguing. The flyer loses 1 Fatigue for every 5 minutes in flight. The wings are rather delicate, and will not work if they get wet. Worse, if the wearer flies higher than about 1,500 feet, the sun's heat will melt the wax that holds the feathers together, and the wings will fall apart with disastrous consequences.

Component Spells: Flight (variant).

Asking Price: If Daedalus could be persuaded to create another pair of wings for someone, he would charge about \$50,000.

GORGON'S BLOOD

The blood of a Gorgon is a powerful substance. When Perseus slew the Gorgon, Medusa, the gods saved much of her blood and occasionally gave it out to mortals. The blood has different properties, depending on where in the Gorgon's body it came from, and on how it was treated afterward. Two of the possible uses are as follows:

Poison – when this form of the blood is ingested or injected into a victim, he immediately takes 4d of damage (2d if he makes a HT roll).

Resurrection – if this form of the blood is dribbled between the lips of a newly-dead person (within 1 hour of death), it restores him to life and heals all

Some of the legends about these monsters describe one weakness: they cannot stand the sound of angry voices, and flee in terror when insults are shouted at them. If the GM rules that this is true in his campaign, assume that an Empusa will make a Will Roll of 12 or less when insulted. Failure means that the demon will abandon her hunt and run. If the prey is a PC, have the *player* make up colorful insults. The Empusa's Will Roll may be at a penalty if the player is creative . . .

One of the more famous of these creatures was named Lamia. She was originally a mortal woman rather than a daughter of Hecate, but she was cursed by the gods. She later turned to cannibalism and blood-drinking with the other Empusae.

HARPY

ST: 12-17 **Speed/Dodge:** 20/10# **Size:** 1
DX: 14 **PD/DR:** 1/1 **Weight:** 100-200 lbs.
IQ: 8 **Damage:** 1d cut **Habitat:** Mountains
HT: 13-16 **Reach:** C

Harpies are half bird and half woman, filthy and hateful creatures who love to torment humans. Their usual tactic is to snatch food and drink, fouling whatever they cannot carry off. This gives the food a terrible stench and makes it totally unusable. Anyone who ingests harpy-fouled food or drink must make a HT roll. On a success, he will simply lose 2 HT and feel ill for several hours. On a failure, he will lose 1d+1 HT immediately and will be seized by painful stomach cramps. He will be at -3 to all skills and attributes until the lost HT is restored.

Harpies are not aggressive in combat and will flee if attacked. If cornered, they may plead for mercy (they speak human language, badly). Or they may attack with their claws for 1d cutting damage. When on the ground, they move with Speed 3, Dodge 7.

LERNAEAN HYDRA

ST: 25 **Speed/Dodge:** 6/6 **Size:** 3
DX: 12 **PD/DR:** 1/1 **Weight:** 800 lbs.
IQ: 3 **Damage:** 1d+1 imp **Habitat:** Marsh
HT: 16/30 **Reach:** C,1

The Lernaean Hydra was a marsh-dwelling monster that lived near the town of Lerna, in the Argolid. Its blood was a potent venom, and its presence blighted the entire region. Heracles killed it during his Second Labor.

The Hydra has a huge doglike body and some number of heads (nine in the most common form of the myth). Each turn, the Hydra may attack into front or side hexes with up to three heads, each one doing 1d+1 impaling damage. Each head is considered an independent hit location, with 6 hit points of its own (the HT above is for the body alone). The heads are at -4 to hit, and damage done to a head does not affect any other head or the body.

The Hydra can never be stunned or knocked unconscious, only killed by killing the body or all of the heads. Unfortunately, it has the capacity to grow two new heads for every one it loses. When a head dies, it withers and falls off, and new heads immediately begin growing in its place. In ten seconds, the new heads will be full-grown and can be used to attack. However, 6 points of flame damage applied to the neck stump (-4 to hit) will permanently cauterize it and neither new head will develop.



MEDUSA

ST: 11 **Speed/Dodge:** 6/6 **Size:** 1
DX: 12 **PD/DR:** 3/5 **Weight:** 140 lbs.
IQ: 10 **Damage:** 1d+2 cut# **Habitat:** Mountains
HT: 13 **Reach:** C,1

Medusa was one of the three Gorgons, semi-divine sisters. Two of the three Gorgon sisters were beautiful and immortal, but Medusa ran afoul of the goddess Athena and was transformed into a hideous monster. She was covered with hard scales and had a nest of snakes for hair. Anyone who looked directly at her face was turned to stone. She was slain by Perseus, who managed to look at her only in a shield polished to mirror brightness.

Consider Medusa to have an automatic Flesh to Stone spell (see p. M32). This costs her no fatigue and is always in effect. Her inherent skill with the spell is 15, resisted by the target's HT. Anyone who looks directly at Medusa and fails to resist the spell becomes completely petrified. This requires no action on her part. The effect is permanent unless countered by another spell.

The Flesh to Stone spell does not affect anyone looking at Medusa in a mirror. Fighting while looking in a mirror puts an attacker at -5 penalty to skill, while attacks with eyes closed are at -10. If necessary, Medusa can attack with claws for 1d+2 cutting damage.

MINOTAUR

ST: 18 **Speed/Dodge:** 8/6 **Size:** 1
DX: 13 **PD/DR:** 1/1 **Weight:** 250 lbs.
IQ: 8 **Damage:** 1d-1 imp# **Habitat:** Domestic
HT: 25 **Reach:** C

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