

G U R P S[®]

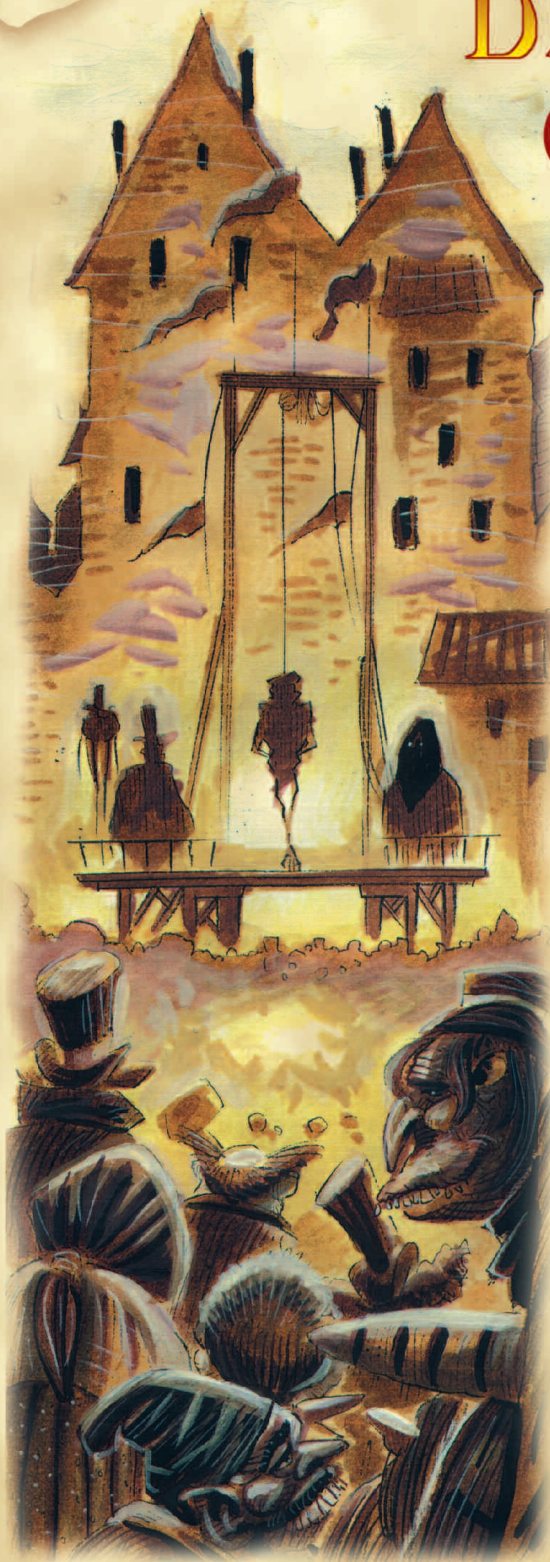
GOBLINS



By MALCOLM DALE AND KLAUDE THOMAS

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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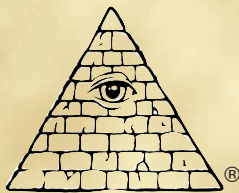
This game deals with a variety of unpleasant subjects, such as burglary, prostitution, child abuse, leeching, alcoholism, the opinions of O.S. Fowler, piracy and venereal disease.

It is unsuitable for small children or persons of frail moral character.

The inclusion of this subject matter should not be taken to imply that the authors or publishers in any way support, condone, or propagate these things in life.

WRITTEN BY MALCOLM DALE
AND KLAUDE THOMAS
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G U R P S[®]

GOBLINS[™]

By MALCOLM DALE AND KLAUDE THOMAS



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"... taking off my hat, quite as if I stood before a great lady, I gave her to understand that I had not acted otherwise than any man of spirit would have done in like circumstances." – *Memoirs of a Buccaneer*, L A T Le Golif, trans. Malcolm Barnes, 1707/1954.
To Kae Dale and Rachael Callender.

"*Par la mort bleu!* You pack of rascals! I shall have to come down and run a few of you through the belly and put an end to your drunken bawling!" Saying which, I fired two shots from my pistols which made them scatter in great haste into the shadows and put a full stop to their din. – *The Memoirs of a Buccaneer*, L A T Le Golif, trans. Malcolm Barnes, 1707/1954.

THANKS:

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION..... 4

About GURPS	4
About the Goblins	5
About the Authors	5

1. GOBLINS!..... 6

The Facts of Life	7
Aristocratic Lineages	7
Physique	8
The Tallest Goblin	8
The Shortest Goblin	8
The Heaviest Goblin	8
Attitude	9
The Goblin with the Loveliest Legs	9
Birds of a Feather – The Grand Opera House Orchestra	9

Map of London (ca. 1830).....10

2. THE WORLD..... 11

The Late Georgian Setting.....	12
Life and Times.....	12
London.....	13
High Society of the West End, Summarised	14
The West End	15
At the Theatre	15
In the Slums	17
The East End.....	18
Prostitution	18
Power and Government	19
Political Parties	19
Shipping	19
Climate	20
Influencing Parliament	20
Technology	21
Power.....	21
Weather	21
Technological Wonders	21
The Dangers of Modern Transport.....	22
Transport.....	23
Weapons	23
Fares	23
Medicine	24
Availability	24
Shopping	24
Buildings	25
Magnificence.....	25
Occupancy	26
Duties of Servants	27

3. PUNISHMENT AND THE LAW..... 28

Crimes.....	29
Ways to Cause Death.....	29
Burglar's Aids and Winning at Cards	29
Murder.....	30
Identifying Thieves, Liars and Murderers	30
Public Opinion	31
The Metropolitan Constabulary.....	31
Examples of Justice	31
Trial.....	32
The Crown Calendar for the Lincolnshire Lent Assizes, 1818	32
Punishment.....	33
Corporal Punishments	34
Newgate Prison.....	34
Capital Punishment.....	35
Death Without Mercy	36
The Proper Catastrophe of Jonathan Wild.....	36

4. STATUS..... 37

Social Status	38
How the Classes Relate to One Another	38
Classes.....	39
The Gutter	39
The Working Class.....	39
The Leisured Gentlefolk.....	39
The Titled Aristocracy	39
The King	39
Servants	39
Goblin Jingoism.....	40
Employment.....	40
Perils for the Commercial Traveler	40
Footmen.....	41
How to Spend Money.....	42
Borrowing to Maintain Social Status.....	42
Money.....	43
Food.....	44
Clothing.....	44
Shelter.....	44
Pleasures.....	44
Drinking in the Gutter	44
Fashions	45
Fashion in the Gutter	45

At the Dance	45
Manners	46
How the Other Half Lives	47
Fashion in the Working Class.....	48
Outfitting an Officer	48
Duelling	49
London Clubs	50
Fashion among the Leisured Gentlefolk.....	51
Un Journee en Bloomsbury.....	51
Drinking in the Upper Classes.....	52
Obtaining a Title	53
The Titled Aristocracy	54
Guiding Marriage and Romance	54
Summary of Terms of Address for the Titled Aristocracy.....	55
Spending Money.....	56
Foreigners	56
Drink & Vice.....	57
Drink.....	57
Giblet Pie	57
Proper Table Etiquette	58
Opiates and Other Narcotics	59
Ill-Gotten Gains.....	59
Gambling (and Cheating)	60
Horse Racing	60
Investment	61
Prices.....	62

5. CHARACTERS..... 63

Character Generation	64
Designing Your Goblin in Eight Easy Steps	64
Courage	64
The Goblin Racial Template.....	65
Preschool.....	65
Goblin Luck (or "The Attentions of God")	65
Mistreatments	66
Improving and Worsening Luck	66
Taking Control of Your Goblin's Life.....	67
Initial Cash, Status and Reputation	68
The Effects of Oppression	68
School.....	69
Deciding on the Right School.....	69
Apprenticeship	70



Fashionable Apprenticeships.....70
 Unfashionable Apprenticeships.....74
 Sundry Other Apprenticeships.....75
 Determining Shape and Size77
 Shape and Size Advantages
 and Disadvantages.....77
 Advantages, Disadvantages
 and Skills.....78
 Advantages78
 New Advantages.....78
 Disadvantages79
 New Disadvantages.....79
 Skills.....81
 New Skills81
 Quirks.....82
 Gender82
 Names82
 Starting Out on Life's
 Big Adventure.....82
 Employment.....83

**6. SUPERSTITION
 AND THE DEVIL84**

Superstition.....85
 The Church85
 A Street Preacher.....85
 The Philosophy of the
 Anglican Church.....86
 The Carrot and the Stick.....86
 Avoiding Sin.....86
 Angels.....86
 Original Sin.....87
 God.....87
 Patron Saints.....87
 The Angels.....88
 The Saints and the
 Virgin Mary.....88
 Miracles.....88
 The Devil.....89
 Bringing Forth the Devil
 (and Successfully
 Negotiating With Him).....89
 Religion in Play.....89
 God in Play.....90
 Angels in Play.....90
 The Devil in Play.....91
 A Deal With the Devil.....91
 Magic.....92
 A List of Spells Known Only
 in Ancient Egyptian.....92
 Influencing Witches, Ghosts
 and the Supernatural.....93
 Psionics.....93

**7. FIGHTING AND
 DRINKING.....94**

I'll Whack Him.....95
 The Pain and the Fear.....95

Fighting Boot and Nail.....95
 Weapons.....96
 Weapons at Different
 Social Levels.....96
 Painful Themes and
 Terrifying Variations.....96
 Guns and Shooting.....97
 Weapon Menace.....97
Weapon Tables.....98
 Drinking and Intoxication.....100
 Alcohol Rating.....100
 Tolerance.....100
 Binges.....100
 Intoxication Table.....101
 Drinking While Distracted.....101
 Special Modifiers for
 Intoxication.....101
 Other Modifiers.....102
 Shyness, Cowardice and
 Courage.....103
 Determining Mood.....103
 Sobering Shock.....103
 Sobering Up.....104
 Hangovers.....104
 Hyperaesthesia.....104

8. DISEASE.....103

Ways to Avoid Illness.....106
 Causing Disease.....106
 Madame Restell's Life-
 Destroying Crochet Hook.....107
 Principles of Medicine.....108
 Patent Medicines.....108
 Things to Do with a Corpse.....109
 Parr's Life Pills.....109
 Cures.....110
 Curing Disease.....110
Glossary of Ailments.....111

**9. DIRECTING
 THE GAME.....113**

The Importance of NPCs.....114
 Crossovers.....114
 Mapping Physical Terrain.....115
 Animals.....115
 The General Theme
 of a **Goblins** Campaign.....118
 In the Beginning.....118
 Casual Employment.....118
 Joining Society.....118
 Using the **GURPS** Reaction
 Table: An Optional Rule.....118
 Winging It.....119
 Social Webs – Creating
 a Society.....120
 Anticipating Luck.....120
A Social Web.....121
 Name-Based Characters.....122

10. ADVENTURES.....124

Introduction.....125
THE GUTTER.....125
 Ashestree Court.....125
 Life in the Gutter.....125
 A Word-Picture of the Street.....125
 Zeke McGrappen.....125
 A Low Lodging House.....126
 The Inhabitants.....126
 Chaste Lovelace.....126
 Provocation Lum.....126
 Adventure in the Gutter.....127
 The Horse Swapping.....127
 Salvation Plunge.....127
 Titus Rippen.....127
 Rumble the Butler.....127
 Provocation and His Cab.....128
THE WORKING CLASS.....128
 The Salisbury Theatre.....129
 Plunge Hall.....129
 Doctor Rudd.....130
 Adventure in the Theatre.....131
 Rat-Catching.....131
 Esther Bunks.....131
 Ungodly Lusts Johnson.....131
 Sodom Peach.....132
 Ahab Godwilling.....132
 The Stage.....133
 Backstage.....133
 The Abridged Macbeth,
 With Just the Witches
 and the Fighting.....134
**THE LEISURED
 GENTLEFOLK.....135**
 Dinner and the Club.....135
 The Dinner.....135
 Lady Drusilla Forbes.....135
 Bishop William Sodom.....135
 Moses Cruise.....136
 Prodigal Bean.....136
 Matthew Hands.....137
THE ARISTOCRACY.....137
 A Lord's Night Out.....138
 Ms Lucretia Lilywhite.....138
 Ms Lucretia's Letters.....138
 Ms Lucretia's Lemon
 Blancmange.....138
 Adventure in the Aristocracy.....139
 Lord Salvation's Nuptials.....139
 Mr R. Golightly.....139
 The Devil's Sooty Brother.....139
 The Plot to Blow Up the King.....140

GLOSSARY.....141
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....143
INDEX.....144





INTRODUCTION

About GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of **GURPS** players. We can be reached by email: info@sjgames.com. Our address is SJ Games, P.O. Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Resources include:

New supplements and adventures. **GURPS** continues to grow – see what’s new at gurps.sjgames.com.

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Store Finder (storefinder.sjgames.com): Discover nearby places to buy **GURPS** items and other Steve Jackson Games products. Local shops are great places to play our games and meet fellow gamers!

Bibliographies. Bibliographies are a great resource for finding more of what you love! We’ve added them to many **GURPS** book web pages, with links to help you find the next perfect element for your game.

Page References

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the **GURPS Basic Set**, Third Edition, Revised. 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, Revised. For a full list of abbreviations, see p. CI181 or the updated Web list at gurps.sjgames.com/abbrevs.html.



He was a snub-nosed, flat-browed, common-faced boy enough; and as dirty a juvenile as one would wish to see; but he had about him all the airs and manners of a man. He was short for his age; with rather bow-legs, and little, sharp, ugly eyes. His hat was stuck on the top of his head so lightly, that it threatened to fall off at every moment – and would have done so, very often, if the wearer had not had a knack of every now and then giving his head a sudden twitch, which brought it back to its old place again. He wore a man’s coat, which reached nearly to his heels. He had turned the cuffs back, half-way up his arm, to get his hands out of the sleeves, apparently with the ultimate view of thrusting them into the pockets of his corduroy trousers; for there he kept them. He was, altogether, as roistering and swaggering a young gentleman as ever stood four feet six, or something less, in his bluchers.

“Hollo, my covey! what’s the row?” said this strange young gentleman to Oliver.

– Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist*



This supplement more or less relates to the sad lives and hard times of persons living in late Georgian London – that is, the city is more or less London, the individuals concerned are more or less persons, and King George is more or less late. The year is 1830.

A roleplaying game usually sends characters on an exploration, in which they seek elusive treasure through uncharted jungles, ruins and dungeons, overcoming obstacles and whacking monsters with magic or astounding technology.

Such things are sadly rare in this game. **Goblins** is set in a city, where every square inch has been trod by one and a half million pairs of feet, and all obstacles are marked on a handy street map. The ruins and dungeons are far from uncharted – the only creature who never explores them is the landlord who rents them out. The magic is dubious. The technology isn’t astounding.





There are, however, plenty of monsters, in every conceivable shape and size. They live in the characters' houses; eat their food; buy groceries at the same market. Many of them are relatives. The characters of **GURPS Goblins** roam well-worn, familiar streets in a sea of unwashed, diseased rogues and villains. The characters *are* unwashed, diseased rogues and villains. They seek the same elusive treasures that all do – gin, glory, and bags of money.

GURPS Goblins was designed with the following philosophies in mind:

Death should be difficult to come by, and murder is discouraged, unless an individual works at it pretty seriously. Our dubious heroes may fling themselves boldly into the most perilous of endeavours, secure in the knowledge that at worst they will be horribly and permanently maimed.

Characters improve and advance themselves with social interaction, and by gaining social level. The aim of every goblin should be to gain security and power with improved social level, faster than he degenerates physically through disease, age, and the aforementioned maiming.

Characters should be answerable for their actions. If a character bashes a monster, it will be as angry, frightened and lusty for vengeance as the character would be. After all, monsters have feelings, too. Because they all live in the same city (and are discouraged from solving disputes by bumping each other off), old crimes are not easily forgotten, and return with a vengeance just when they are least welcome. Courage governs the actions of characters, more than physical endurance. It is intended that goblins should end a violent dispute by running away or begging piteously, rather than by being beaten to a small pulp. Being beaten to a small pulp is, after all, the worst that can happen.

Except for catching French Pox. Or tetters.

About the Goblins

The race of goblins encompasses a huge variety of creatures of different appearance, menace and ability. If encountered in a fantasy setting, many of them might be taken for gnomes, hobgoblins, trolls, ogres, giants and so on. Nevertheless, they make up a single fecund, belligerent species. There is no question of different races, let alone cross-breeding. They are all just goblins, and come in whatever shape, size and colour they please.

About the Authors

The private sensualist may be known by his pallid, bloodless countenance, and hollow, sunken and half-ghastly eyes, the lids of which will frequently be tinged with red; while if his indulgence has been carried very far, he will have black and blue semi-circles under his eyes, and also look as if worn out, almost dead for want of sleep, yet unable to get it &c.

He will also have a half-wild, half vacant stare or half-lascivious, half-foolish smile . . . little things will agitate and fluster him. Nor will he walk erect or dignified, as if conscious of his manhood, and lofty in his aspirations, but will walk and move with a diminutive, crying, sycophantic, inferior, mean, self-debased manner, as if depreciated and degraded in his own eyes; thus telling you perpetually by his shamed looks and sheepish manner that he has been doing something low, mean, contemptible and vulgar.

– O.S. Fowler, *Warning And Advice to the Married and Single*, 1877.

Malcolm Dale is a fine, upstanding fellow, clean-limbed, well-traveled and sophisticated, with a degree in Zoology and a qualification as a Patent Attorney. He is a graphic artist. His clear, blue eyes carry a lilting smile, and his merry laugh gladdens the hearts of those around him, who love him dearly.

Klaude Thomas is a sterling gentleman, tall, dark and manly, with a background of years of dedicated study and game-designing experience. He is a game designer. His dark, limpid eyes glow with serenity and wisdom, and the mellow tones of his sonorous voice bring calm and clarity to the minds of those around him, who love him dearly.



The skin colour of goblins is varied, even over the surface of an individual goblin. Those who have been boiled at an early age are a rosy pink colour, blushing to fiery red in the actual parts immersed, while those raised in complete darkness are as white as the belly of a fish. Those born in a hot summer or spending much of their time outdoors can be very black, and those raised in a tropical climate are inevitably very dark. Diet influences colouring, with fruit, spices and meats giving a yellow, orange or red tinge to the skin respectively. Finally the health of the individual adds its touches, with jaundice, smallpox, scarlet fever, leprosy, consumption and apoplexy all contributing to the palette, and freckles, liver spots and the flags of alcoholism finishing the picture. There is no discrimination on the basis of skin colour in goblin society.

Attitude

The goblin attitude to life is not a pleasing one. Higher sentiments such as love, respect, patriotism, and community spirit are overwhelmed by the forces of greed, fear and revenge. Vanity and lust play a role, but collapse quickly under pressure.

Although goblins do not care for charity, the webs of society bind them together. A goblin may be obliged to put himself to considerable risk on behalf of a "friend," simply to prevent his own fortunes from collapsing along with his associate's. This binding effect is carried to its extreme in the bonds of marriage, where two goblins tie their fortunes together by setting up joint bank accounts (accessible only with the signature of both parties), buying property together, and acquiring a title on the basis of their combined strengths. These partnerships can last a lifetime, and in some cases the long familiarity, habits and shared sufferings can blossom into an irrational attachment, resembling affection.

Greed is the first great motivator behind the actions of goblins. The main point to a goblin's life is to achieve something within their own lifetimes, which they themselves can enjoy contemplating. The happiness of future generations means less than nothing to goblins, and they have no interest in (for example) producing lasting works of art or literature which might impress those future generations, unless it results in tangible rewards which they can enjoy in the present.

Fear is the second great motivator of goblin behaviour. A life without achievements might be bad, but no one wants it cut prematurely short. The possibilities of crippling, maimings and destitution also stir powerful emotions in the goblin heart.

Revenge is the third great motivator – a desire to exact fear, loss and suffering upon those who cause travail and deprivation in one's own life. This is particularly true when a goblin has lost everything, and has no hope of regaining it. At such times a goblin has nothing to sustain greed or fear, and is consumed entirely by the desire for revenge.

Vanity is a strong emotion in goblins, and sometimes it can overcome greed, fear and revenge. A classic example is the public execution at Tyburn, to which quite a few condemned goblins go eagerly, relishing the opportunity to be the centre of attention of a crowd of thousands, wearing a well-tailored suit of clothes and showing devil-may-care courage in the face of Death.

Superficially, lust is a strong emotion, particularly in more mature goblins. In fact it is usually just fear of Age and Death, or some form of greed, fear, revenge and vanity, masquerading as lust. Occasionally even young goblins may be driven to do foolish things out of lust, but usually they show a rapid change of heart if other motivators pull in a contrary direction. Green Sickness (see *Diseases*, p. 111) will sometimes smite a goblin, and fill him with irrational passions, resembling love. It is best cured with a strong dose of Dalby's Carminative (1s 9p per bottle) or Frampton's Pill of Health (1s 1p per box of 20).

The Goblin with the Loveliest Legs

At present, the unusually long leg is the most fashionable body feature in London society. Really, the current fashion is just an extension of that perennial favourite, the monstrous buttock, which has been in high regard for much of the preceding 100 years.

Given the attraction of the leg, it may seem odd that fashionable female attire includes a skirt reaching to the floor. This might be explained (and often is) by the old adage that to conceal is to allure, but then how can one explain male fashionable attire, which includes trousers so tight as to resemble a second skin, often coloured white or beige to heighten the similarity? The most highly regarded legs in London belong to Mr Exodus Meloane, who is 6'8" tall, and of whom the lower 4'6" is made up entirely of leg, of the most elegant shape and proportions.



Birds of a Feather – The Grand Opera House Orchestra

The orchestra at the Grand Opera House in Haymarket is composed entirely of foreign musicians of the long-fingered, spidery type. Their musical talent is undisputed, but the sight of all those flailing digits in the pit, waving and strumming in time to the score, presents an extraordinary and rather mesmerising effect, which may be distracting to newcomers.

– Jacob Dreadwort & Solomon Grimm, *Intimate Tableaus of London Life*.



served. A good dinner might comprise six different *hors d'oeuvres* – *canapés*, *bouchées*, a few *koftas*, *dolmas* and *samosas*, and perhaps a plate of *pirozhok*. The main course should include at least one fish, one bird and three animals with four legs (each), together with at least one vegetable for each meat, some chutneys and a profusion of indeterminate jellied dishes, which no one ever eats. For dessert, choose French and Italian dishes only. Four desserts should be provided, at least two of them hot. Finally, a cheeseboard with the port.

There should always be more dishes presented than can be eaten, but “spare” dishes can be taken back by the chef for a modest refund, if untouched. The same *blancmange* may visit six houses in a week by this arrangement, although some boorish goblins make a point of plunging their spoon into every dish as it passes the table, before the servants can whisk it away again.

☛ Shelter

The houses and apartments of Leisured Gentlefolk do not differ significantly in general plan from those of the Working Class, but are on a larger scale and will definitely be in a better area. Fortunately, London is a tangled city; “a better area” can be found within three streets of almost any disreputable slum, so it is not necessary to move far when moving up in class.

Fewer goblins occupy each house, each having two, three or four personal rooms and shares in two or three others. Most of the additional “Shelter” expense goes toward making the house magnificent. A piano should be acquired, perhaps a chandelier or a four-poster bed, an oak dining table, and of course those indispensable furnishings: servants (see p. 27 and sidebar, p. 39).

☛ Pleasures

The pleasures open to the Leisured Gentlefolk are many, but still seem insufficient to keep them amused in a savoury manner. Numerous low diversions are added to the list, more or less secretly, by bored Gentlefolk in their idleness.

The favoured alcohols are whisky, brandy and wine, particularly champagne. However, no alcohol is avoided if sufficiently expensive, except those in brown bottles, and no cabinet would be complete without a gin, a port and a sherry. Whisky may be Irish or Scotch, according to choice (American “whiskey” is not acceptable). Brandy should be a cognac, preferably Courvoisier’s; the wine selection should include a good claret, a soft burgundy, a few fruity Germans and a couple of French delicacies. Not to be forgotten are a few bottles of cheap Marsala for visiting clergy, and a bottle of cheap Madeira to keep the butler out of anything more expensive.

Gambling is performed only at clubs, races or boxing – not at home or in public places. At the club one may play at billiards, baccarat, quize or whist. Racing of horses is the only seemly contest of animals at which gentlefolk might gamble – dogs or pigeons are not suitable, and ratting is entirely unacceptable. Boxing is a popular subject for wagers, in this class as in every other; people talk about a match for a week before and a week after, speculating on which combatant has been paid the most to take a fall and the most not to.

Licentious indulgence is common and unsavoury; no further detail need be given of these unwholesome amusements, except to say that they tend to be indiscreet and dangerous.

The opera is much frequented by goblins of this class, and is an elevating influence on many of them. While some attend only to be seen there and others attend to meet and leave without being seen, most actually go to enjoy the

Obtaining a Title

Leisured Gentlefolk have another category of expenditure, less clearly defined than the others, but more important in that it forms the main objective of the class. This is of course, obtaining a title.

A title comes with a property – a parcel of land in the provinces and a house in the City, courtesy of King George. The size of the parcel varies from a small country manor and 50 humble peasants, to Wales (in the case of the Prince of Wales). This land comes with a manager and an accountant, who do all the work and dish out an annual income to the Titleholder, of anything from £2,000 upwards. The annual income from a property is about 4% of its total value.

There are only 2,400 landed titles to be had: 1,300 Baronets and 1,100 Barons, Viscounts, Earls, Marquesses, Dukes and Duchesses. To obtain one, it is necessary that a current titleholder should meet a timely demise, or move up to a higher title. Titleholders can recommend a successor, if they have time, but the decision as to who succeeds to which title rests ultimately in the hands of three bodies – the House of Lords, the popular press, and King George.

The House of Lords comprises all the Titled Aristocracy except Baronets; to appeal to them it is necessary to have impeccable grace, dress sense, money and good legs. To appeal to the popular press, one must be of irreproachable moral character but with a touch of fun. To appeal to King George, one must meet him and have at least 10 freshly-earned character points to talk about. The King cannot abide dull conversation. (These 10 points are used to acquire King George as an exceedingly powerful Patron, who only assists on a 3.)

Naturally, few goblins among the Leisured Gentlefolk are possessed of this combination of qualities. Dress sense and the popular press can easily be bought, and a little money displayed to its best advantage, but the processes by which character points are obtained or legs lengthened are expensive, painful and dangerous. Deficiencies in these categories are best remedied or glossed over by worming in amongst the Peers and applying those trusty levers: bribery, blackmail and begging . . . or by marriage.

In marriage, two goblins combine their good qualities to gain a title between them, because of course when one is elevated the spouse is also. A gentleman with good legs and irreproachable moral character might marry a lady with good dress sense, money and a touch of fun, and by adding their character points together, make themselves sufficiently amusing for King George.



CHARACTER GENERATION

Courage

This measures the enthusiasm with which one greets a frightening situation. Courage varies depending on the weather, one's injuries and state of health, how drunk one is, and the Menace of the opponent one is facing. Most goblins are not particularly menacing (Menace 0); however, levels of the Menace advantage (p. 78) and a dangerous-looking weapon can change this.

Courage has a base value equal to ST. It can be raised or lowered from that value by taking the Extra Courage advantage (4 points per level) or the Reduced Courage disadvantage (-4 points per level), in much the same way that Strong and Weak Will modify Will from its base value of IQ.

Example: If ST is 12, Courage starts at a base value of 12 and can be raised to 13 for 4 character points, to 16 for 16 points, or lowered to 11 as a -4 point disadvantage.

The Cowardice disadvantage reduces a goblin's Courage by 1, while Social Status above 0 is added to Courage.

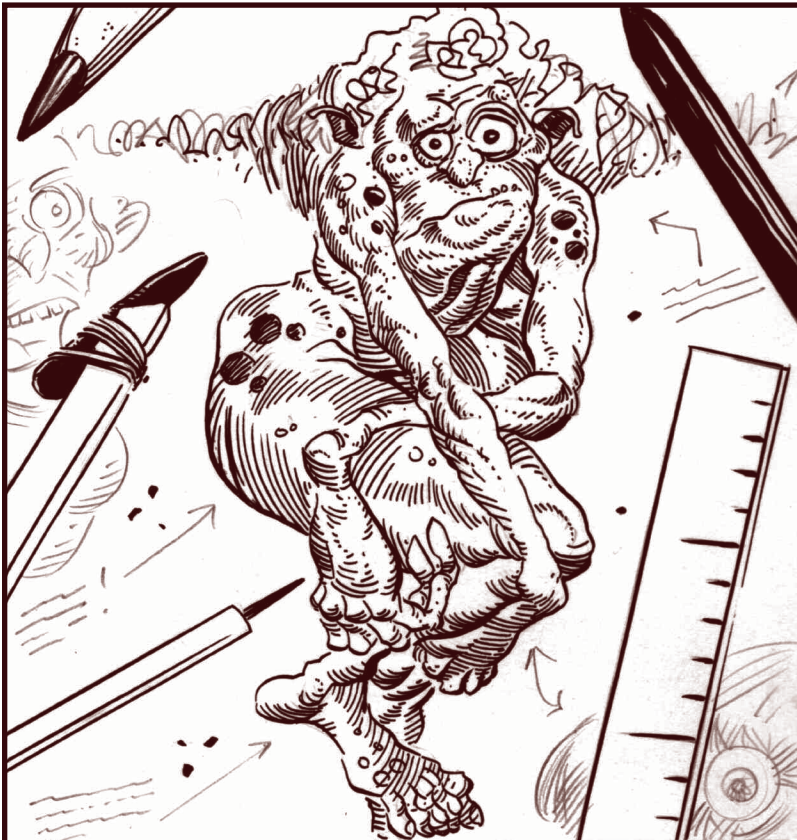
The use of Courage in combat is explained under *Combat* (see p. 96). Briefly, in combat the perceived Menace of opponents and damage taken reduce Courage. Once Courage drops below 0, make a Fright Check each turn at a penalty equal to the amount by which Courage is negative.

Starting Points

The beginning goblin starts off in worse circumstances than the average human being. Beginning goblins are, in most cases, malnourished and underprivileged members of London society. Such heroism as they possess is born of desperate circumstances. To reflect this, goblins are around 15-point characters, but they should be allowed a full -45 points of personal disadvantages and quirks. This is *in addition to* any disadvantages acquired during *Preschool* or *School*, and the -73 points from the *Goblin Racial Template*. All told, a starting goblin might easily have -120 to -150 points in disadvantages! Because of the various disadvantages and advantages a goblin acquires during school, starting goblins in the same adventure will not all have the same point total.

Playing At Different Point Values

To run a campaign set at higher social levels, waive the limitations on Status and Wealth, and allow the players even more points of disadvantages. This realistically portrays the dissipation accompanying social advancement. Age and reduced attributes would be extremely appropriate disadvantages in such a campaign, especially if the characters are Filthy Rich. Moreover, goblins of high Status have undoubtedly acquired their position at the expense of others, and so will have a great many Enemies in their wake. To play a realistic game (that is, a Georgian London campaign without the goblins), the easiest method may be to reduce disadvantages to 40 points, increase initial character points to 25 or 50, and create human characters. This should not prevent the players or GM from portraying remarkable eccentricities or abilities.



Designing Your Goblin In Eight Easy Steps

To design your goblin character, pluck a Prole off the street at random – it doesn't matter which one, they're all alike – and follow these steps:

1. Record all of the racial traits listed in the *Goblin Racial Template* (p. 65).
2. Put your Prole through *Preschool* (p. 65): choose a birthday, then roll six times on the *Mistreatments* table to determine your Prole's history of mistreatment over the first six years of life. Modify your character accordingly.
3. Put your Prole through the *School* (p. 69) of your choice, and make any modifications indicated there.
4. Select your Prole's *Apprenticeship* (p. 70), and make any modifications suggested *there*.
5. Choose your Prole's ST, then determine its *Shape* and *Size* (see p. 77).
6. Buy your other attributes, including *Courage* (see sidebar, this page).
7. Spend any remaining character points.
8. Give your goblin a name and gender. It is 14 years of age. The game may now begin . . .

Crossovers

In the sidebars of this chapter are several crossover adventure seeds, arranged in chronological order against the unlikely event that some profoundly enterprising young goblins acquire a time machine.

The late 15th Century: Jabberwocky – Goblins’ Dark Past (Dirt, Slime and Turnips)

The year is more or less 1483, and Richard of Gloucester is more or less the King of England, or at least, he would be if old Edward would just move on. It is the age of gallant knights in shining armour, fighting with the sword, the lance and the shield. Lavish costumes, stunning castle backdrops, casts of a thousand toiling peasants, all wait to form a feast for the imagination.

Three hundred and fifty years before goblins became civilised, genteel creatures of the 19th Century, they were lewd, rough and nasty – except the king of course, God rest him. The society was very strictly classist, with the aristocracy (who had swords and armour) doing exactly as they liked, and the peasantry (who had pitchforks and smocks) also doing exactly as the aristocracy liked. For the aristocracy, it was a fine time. For the peasantry it was not. Unfortunately, there was no way for a peasant to become an aristocrat – unless a group of them could catch one unawares, and split his shell open like an oyster . . .

Diseases and illnesses were no worse in those days than they are now, contrary to popular belief – only the cures and the surgery were worse. Leeching had not yet been invented, nor hygiene, nor any medicine except of the crudest sort. A cure for piles had recently been found, comprising the steps of 1) boiling an egg; 2) slipping it – hot as the patient can bear – up the fundament; 3) waiting for it to cool; and 4) returning to step one. The cures for plague are various, but most involve strapping a fish to the sole of each foot with a bandage.

A variety of exciting adventures are open to the medieval peasant goblin, involving travel, fighting, lusty interludes and the potential for wealth beyond their wildest imaginings:

Continued on next page . . .

THE IMPORTANCE OF NPCs

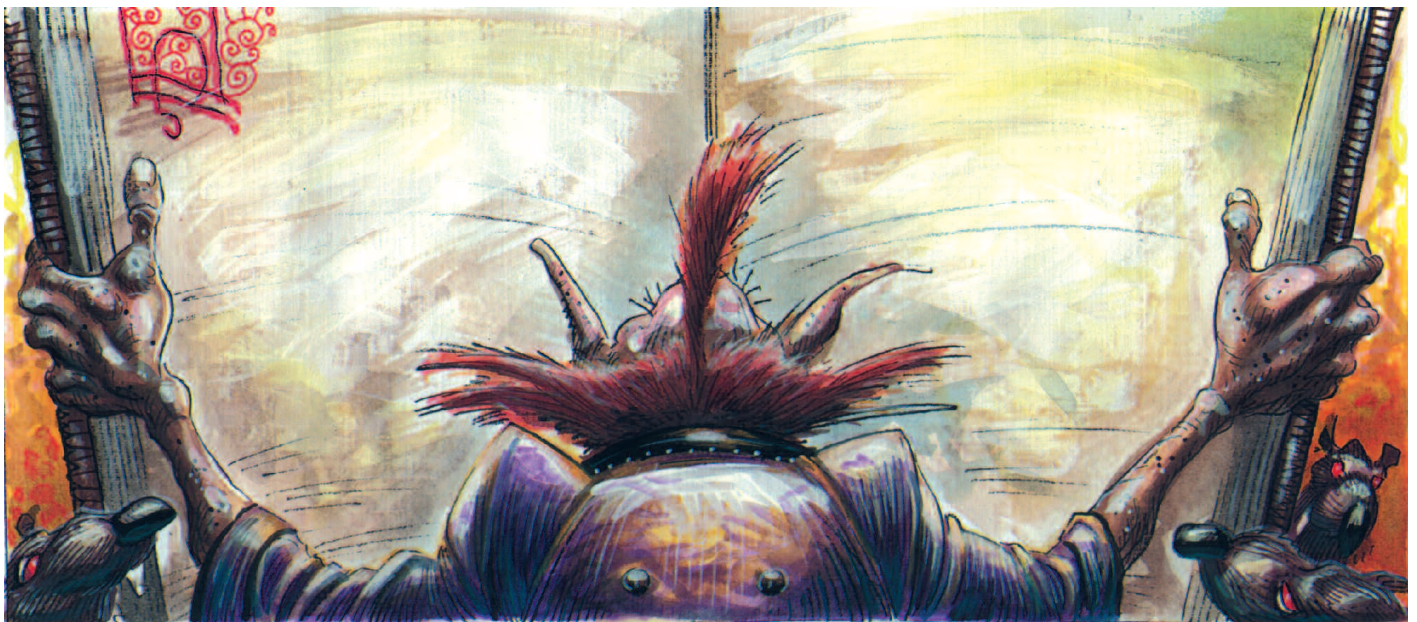
The *Goblins* campaign is set in a “normal” city, filled with shops and houses rather than ruins, dungeons and castles. The scenery is fairly ordinary, and nearly every room has windows by which a character may exit from any scene of unpleasantness. Anything found in one building is likely to be available in most other houses as well, so if, for instance, a goblin is in need of an armchair, and finds it difficult to remove one through a doorway because of the fine Chubb lock on it, he can simply go next door and take one of their chairs instead. It is sometimes difficult to keep adventurous goblins in a particular unpleasant spot at a particularly unpleasant time, as when they run into any physical difficulty they are bound to simply leave, and try again next door or next week.

It is usually better to compel them to deal with unpleasant persons (and pleasant ones), regardless of time or place. When creating the adventure (or scenario), attention should be directed to producing a large number of well-rounded NPCs. They should be woven into an intricate web of social and business associations so that the actions of the characters with regard to one goblin will have an effect on all the other goblins they meet and live among.



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INDEX

Addiction disadvantage, 79.
 Advantages, 78-79; NPC, 122.
 Adventures, 125-140.
 Age disadvantage, 79.
 Alcohol: ratings, 100; tolerance, 100;
Tolerance advantage, 78.
 Alcohol-related Quirks
 disadvantage, 80.
 Alcoholism (Extreme)
 disadvantage, 80.
 Alcoholism (Racial) disadvantage, 79.
 Ally advantage, 78.
 Angels, 86, 88; *in play*, 90.
 Animals, 115-117.
 Apprenticeships, 70-76.
 Aristocracy, 7, 39, 54; *adventure in*,
 137-140; *and weapon choice*, 97.
 Attitudes, 9.
 Attributes, NPC, 122.
 Barbers, *and disease*, 106; *and disease*
treatment, 110.
 Bible, 82, 85.
 Bibliography, 143.
 Bill, the, 30, 72.
 Birthday, 64, 65, 106.
 Bleeding, 97.
 Blindness disadvantage, 79.
 Borrowing, 17, 42.
 Buildings, 25.
 Burglary, 15, 44, 71.
 Campaigns, 114-120; *crossover*, 114-
 118; *settings*, 12; *themes*, 118-119.
 Characters: *design*, 64; *generation*, 64.
 Cheating, 60-61.
 Church, 85; *in the Gutter*, 48; *in the*
Working Class, 51.
 Classes, 39; *relations between*, 38.
 Clothing, 44; *among the Leisured*
Gentlefolk, 51; *in the Gutter*, 45; *in*
the Working Class, 48; *of the*
Aristocracy, 54.
 Clubs, London, 14, 15, 50, 56; *and the*
Leisured Gentlefolk, 135-137.
 Combat, 95-97; *and picks*, 96; *dirty*
tricks, 96.
 Commerce, 18, 55, 61.
 Common Sense advantage, 78.
 Compulsive Behaviour (High Living)
 disadvantage, 79.
 Courage, 5, 64, 64, 95; *and injury*, 96;
in combat, 96; *recovering*, 96.
 Cowardice disadvantage and drink-
 ing, 103.
 Crimes, 29.
 Crossover campaigns, 114-118.
 Cures, 110.
 Deafness disadvantage, 79.
 Death, 5; *instant*, 97; *without mercy*,
 36.
 Dependent disadvantage, 79.
 Devil, the, 30, 85, 89; *deals with*, 91;
in play, 91.
 Disadvantages, 79-81; NPC, 122.
 Discrimination, *color*, 9; *gender*, 82.
 Disease: *and barbers*, 106; *and*
Diagnosis skill, 109; *and licentious*
indulgence, 106; *glossary of*, 111-
 112; *tables*, 107-108.
 Drinking, 43, 57-59; *among the*
Leisured Gentlefolk, 53; *and*
Courage, 95, 103; *and Cowardice*
disadvantage, 103; *and hangers*,
 104; *and hyperaesthesia*, 103; *and*
mood, 103; *and shocks*, 103; *and*

Shyness disadvantage, 103; *and*
sobering up, 104; *in the Gutter*, 44,
 46; *in the Working Class*, 50; *in the*
upper classes, 52; *rules for*, 100-
 104; *while distraught*, 101.
 Duelling, 14, 30, 49, 97.
 Dungeons, 4.
 Dwarfism disadvantage, 79.
 Employment, 40, 83; *casual*, 118.
 Enemy disadvantage, 79.
 Extra Courage advantage, 78.
 Extra Hit Points advantage, 78.
 Family, 7.
 Fashion, 44; *among the Leisured*
Gentlefolk, 51; *in the Gutter*, 45; *in*
the Working Class, 48; *of the*
Aristocracy, 54.
 Fat disadvantage, 79.
 Fatigue, *and Courage*, 95.
 Fear, 9; *and Courage*, 95.



Filch skill, 81.
 Food, 44; *among the Leisured*
Gentlefolk, 52; *in the Gutter*, 45; *in*
the Working Class, 49; *of the*
Aristocracy, 55.
 Footmen, 41.
 Foreigners, 15, 45, 56, 71, 75, 92.
 Fur advantage, 78.
 Furniture, 26.
 Gambling, 60.
 Gasworks, 17.
 Gender, 8, 82.
 Ghosts, 19, 30.
 Gigantism disadvantage, 79.
 Goblin Aging disadvantage, 81.
 Goblin Jingoism, 40; *disadvantage*, 80.
 Goblin luck, 65; *in adventures*, 128,
 132, 137, 140; *example*, 118.
 Goblin Resilience advantage, 78.
 Goblin Snobbery disadvantage, 80.
 God, 87; *in play*, 90.
 Government, 19-20, 55.
 Greed, 9, 87; *disadvantage*, 79.
 Guns, 12, 97.
 Gutter, 39; *adventure in*, 125-128; *and*
weapon choice, 96.
 Hangings, 14, 16, 30, 35.
 Hangovers, 104.
 Hit Location, 96.
 Honesty disadvantage, 79.
 Horrible Hangovers disadvantage, 81.
 Houses, *low lodging*, 126; *upper-class*,
 129.
 Humours, malignant: *and disease*, 106;
treatment of, 110.
 Hyperaesthesia, 104.
 Illiteracy disadvantage, 79.
 Immunity to Disease advantage, 78.
 Injury, 96.
 Intolerance disadvantage, 79.
 Intoxication: *modifiers*, 101, 102;
table, 101-103.
 Investment, 61.
 Job Table, 83.
 Judges, 32, 55.
 King George, 12, 29, 39; *noble suffer-*
ings of, 87.
 Knockback, 96.
 Lame disadvantage, 79.
 Law, 12, 16, 29, 31, 35, 55.
 Leisured Gentlefolk, 39; *adventure in*,
 135-137; *and weapon choice*, 96.
 Licentious indulgence, 45; *among the*
Leisured Gentlefolk, 53; *and dis-*
ease, 106; *in the Gutter*, 47; *in the*
Working Class, 50; *of the*
Aristocracy, 56.
 Light Hangover advantage, 78.
 Literacy advantage, 78.
 Lockpicking skill, 81.
 London Bridge, 18.
 London, 13-19.
 Love, 9.
 Lust, 9, 87.
 Macbeth, *Abridged, with Just the*
Witches and the Fighting, 135.
 Magic, 4, 75, 92.
 Maimings, 5, 95, 97.
 Manners, 46.
 Map, 10.
 Marriage, 9.
 Medicine, 24; *patent*, 108; *principles*
of, 108; *ratings of*, 110.
 Menace, *advantage*, 78; *weapon*, 97.
 Miracles, 88, 90.
 Mistreatment, 65; *table*, 66.
 Money, 18, 43; *how to spend*, 42;
spending, 56.
 Monsters, 5.
 Murder, 5, 30, 95.
 Music, 8, 15; *among the Leisured*
Gentlefolk, 53; *and magic*, 92; *in*
the Gutter, 47; *in the Working*
Class, 50.
 Names, 82.
 Narcotics, 59-60.
 Necrophilia disadvantage, 81.
 No Hangover advantage, 78.
 NPCs: *character generation*, 122;
importance of, 114.
 "Only When Drunk" disadvantages,
 80.
 Overweight disadvantage, 79.
 Pacifism disadvantage, 79.
 Patron advantage, 78.
 Peelers, 15, 31, 74-75.
 Phobia disadvantage, 81.
 Phobias, NPC, 122.
 Physiques, 8, 67, 77; NPC, 122.
 Picks, 96.
 Pleasures, 13, 44; *among the Leisured*
Gentlefolk, 53; *in the Gutter*, 46; *in*
the Working Class, 50; *of the*
Aristocracy, 55-56.
 Point values, *different*, 64; *starting*, 64.
 Power, 21.
 Pregnancy, 7, 107, 112.
 Preschool, 65.
 Prices, 62.
 Prisons: *Fleet*, 17; *Newgate Gaol*, 17,
 34-35, 88.

Proles, 7, 65-82.
 Prostitution, 18, 73.
 Psionics, 93.
 Punishments, 14, 16, 33-36.
 Quirks, 82.
 Racial Template, 65.
 Reaction Table, 118-119.
 Reduced Courage disadvantage, 81.
 Religion, 85-91; *in play*, 89.
 Reproduction, 7.
 Reputation, starting, 68.
 Revenge, 9.
 Saints, 88; *patron*, 87.
 School, 69; *charity*, 70; *private and*
dame, 70; *public*, 69.
 Sense of Duty disadvantage, 79.
 Servants, 27, 39, 44, 76; *duties of*, 27;
rewards of, 41.
 Shelter, 44; *among the Leisured*
Gentlefolk, 53; *in the Gutter*, 46; *in*
the Working Class, 50; *of the*
Aristocracy, 55.
 Shipping, 19.
 Shooting, 97.
 Shopping, 24.
 Shyness disadvantage and drinking,
 103.
 Sin, 92; *original*, 87.
 Skills, 81; NPC, 122.
 Skinny disadvantage, 79.
 Slums, 14, 16, 17.
 Social Disease disadvantage, 81.
 Social level, *see* Status.
 Social webs, 9, 120, 121.
 Spells: *list of those known only in*
Ancient Egyptian, 92.
 Stargazing skill, 81.
 Status, 5, 38-62; *advancement table*,
 43; *advantage*, 78; *as modifier*, 68,
 80; *detecting*, 80; *increasing*, 39,
 40-41, 42, 43; *maintenance table*,
 43; NPC, 122; *obtaining a title*, 53;
starting, 68.
 Suffocation, 96.
 Superstition, 85; *burglar's aids*, 29;
cards, 29; *corpses*, 109; *cures*, 110;
dealing with the Devil, 89; *death*,
 29; *illness*, 106; *love*, 54; *luck*, 66,
 120; *sin*, 86; *the supernatural*, 93;
thieves, liars and murderers, 30.
 Susceptibility to Poison disadvantage,
 81.
 Technology, 4, 21-24.
 Temperature Tolerance advantage, 79.
 Template, racial, 65.
 Terrain, 115.
 Theatres, 15, 16, 75; *and the Working*
Class, 128-129.
 Theology skill and shooting, 97.
 Thieves, 17, 44, 72; *and stolen goods*,
 59.
 Timeline, 12-14.
 Titles, *obtaining*, 53.
 Tolerance for alcohol, 100.
 Tower of London, 18.
 Transport, 23; *dangers of*, 22.
 Travelers, 40.
 Trials, 32.
 Tyburn, 14, 31, 35.
 Uttering of Base Coin skill, 81; *practi-*
tioners, 17.
 Vanity, 9.
 Virgin Mary, 88.
 Wealth, starting, 68.
 Weapons, 23, 96; *Menace*, 97; *reach*,
 96; *social levels and*, 96-97; *table*,
 98-99.
 Weather, 20-21.
 Whacking, 95-97, 102, 103, 120.
 Working Class, 39; *adventure in*, 128-
 134; *and weapon choice*, 96.
 Wounds, *accumulated*, 97; *last*, 97.
 Youth disadvantage, 79.



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