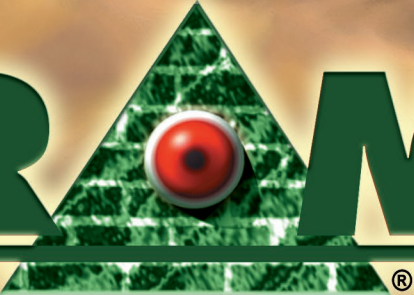


PYRAMID[®]



Issue 3/80 June '15

FANTASY THREATS



THE GRYNDEL MENACE

by Christopher R. Rice

GOG AND MAGOG

by W.A. Frick

MORE PSIONIC THREATS

by Cole M.B. Jenkins

**THE KNIGHTS OF
THE IRON TABLE**

by David L. Pulver

ON THE BOUNTY BOARD

by Justin Yoder

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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*In comradeship is danger
countered best.*

– Goethe

ARTICLE COLORS

Each article is color-coded to help you find your favorite sections.

Pale Blue: In This Issue

Brown: In Every Issue (humor, editorial, etc.)

Green: Columnist

Dark Blue: GURPS Features

Purple: Systemless Features

COVER ART

Abrar Ajmal

INTERIOR ART

Greg Hyland

In a world where monsters lurk in little-traveled forests and magic is in the air, incredible heroes must be ever ready for fantasy threats. This issue of *Pyramid* delivers, with an avalanche of adversities awesome for adventurers.

What if the death of a dragon signifies the start of something more strange and horrific? Learn about the terrible potential of *The Gryndel Menace*. Longtime *Pyramid* contributor Christopher R. Rice reveals this monster's history, its life cycle, the danger of its infectious nature, and much more. It comes with **GURPS** stats for its three stages, plus rules for its various strains, treasure that can be forged from the fallen creatures, and *much* more!

When two goblin tribes engage in a never-ending feud, their clash resembles the historic war of *Gog and Magog*. The Garguk and Skrixid both lay sole claim to the same tunnel complex . . . which they share with a *third* ravenous threat. This adventure framework is ideal for crypt-crawlers who want a threat that requires more finesse and subtlety than destroying dungeon dwellers. It includes a myriad of **GURPS Dungeon Fantasy** stats to represent the goblins, their spiders and hell-hounds, and the One Who Eats.

What happens when you look at legendary tales through a darker lens? You might end up seated with *The Knights of the Iron Table*, this month's Eidetic Memory offering from **GURPS Banestorm: Abydos** author David L. Pulver that's suitable for nearly any fantasy campaign. Discover the story of Baron Vordag, including how he gained a reputation as a tyrant, why he went to war against "evil" elves, and the kingdom-shattering secret behind his magical sword. In addition to **GURPS** stats for key people, you'll find **GURPS Mass Combat** stats in case the baron's insatiable ambitions take a larger scale . . .

Heroes often turn to public calls for adventure. But what do they do if they find themselves *On the Bounty Board*? Discover how to make the PCs sweat by putting them on the run from the law, and how they might use their wits (as well as **GURPS Social Engineering**) to extradite themselves from the situation.

Dungeon Fantasy delivers, beware; there's more danger than you "think" when *More Psionic Threats* make themselves known. Discover six new creatures – and two new **Dungeon Fantasy Monster** prefixes – that are perfect campaign additions to **GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 14: Psi**.

This month's *Pyramid* also includes a Random Thought Table that expands on understanding the unknown, plus Odds and Ends that include a Murphy's Rules ideal for prying eyes. Fantasy has never been so threatening!

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FROM THE EDITOR

ALL MANNER OF SURPRISES

When I ran a combat-light, low-magic fantasy campaign with low-powered heroes, the first adventure I took them through had the heroes end up in the Ethereal Plane. And by “the Ethereal Plane,” I mean they were kidnapped by a madman and tied up in a warehouse with multicolored cloth streamers dangling from the ceiling and a hand-painted sign that said “Welcome to the Ethreal [sic] Plane.” The warehouse ended up catching fire, and the heroes had to stage a daring escape from their bonds, keep the flames from spreading to the rest of the city, and capture the lunatic. From then on, they were able to truthfully say that their first adventure was traveling to the Ethereal Plane.

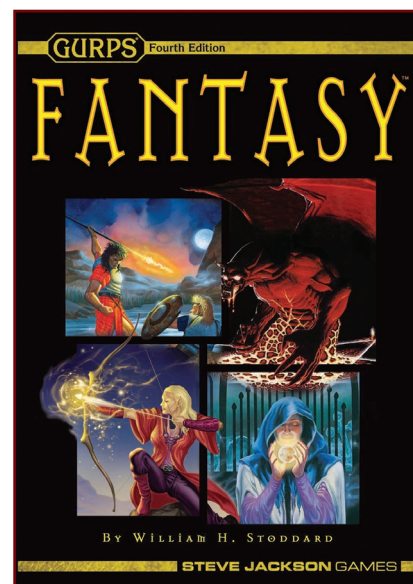
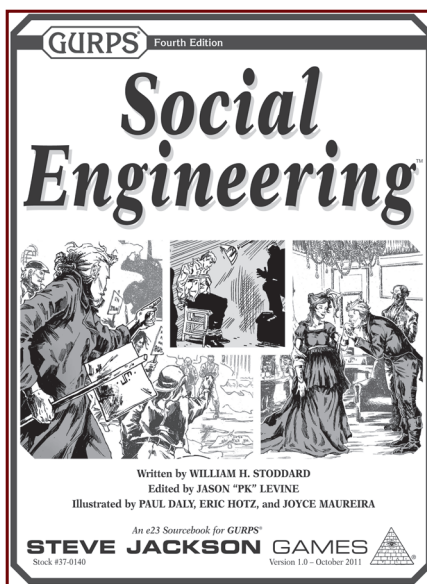
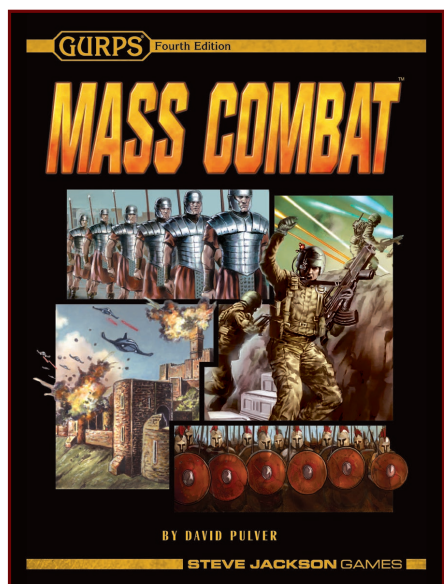
I mention that anecdote because one of the amazing things about fantasy as a genre is that it’s so *versatile*. Low-power heroes could fight brigands . . . or face a kobold invasion of a village . . . or serve on a diplomatic mission for a town.

Mightier heroes might face demons, powerful nobles, magical traps, or otherworldly dungeons.

This issue tackles some of that “diversity in adventure” potential. Unlike the draw of pure dungeon-fantasy hack-and-slash encounters, many of the threats in this issue require some finesse or acumen to resolve. (Of course, we’re not going to leave *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy* entirely alone; for one offering, see pp. 32-35 for more psychic threats than you can stake a think at!) And ensuring a variety of encounters and adventures is one of the easiest ways to provide that sense of wonder and awe that helps keep fantasy so *fantastic*.

WRITE HERE, WRITE NOW

So, how fantastic were we this month? Were we a triple threat, or did we put the “ick” back in fantastic(k)? Let us know via messenger owls at pyramid@sjgames.com, or join the nonstop celebration of the virtual tavern that’s online at forums.sjgames.com.



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1454 (approximately): Pedro Tafur encounters a juvenile gryndel during his travels in Egypt; he records the event as a footnote in his book, *Andanças e viajes de Pero Tafur por diversas partes del mundo avidos* (“Wanderings and voyages of Pedro Tafur through the diverse parts of the world”).

1456 (approximately): Vlade Tepes becomes obsessed with “the blood of the dragon” after reading a 12th-century French

knight’s diary. He eventually finds a vial in the Vatican’s secret archive. It gives him everything he could desire – strength, endurance, and the like – but it comes with a cost: his sanity. As the madness within him grows, so grows his legend. This is also the first documented appearance of the hemovoric gryndel (see p. 10), which may have been created thanks to some oddity in Vlad’s DNA.

No one that has tasted the power that comes with being one of the Brood can forget the sensation. You will crave it to your dying day.

– *Ghost Rider*, #3.27

GRYNDEL ANATOMY

Gryndel biology is, at best, strange. While they hunt for food, they also catch, wound, and release their prey to *breed*. They can either reproduce through sex or by infection via the *dracovirus* (see pp. 7-8); if not thrown off by the host’s immune system, the host will develop growths that become larval gryndels, or spawnlings (p. 6). The spawnlings (from either method) develop into juveniles (pp. 6-7) and then adults (p. 7).

When ingested, the *dracovirus* behaves differently! Instead of forming larval gryndels, it slowly transforms the *host himself*. At first, this transformation gives the host enhanced abilities and eventually an addiction to gryndel meat or blood. The completed transformation results in an adult gryndel who retains the host’s intelligence and other personal traits, though the mind is effectively rewritten. Sometimes, the transformation doesn’t occur fully, and the host retains his own shape and capabilities *and* gains those of a gryndel (see *Gryndel Parasitism*, pp. 8-9!)

COMMON GRYNDEL TRAITS

All gryndel (spawnlings, juvenile, and adults) have the following traits at varying degrees of ability. See p. 7 for the meta-trait.

- **Bones and Musculature:** Gryndel bones and muscles are much stronger than appearances might lead one to believe, as they are replaced with biological materials more akin to spring steel and carbon fiber than actin, myosin, and hydroxyapatite. Their bones are nearly impervious to breaking, thanks to an especially flexible composition. Any crippling is usually the result of ligaments and tendons tearing rather than broken bones. This also applies to their teeth, claws, horns, and so on, which are razor sharp. Their jaws have special muscles, which can extend outward, increasing their bite range much like a goblin shark.

- **Corrosive-Resistant Skin:** The skin of a gryndel is extremely resistant to all forms of corrosives (liquid or otherwise), thanks to a semi-permeable layer of biological “plastic”

and oily secretions. These secretions give them a resistance to dangerous levels of radiation unlike anything found on Earth.

- **Corrosive Necrotizing Spit:** A gryndel’s saliva contains a combination of strongly acidic substance, bacteria, and traces of the *dracovirus* (pp. 7-8). The latter two are encapsulated in protein-like structures, protecting the virus from the acid that would otherwise break them down. The structures also act as a hemotoxin ensuring bite wounds bleed freely. When interacting with the potassium chloride naturally found in the human stomach, the saliva (as well as flesh and other fluids) does odd things (see above).

- **Echolocation:** Gryndels “see” through a form of echolocation, which functions equally well in air or water, using several special sensory organs radially spaced. These organs look more or less like spots. Older gryndels have them all over their bodies – not just their heads – which gives them a wider awareness and longer range. Without their echolocative capabilities, they are effectively blind.

- **Enhanced Olfactory Awareness:** A gryndel’s sense of smell is extremely strong. Due to a quirk in their neurochemistry, they can actually *see* scents (much like a synesthetic).

- **Hexapedal Body Structure:** All gryndels have six limbs – the hind legs, middle limbs (which vary by sex in adults), and forearms (for grasping work). In adult males, the middle limbs are powerful and used for digging, holding, and walking. In adult females, the middle limbs are wings, which can also function as legs on the ground.

- **Mentality:** Gryndel are driven by their most base instincts – eat, survive, and reproduce – despite having an almost human-like intelligence. These drives tend to produce a mind that’s not quite Hidebound (p. B138), but close.

- **Metabolism:** Gryndel metabolism is like a furnace in constant need of stoking. They are rabidly hungry almost all the time; when they are *not* eating, they are looking for their next meal. Furthermore, they heal rapidly and have an incredibly robust immune system. As a survival mechanism, in times when food is scarce, or it’s too cold, they can hibernate almost indefinitely, slowing their metabolism to a crawl.

The rider is effectively 3' above a foot-bound opponent, giving him +1 and his target -1 to defend in melee; if he attacks while the hound is moving at 7 or more, he gets -1 to skill but +1 to damage. Due to his training, a rider ignores penalties for "no hands" riding, and uses his full skill when attacking with melee or ranged weapons. See *Mounted Combat* (p. B396) for details.

I was going to tell you . . . I found something in the Goblin tunnels.

– Bilbo Baggins, in *The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug*

GARGUK HELL-HOUNDS

Fire-breathing infernal canines the size of a tiger, they are strong and vicious enough to carry a fully armed Garguk warrior into battle. Although highly aggressive, they can be trained to follow the commands of a rider, and will generally do so unless something sends them into a frenzy.

ST: 21	HP: 22	Speed: 7.00
DX: 13	Will: 12	Move: 10/15
IQ: 4	Per: 14	
HT: 13	FP: 13	SM: +1
Dodge: 11	Parry: N/A	DR: 5 (+10 vs. Fire)

Bite (18): 2d+1 cutting + linked 1d burn. Reach C, 1.

Fiery Breath (16): 1d+1 burn, Jet, Range 5/10.

Traits: Berserk (12); Bloodlust (12); Combat Reflexes; Discriminatory Smell; Enhanced Move 0.5 (Ground); Filter Lungs (Smoke Only); Gluttony (12); High Pain Threshold; Injury Tolerance (Damage Reduction 3; Fire/Heat only); Infravision; Night Vision 9; Quadruped; Sure-Footed (Slippery, Uneven); Teeth (Sharp); Wild Animal.

Skills: Brawling-18; Innate Attack (Breath)-16; Stealth-15; Tracking-18.

Class: Demonic Animal.

Notes: A rider is Light Encumbrance, for Dodge 10, Move 8/12.

GARGUK CAVES

The Garguk have selected caves with certain specifications and optimized them for defense against creepy-crawly spider goblins. Although tall enough to accommodate a hound-rider or ogre, most don't have high vaulted ceilings where spiders can skulk. In places where attacks have been common, the floors, walls, and ceiling are routinely coated with oil, both to make them slippery (-2 to skill, -1 to defenses; any failed DX-based roll forces a DX check to avoid falling – but all Garguk ignore this effect), and so they can be ignited (1d-1 burning per second per square yard). Being resistant to fire damage, the goblins won't hesitate to torch the room even if they're inside. All passages into the tribal commons have built-up mounds of

rubble that act as cover, from behind which sentries can make pop-up attacks (p. B390). The passages also have large gongs that can be struck to alert the rest of the tribe to an attack.

Further, all Garguk areas are filled with smoke, giving a -3 to vision *on top of* lighting penalties to anyone who lacks Infravision. Anyone who breathes the smoke for over one minute must make a HT roll (and another after each minute spent breathing smoke) to avoid coughing (-3 to DX, -1 to IQ, can't be stealthy). Air spells can clear an area temporarily (for the duration of a battle), but the smoke is coming from a great bonfire in the tribal commons, which will have to be put out before the caves will clear permanently. Garguk (including Gorgo and Mormo as well as hell-hounds) can all see and breathe fine in smoke.

The tribe is on high alert due to the constant threat of Skrixid attack. A typical sentry group or war-party consists of at least six goblins (or *twice* the number of adventurers, if more), about a third of which are hound-riders. In a sentry group, one always has the job of hitting the alarm gong, and he will do so on the second turn of combat (one turn to get there, and a Fast-Draw roll to Ready the mallet instantly). Once the alarm has been sounded, another group of Garguk guards arrives in 3d turns; then 1d minutes later, Gorgo and Mormo arrive, along with Gramm and yet more goblins, to investigate. The tribe is at least 50 strong altogether, with no noncombatants.

THE SKRIXID TRIBE

Goblins of the Skrixid tribe are nimble and sleek, some might say downright spider-like. The magical experiments of Shiirith have left them with several traits adapted to living among arachnids – clinging to walls, immunity to venom, and the ability to see and move through the many spider webs that choke their section of the caves (see *Skrixid Caves*, p. 19).

Skrixid usually crawl stealthily across the ceiling (-2 to be spotted), and either snipe enemies from afar (falling back when approached) or wait in ambush and attack from above (-2 to target's defenses; see *Attack from Above*, p. B402). They use long knives (not balanced for throwing) and pistol crossbows in battle, all treated with a sticky spider venom. A successful Fast-Draw (Arrow) roll allows them to reload and

ready a crossbow to fire in a single turn; Skrixid war-bands will stagger shots so someone is firing every turn.

SHIIRITH THE MOTHER

It's unclear exactly *what* Shiirith is, or was. She has the torso, arms, and head of what might once have been a beautiful raven-haired human, elf, or faerie woman . . . but from the waist down, she has the bulbous abdomen and spindly legs of a gigantic black widow spider. Whether she is some sort of demon, is the victim of a curse, or has done this to herself (intentionally or otherwise), she's a monster, if an unusually comely one above the hips.

Skills: Administration-13; Alchemy-13; Area Knowledge (Barony)-14; Current Affairs (Politics)-14; Diplomacy-12; Intelligence Analysis-14; Knife-12; Occultism-14; Politics-13; Philosophy (Atheism)-13; Research-13; Riding (Horse)-12; Savior-Faire (High Society)-14; Staff-11; Survival (Woodlands)-13; Sex Appeal-13; Stealth-14; Swimming-11; Writing-13.

Spells: Analyze Magic-15; Apportation-15; Aura-15; Continual Light-15; Counterspell-15; Darkness-15; Deflect Missile-15; Dispel Magic-15; Haste-15; Identify Spell-15; Ignite Fire-15; Itch-15; Lend Energy-15; Light-15; Mind-Reading-15; Recover Energy-15; Seek Earth-15; Seeker-15; Sense Emotion-15; Sense Foes-15; Shield-15; Trace-15; Truthsayer-16.

Equipment: Large knife; fireball wand with a 10-point Powerstone (dungeon salvage tax); variety of poisons and antidotes.

And then there are those who operate on the fringes of society, unburdened by the confines of morality and conscience. A ruthless breed of monsters whose deadliest weapon is their ability to hide in plain sight.

*– Emily Thorne,
in **Revenge** #1.19*

TYPICAL KNIGHT

"I swear to serve Baron Vordag, to show no mercy to his enemies, to defend the lands and reputation of the barony against all foes, human and inhuman, to punish those who break its laws, and to faithfully quest to prove my honor and win glory for the House of Vordag as a Knight of the Iron Table."

Vordag's knights are veterans of the restoration, the elf war, and conflicts with the church rebels. A few are remnants of the loyalists; most are jumped-up cutthroats, robber-knights, and mercenaries. Use these statistics for an ordinary knight.

Those who begin as knights of the barony may adapt the warrior template in *GURPS Martial Arts*, p. 41, the knight-errant template in *GURPS Banestorm*, pp. 208-209, or the knight template in *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 1: Adventurers*, pp. 8-9.

Vordag has been actively recruiting new knights, and offering the most successful land holds carved out of conquered elven territory and confiscated Sky Faith holdings.

ST 13; DX 13; IQ 10; HT 12.

Damage 1d/2d-1; BL 34 lbs.; HP 13; Will 11; Per 10; FP 12.

Basic Speed 6.25; Basic Move 6; Dodge 10.

SM 0; 6', 180 lbs.

Advantages/Disadvantages: Ally (Squire); Bloodlust (12) or Jealousy; Callous or Overconfidence (12); Combat Reflexes; Duty (To baron); Intolerance (Elves and the Sky Faith); Reputation +2 (As good fighter; In the barony; 10 or less); Reputation -2 (Brutal; By commoners and elves, All the time); Status 2; Wealth (Comfortable).

Skills: Area Knowledge (Local)-11; Armory (Body Armor)-10; Brawling-13; Broadsword-15; Carousing-12; Heraldry-10; Knife-13; Lance-15; Law (Local)-10; Leadership-10; Riding (Horses)-14; Savoir-Faire (Police)-13; Shield-15; Tactics-11; Two-Handed Sword-15; Wrestling-13.

Equipment: Plate armor; thrusting bastard sword (fine quality); large knife; medium shield. If mounted for war: lance, warhorse with mail barding.

Typical Knights of the Iron Table

Sir Davis, The Black Dog of the Moors: He loves hunting. He has a pack of well-trained war dogs, and he often hunts captive elves. Add Animal Empathy and Animal Handling (Dogs)-16.

Sir Xabier Troll-Bane: Immensely strong (ST 17); he once wrestled a troll and won (Wrestling-17). Son of Sir Xaber (see p. 20). Xabier disapproves of Vordag's more brutal excesses but is loyal, believing him the true heir to the barony.

Sir Mara, The Wyvern Knight: Lighter build than the average knight (ST 11, 140 lbs.). Growing up in the woods, she found and raised a baby wyvern; now, she rides it. She often fights from the air with throwing spears or javelins, rather a lance.

Sir Basajuan, The Oak Knight: A woodland knight and a very tough fellow (HP 18, High Pain Threshold). His armor is adorned with bronze leaves. He hangs poachers and rebels from a great oak outside his manor.

Sir Shagarat, Knight of the Morning Star: The pretty title refers to his weapon; he has Flail-15. He is a half-orc warrior who led a band of orc and half-orc mercenaries accepted into service. Knighted for being first over the wall storming an elven keep.

Sir Vandrel, Knight of the Stone Steed: This knight rides Petrifax, a stone golem in the form of a horse and a gift (looted from a dungeon) he received as a reward for a quest. His backside is always very sore; he has Bad Temper (9).

Sir Duvainor, Knight of the Ivy Chains: Famous as a slaver and very handsome, but sadistic. He is of half-elf stock but was rejected by his elf family and driven out of the woods. After serving as a mercenary, he joined Vordag's army for vengeance.

Sir Zorion, the Laughing Knight: A terrifying warrior (ST 15, Ambidexterity, Berserk (12)) who fights with two broadswords. He laughs constantly during a fight (or at himself when losing), which can be unnerving as he continues to do so when he goes berserk.

UNHOLY QUESTS

One of Vordag's challenges has been how to keep his knights busy when not at war. Being a good judge of character, he knows that the collection of blackguards he has assembled would be plotting to overthrow him if left to their own devices.

ABOUT *GURPS*

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Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition*. Page references that begin with B refer to that book, not this one.

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