

**GURPS**

Fourth Edition

# LAIR OF THE FAT MAN™



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*An e23 Sourcebook for GURPS®*

**STEVE JACKSON GAMES**

Stock #37-1101

Version 1.0 – February 2009



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# INTRODUCTION

This is a 1980s Cold War espionage adventure – but not an ordinary one. It's not a mission in the grim tradition of Ian Fleming's James Bond. This adventure has all the nail-biting drama of several super-spy movies released years ago – the gritty realism of the original film version of *Casino Royale*, the dramatic integrity of *The President's Analyst*, the *film noir* quality of *The Silencers*, and the hard-hitting tragedy of *Our Man Flint*. In short . . . it's silly.

GMs, take note: This does not mean that it's safe. If you intend to use the adventure as written, don't run it as part of an ongoing campaign; it works best as a one-shot change of pace. This adventure is most appropriate for four players and requires at least a day or two of pre-game time to build agents. (GMs should feel free to conceal the true nature of this adventure from their players until the last possible moment.)

## THE PLOT (SUCH AS IT IS)

A madman, calling himself the Fat Man, is stealing the world's most precious military secrets from the great powers. He claims to be working unilaterally to disarm the world . . . but who can believe him?

At last, four major world powers, alarmed by this threat, locate what seems to be the lair of this incredibly dangerous

man. They send in their top team to smoke him out – a UNISTOMP action team, from a top secret United Nations anti-terrorist agency.

Can the action team, composed of agents from the KGB, CIA, and other spy agencies, forget their hostilities long enough to deal with the Fat Man? Will it work?

This scenario is intended as a short adventure lasting one or two evenings, and makes an interesting break from the usual sort of adventuring. (Indeed, *Lair* can be the excuse for a really different sort of party.) Although this adventure is not meant to link with an ongoing campaign, an inventive GM could design a serious game around the UNISTOMP agency.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

W.G. (Bill) Armintrout began his game design career in 1978 with the publication of *Hot Spot*, a Metagaming microgame. In addition to his freelance work, he has worked for Steve Jackson Games, Bard Games, Origin Systems, Electronic Arts, Turbine, Psygnosis, Vicarious Visions; designing, developing, and programming board games, RPGs, computer games, and video games. He currently is the proprietor of The Miniatures Page ([www.theminiaturespage.com](http://www.theminiaturespage.com)), a website for miniature wargamers.

## Some Cautions

As soon as most players hear the name “UNISTOMP,” they'll know that this is not an especially serious scenario. The agent briefings at the start of the adventure, if played correctly, should reinforce this feeling. GMs can go too far if they try for exaggerated, obviously fake accents, or overt national stereotypes; it's better to underplay things a bit and let the humor come naturally. (GMs who are gifted with accents are certainly welcome to use them, of course!) Players should get into the spirit of things as the game progresses without overly broad prompting from the GM.

The issue of stereotypes is one to be careful of throughout this adventure. Several encounters have the potential to give offense if not played with tact and sensitivity to the players' feelings. For that reason, GMs are advised not to use this scenario with unfamiliar players; save this for a group of old friends getting together or when your established group wants a break from your usual game. Even then, be aware of where your friends' “line” is, and be sure you stay on the good side of it.

### *Fine-Tuning the Funny*

Not every group appreciates humorous adventures. (Heathens!) It is relatively simple to change this to a serious scenario, just by altering a few details – starting with UNISTOMP's name – and making the Fat Man a genuine menace rather than a twisted puppet master. In a serious game, probably none of the PCs would be double agents,

which right there would go a long way toward taking some of the silliness out of the game. In fact, GMs might discard the “enemies working for a common goal” aspect altogether, presenting this as a NATO or Warsaw Pact team, or possibly even a strike team from a single nation. This will, of course, also change the Fat Man's motives.

Conversely, a group might choose to ramp *up* the absurdity, pushing the game toward, or all the way into, farce. In such a game, *everyone* might be a double (or even triple!) agent. These turncoats could well be grotesquely inept at maintaining their cover identities – the only thing saving them is that everyone else is more concerned about their own transparent cover stories than in poking holes in everyone else's. GMs who are fond of movies such as the Austin Powers series do not need any more advice on running such a game.

Finally, another way to change up this scenario is to change the setting. There's nothing in here that absolutely requires a Cold War timeframe. *Lair of the Fat Man* could work equally well as a future special ops team sent into a satellite junkyard, a dungeon-crawling adventure party trying to outsmart an evil wizard, or a group of Illuminati University grad students tasked by the Archdean with retrieving certain items of IOU property before Parents-and-Guardian Spirits-and-Fairy Uncles Weekend. (That last game would probably redefine the boundaries of “farce,” but that's no reason not to try it!)