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About GURPS

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Bibliographies. Many of our books have extensive bibliographies, and we're putting them online – with links to let you buy the books that interest you! Go to the book's web page and look for the "Bibliography" link.

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.

INTRODUCTION

The creatures in this book are territorial. They defend their nests, build magic patterns on the ocean floor, and transform anyone who comes too close. They take control of the area around them, swinging from the darkness to attack intruders, or altering the weather to distract innocents from their schemes. They are easy to avoid – if you never come close to their territory.

The beasts are supplemented with over a dozen adventure ideas. These plot sketches range from simple combat encounters to brief campaigns.

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MISER TROLL

A miser troll is a small, ugly creature that stands half a foot tall. It has long fingers, stubby legs, and oily skin.

It is obsessed with controlling a major natural resource in the campaign world. In a fantasy world, this could be gold, silver, or gems; in the modern world, it might be oil, coal, or natural gas.

A mind-controlling imp that uses social conflict to hoard wealth.

The miser troll makes its nest in a secluded, high area near the resource, so it can watch its surroundings like a gargoyle. It can wait for years until a person with great social and political power comes close. Then the creature secretly deposits an egg inside the person, planting a seed that creates conflict over the resource.

The Commander and the Egg

The victim will be a head of state, a major political leader, a military commander, a billionaire, the CEO of a large corporation, or (in a medieval world) a baron, king, or guild master. This commander has wealth, connections, devoted and skilled subordinates, and the ability to hire or control armed forces.

The miser troll can sense the commander's power, and will approach quietly to make a secret attack. Its oily skin contains a contact agent that both anesthetizes the wound and seals it as the troll burrows into the commander's abdomen. The commander will feel ill, but won't know what's happening unless he notices the miser troll. The creature lays a black, golf-ball-sized egg inside the commander and then escapes as soon as possible. These events can take less than five minutes.

If complications arise (for example, if people are nearby and it cannot escape without being seen), the miser troll may have to stay inside until it can safely escape.

The wound heals immediately, leaving no trace except for a faint scar and the deposited egg. At that point, the commander gains the disadvantage Obsession (Control the natural resource) with a self-control roll of 15 or less. The self-control roll drops by 3 points every 1d days, until it reaches 6 or less.

In addition to the obsession, the egg gives the miser troll a limited telepathic link with the commander. It can see through his eyes, hear through his ears, and sense his emotions. The creature cannot, however, direct his movements, implant thoughts, or influence his body.

Shrinking Egg

The egg slowly shrinks, reducing the influence of the troll. In game terms, the commander gains a cumulative +1 to his self-control roll every week, while the troll's telepathic rolls suffer a cumulative -1 penalty. To prevent the commander from "coming to his senses," the troll must make eye contact with him, causing the egg to grow back to full size and removing these modifiers.

Fortunately, this is part of the Obsession. Each week, the commander must make a self-control roll or visit the resource . . . while he is there, the troll can make eye contact from the shadows, where the commander will be unaware of what is happening on all but a subconscious level.

After a full month with no eye contact, the egg shrinks and disappears. The commander is cured, and the troll waits for a new victim. By that time, however, a conflict should be raging, and the troll can choose a new commander to implant an egg in.

Magical or medical inspection can reveal the egg. An x-ray or Detect Curse spell will locate it automatically, and anyone knowledgeable about miser trolls will recognize the egg for what it is.

Confronting the Troll

A direct confrontation with the troll is disturbing. Its face resembles the commander's – albeit misshapen to fit the creature's small head – and its voice mimics the commander's, as well. It even uses the same vocabulary, although it slurs the words.

The miser troll is cunning and ruthless, but cowardly. In a fight, it will attack with its claws (1d-1 cutting), then retreat to safety. It can Move and Attack with surprising speed, racing in and out of the shadows (attacks will often be at -10 against it: -6 from its size and -4 from its favored shadows), and will squeal to frighten its opponents. Its slippery skin makes it almost impossible to grab.

If killed, the miser troll dissolves into a puddle of gray fluid, which evaporates within an hour, leaving no evidence that the conflict over the resource was caused by a strange little monster.

The Conflict

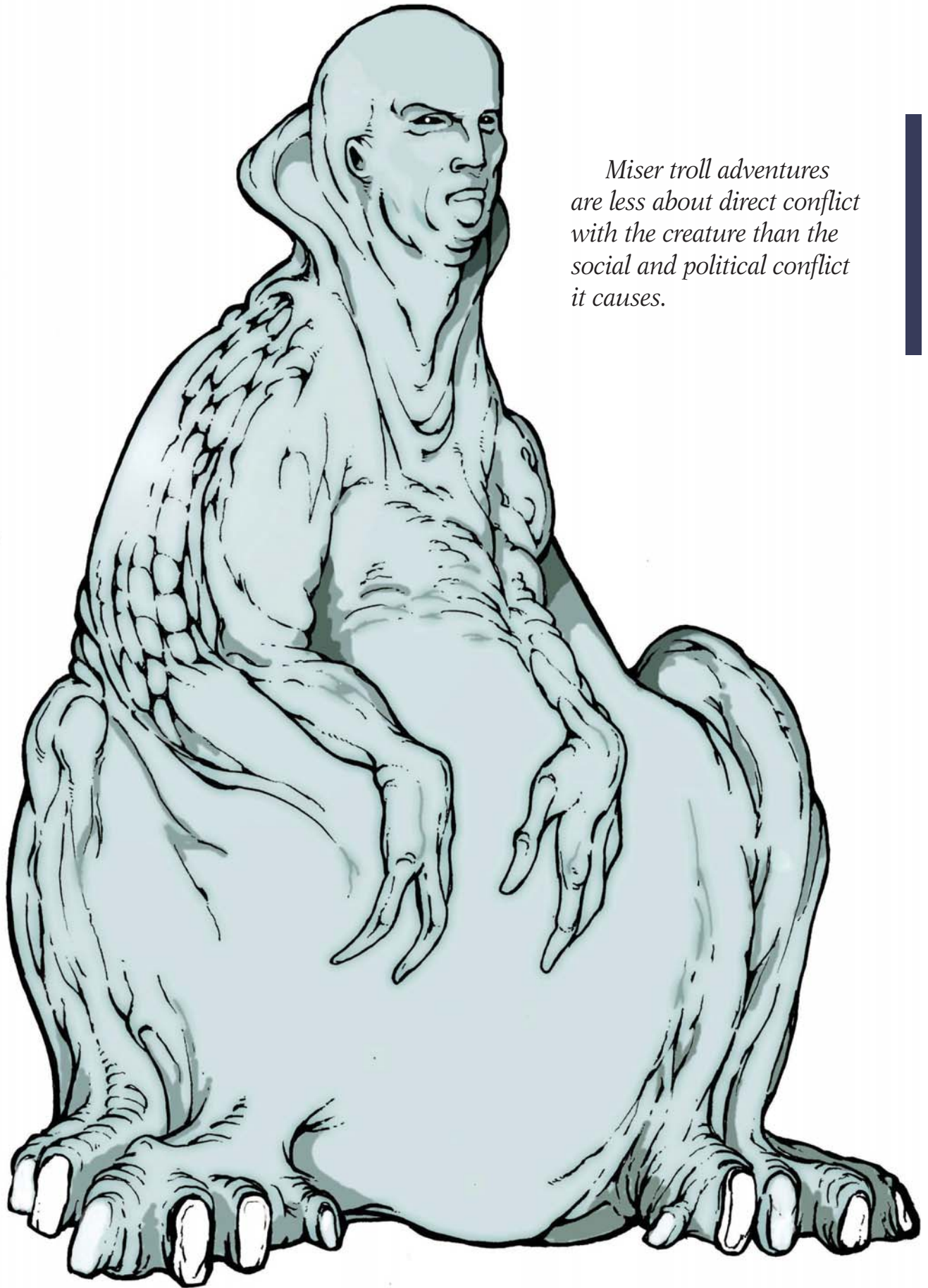
Miser troll adventures are less about direct conflict with the creature than the social and political conflict it causes. The scope of the conflict depends on the world, resource, and particular groups interested in it.

The group may begin in any social position – from complete outsiders to advisors to the king – but they should be drawn into the center of the conflict as soon as possible, whether as noble heroes who want peace or complicit henchmen of the commander.

The resource is a vital part of the economy. The economy or whole world will change if it is used up, if a mother lode is found, or if control changes hands. It should be able to lead to political upheaval, including revolution and counter-revolution. It can also be a finite resource – perhaps it is the most valuable natural treasure in the world, but it won't be around forever.

Rivals for Control

The most common tool for control is military power. This is not a subtle method, but it is effective. The commander can also use corruption, economic power, religion, or any other means at his disposal. Corruption could include family ties, blackmail, and other means of procuring peace with enemies; economic power can buy loyalty and resources; and religion can unify allies and turn enemies into subhumans.



Miser troll adventures are less about direct conflict with the creature than the social and political conflict it causes.