

GURPS

Fourth Edition

CREATURES OF THE NIGHT™

VOL. 4



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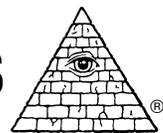
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INTRODUCTION

Most beings, whether dull animals or intelligent characters, can be escaped, trapped, or forced into giving up. The creatures in this volume, however, are unified by their *tenacity*: Snakes capable of dissolving through any barrier, given time. A mass of animated rock, unerringly focused on its prey. A swarm of winged monstrosities, mindlessly attacking anyone nearby. Dehydrated undead with burning flesh who relentlessly seek water. An orb that surrounds itself with an ever-growing army of enslaved drones. A pack of demons that defend their toxic waste "home."

Your players can run, but they can't hide.

About the Authors

Scott Maykrantz lives on an estate near Indianapolis. The high walls that surround the property are topped with black iron spikes. The doors are locked, day and night. Scott writes quietly in his room, waiting for the pretty woman in the white uniform to bring the medicine.

Jason Levine, better known to most as "Reverend Pee Kitty," has been a gamer for most of his life and a die-hard **GURPS** fan since the release of *Third Edition*. He enjoys making music, collecting Transformers, and praying to "Bob" for eternal salvation through alien intervention. He maintains a **GURPS** fansite at www.mygurps.com.

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ACIDRIAD

The acidriad is a four- to six-foot-long serpent with a disturbingly human face. Short spines surround its gaping maw. Its features conspire to give it an undeniably *malicious* appearance.

*An acid-spitting snake
that mimics human
voices.*

ACID ATTACKS

The acidriad has an acid gland that swells when its fight-or-flight reflex is triggered. After taking a second to prime the gland, the acidriad can spit 10-yard-long stream of acid that inflicts 2d corrosion damage. The gland holds enough acid for three shots per day, and slowly refills as the serpent sleeps. An acidriad that's unexpectedly awakened cannot spit for 2d+2 seconds.

An acidriad's jaw is incredibly strong and filled with rows of small, sharp, diamond-hard teeth. Its bite does 1d+1 cutting damage – enough to cripple a limb or sever a table leg – and armor protects at half DR. Worse, its acid acts as a follow-up attack, adding 1d corrosion damage to the bite! This works as long as the serpent has at least one shot of acid remaining, as biting expends far less acid than spitting does.

Out of combat, the acidriad is smart enough to use its acid to burn through barriers. Confronted with a wall or a door, it can dissolve a hole wide enough to slither through in less than a minute.

SLITHERING AND SCAVENGING

Acidriads build their nests in hidden locations and then sneak through nearby areas searching for food. They usually hunt alone or in pairs, but a nest contains 3d serpents. On a world where acidriads are known to exist, people treat them as dangerous pests – any sign of acidriad activity prompts a call to an exterminator.

Acidriads often carry disease. If a contagion-spreading creature would spice up the adventure, the GM should design a suitable malady. See *Illness* (pp. B442-444).

MIMICRY

Like a parrot, the acidriad repeats any unusual sounds it hears. It has a special affinity for human

voices, and likes to repeat long sentences in a tone and accent identical to the source. The creature isn't smart enough to know what the words mean . . . but that doesn't stop it from repeating an overheard conversation as it slithers through a passage, confusing those who hear it.

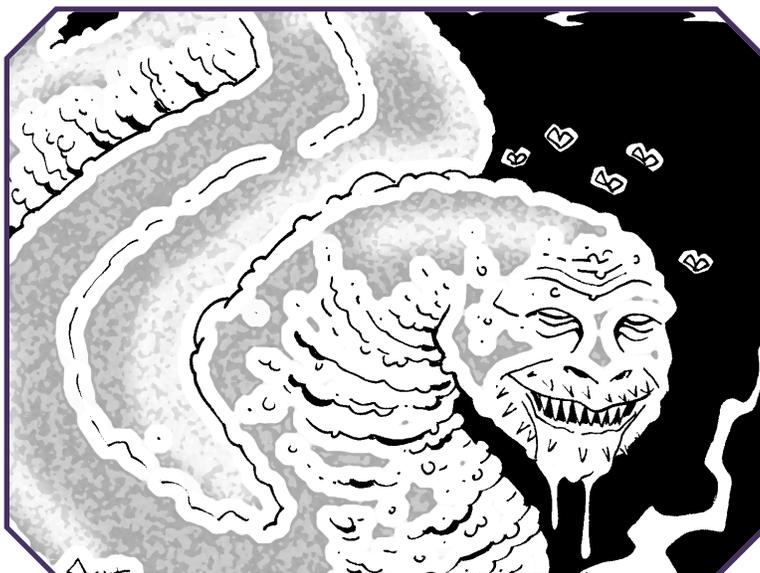
Acidriads use verbal cues to communicate with each other. They tend to fixate on a particular word or phrase and make it part of their interspecies communication. For example, to warn others of a possible threat, a particular group of serpents might yell "Waldo! It's Waldo!" in an old woman's voice.

Compelling sounds can distract acidriads. A victim can sing, laugh, cough, or deliver a brief speech to delay an attack. Roll a Quick Contest of IQ-2, or an appropriate skill (Public Speaking, Singing, etc.), versus the serpent's Will. The Voice advantage gives +2 in all cases; if the sound echoes, add +3. If the serpent loses, it will pause for seconds equal to its margin of loss.

IT IS WHAT IT EATS

When an acidriad's diet is limited to one type of food, the chemical composition of its meals alters its acid jet, adding a secondary effect *in addition to* its normal corrosive damage. This is a simple way for the GM to make the acidriad more dangerous, by deciding that the creature has been eating one particular material for the past few days. Of course, it helps if the material exists in the campaign world – packaged food will not be available in a fantasy setting!

Vegetarian: The diet includes algae, grass, leaves, seaweed, etc. It's appropriate if the acidriad is encountered anywhere near a garden, hydroponics chamber, swamp, and so on. This makes the acid poisonous. Anyone damaged by the liquid must make a HT-4 roll immediately and once per minute after that, taking 1d-2 toxic damage on a failure. This ends after 10 minutes, if the subject succeeds at a resistance roll, or if antivenin is administered.



Breeds

Like other vermin, acidriads adapt to almost any terrain or climate. Specific breeds have additional traits:

Arctic: Add white fur, giving DR 2 and Temperature Tolerance 2.

Dungeon: The environment has made it tougher. Add +3 ST, Compulsive Behavior (Collecting shiny objects) (9), DR 4, and Brawling at 13+.

Forest: The creature mimics bird calls, eats carrion, and can alter its skin color to hide. Add Chameleon 2 and Discriminatory Smell.

Pet: Add the Domestic Animal meta-trait. As a pet, the acidriad's mimicry, not its acid, is the primary attraction, so civilized masters normally remove the acid gland. Rougher owners – like orcs and post-apocalyptic gangs – are unlikely to do so!

"Pit Snake": On some worlds, acidriads are bred to fight each other. Choose any of the following: +2 ST, +3 DX, Berserk, Bloodlust, DR 1-3, Slave Mentality, or Brawling at 13+.

Starship Vermin: Add some level of G-Experience, Improved G-Tolerance, and Area Knowledge of the ship's deck plan.

Carnivorous: The acidriad consumes mostly meat, usually from nearby vermin (rodents, stray cats, small scavengers, etc.) or from human flesh, living or dead. Acidriad encountered in an urban or rural environment or near a graveyard may have this diet. This adds a nauseating smell to the acid; anyone struck by it suffers from Bad Smell for 1d hours. In addition, they must make a HT roll or be nauseated (p. B428) for the duration. If the acid did not penetrate DR, a person can avoid these effects by simply removing his armor.

Garbage: The creature eats cardboard, piece of rubber and plastic, soda cans, glass, and so on (but not plant material or rotting meat). At TL5+, acidriads encountered in or near landfills, Dumpsters, vacant lots, a spaceship's compactor, etc. likely feasts on waste material. This diet makes the acid flammable. Anyone who takes damage from a *bite* receives an extra point of burning damage (bypassing DR) from any incendiary attack until the wound is dressed. Anyone struck by a *jet* (whether it penetrated DR or not) catches fire (p. B434) if hit by any incendiary attack!

Modern Packaged Food: The acidriad's diet consists of MREs, TV dinners, airline meals, and anything else filled with preservatives, artificial flavors, and dozens of unpronounceable chemical additives. At TL7+, this is appropriate for acidriads encountered in malls, near grocery stores, in cupboards, in a ship's storeroom, etc. This makes the acid sticky; treat a *jet* as having a linked Binding attack with ST equal to twice the damage rolled. *Bites* are unaffected.

USEFUL SKILLS DURING ENCOUNTERS

When hearing an acidriad mimic a voice from a distance, a successful Observation roll tells the listener that the sound isn't coming from the original speaker. Roll against Mimicry to

imitate the serpent or to trick it into making different sounds (like teaching a parrot). Use Animal Handling (Snakes) to gain its trust. Removing the acid gland without killing the creature requires Veterinary.

ADVENTURE IDEAS

Acidriads can be found in almost any setting. Outside their nest, they're encountered singly or in pairs. The serpents use their mimicry to scare intruders.

Creative handlers might use an acidriad to gather information. If suitably coaxed or charmed, a serpent could "record" a conversation and repeat it.

Starship Fever (Science Fiction)

The heroes are crewmembers aboard a starship infested with acidriads. The creatures carry a bioengineered disease: a virus that causes its victims to become pathologically superstitious. Over a 24-hour period, victims gradually acquire Fearfulness, Confused, a Delusion, and a Phobia.

The heroes must work with the rest of the crew to find the disease's cause and exterminate the acidriads. But the serpents' voices trigger their superstitious fears – and the creatures chatter in the voices of crewmembers, including sneezes, whistles, singing, and laughter. Exterminators who cover or plug their ears will find their mission easier!

In the Bellies of the Beasts (Dungeon Fantasy)

During a typical dungeon-crawl, the heroes encounter a single acidriad. If they kill it, they find a weak but useful magic item in its stomach (e.g., a Spell Stone or a Blessed Holy Symbol). Later on in the adventure, they encounter two more acidriads, one of which has swallowed a different item.

The explanation is simple: A large group of acidriads are nested in a room filled with treasure. They have gobbled some of the smaller, brightest items. As a result, several of the acidriads are carrying at least one small magic item.

The GM can use these creatures to assist the heroes. If they are in dire need of an edge over other opponents, the GM can send in a single acidriad carrying a powerful and useful item.

If the heroes track the acidriads, they find the nest – and the rest of the horde of treasure. The GM should feel free to make the heroes work hard for such a giant haul. He can add traps to the room or additional creatures on the way to it.

ACIDRIAD

ST 7; DX 13; IQ 3; HT 12.

Will 11; Per 11; Speed 6.25; Dodge 9; Move 6.
SM 1; 25 lbs.

Traits: Corrosion Attack 1d (Accessibility, Requires at least one remaining acid stream; Follow-Up, Teeth); Corrosion Attack 2d (Limited Use, 3/day; Reduced Maximum Range, ×1/10; Takes Extra Time 1); Eidetic Memory; Infravision; Mimicry; Spines (Short); Striking ST 10 (One Attack Only, Bite); Teeth (Sharp; Armor Divisor (2)); Vermiform; Wild Animal.

Skills: Innate Attack (Breath)-13; Stealth-13.

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