

Iridia

role-playing games and miniatures, old and new
by Christian Walker

On Point

James Stubbs sent me a fascinating NPC about a year ago and I am so happy to finally present it to you. James has long been a supporter of my zines, so I'm grateful for his contribution to this week's issue. Last week I wrote up a treant for GURPS, but I didn't have room to include an animated tree like the Whomping Willow from the Harry Potter books, or that child-eating tree from Poltergeist. Gnarled trees that lash out at lonely souls on dark, narrow paths are a staple of fantasy, so I felt one last tree-related article was in order.

Until next time, Christian

Animated Tree

gurps 4e

Miguel is a second grader who loves Spider Man and is crazy about super heroes in general. After school Miguel cuts out pictures from his comic books and pins them to his walls. He does so because he hopes the super heroes will keep him safe from the tree in his back yard.

Miguel knows that something isn't right about that tree. At night its branches scrape against his window even though there isn't any wind. When he takes the trash out, he often trips over exposed roots that were below ground the day before. He tried to tell his parents about his concerns, but they accused him of having an overactive imagination. Miguel would love to chop the tree down, or set it on fire, but he shudders at the thought of the spanking he'd receive.

When motionless, an animated tree is indistinguishable from a normal tree. It stands about 30 feet tall, with a trunk nearly 3' in diameter. It weighs about 4,500 pounds. Due to its wide roots and sweeping branches, an animated tree occupies a space 3 hexes in diameter.

Animated trees are territorial and extremely aggressive. Although they can move, they only do so to seek out areas with better sunlight and soil. In the absence of rich soil, they will attack any creature that comes within its 3 hex reach. (Animated trees can sense movement upon the ground near their roots.) If the interloper is killed, the animated tree fertilizes the soil with the corpse. Animated trees lack intelligence. As a result, they are incapable of planning, tactics and communication.

Although generally considered a nuisance, some animated trees are valued as sentries.

Animated Tree (69 points)

SM +4 (30' tall, 4,500 lbs.);
ST 35 (size, -40%) [150], DX 10, IQ 0 [-200], HT 14 [40];
HP 35, Will 0, Per 0, FP 14;
Basic Lift 245, Damage: Thr 4d-1/Sw 6d+1;
Basic Speed 6, Basic Move 2 [-20];
Dodge 6, Parry (see attacks), Block -;
DR 1.

Advantages and Perks

Damage Resistance 1 [5], Doesn't Breathe (oxygen and CO2 absorption) [15], Doesn't Sleep [20], Extended Lifespan 2 [4], Immunity (metabolic hazards) [30], Injury Tolerance (homogenous) [40], Temperature Tolerance 3 (7°–104°) [3].

Disadvantages and Quirks

Dependency (sunlight, very common, daily) [-15], Dependency (water soluble nutrients found in soil, very common, weekly) [-10], Fragile (combustible) [-5].

Skills

Brawling-14 [12].

Attacks

Punch-14, 4d+3 cr, reach 3, parry-10.

Merrick the Grave Robber

d&d 3.5

by james stubbs

Merrick found the soil of a fresh grave much easier to excavate than the older ones. The moon peeked out from behind the clouds and the rat-like man shrank away from its baleful glow. Moonlight reflected from the granite monuments that surrounded him, each one a testament to a life fulfilled. It wasn't right for the living to be in a place of the dead. Merrick wasn't one to admit to being a coward, but not matter how often he pilaged graves, it unsettled him. Some things were better left alone. Sadly, his debtors didn't tend to agree.

So here he was, his lonely spade turning the earth and violating the final rest of another unfortunate soul. His only company was an old mare that pulled his rickety wagon. Merrick knew better than to question why he was paid for corpses, but his own mind had drawn too many ideas on its own - all of them morally repugnant. It's not that he considered himself a saint by any stretch of the imagination, but there were some things that were just wrong and he wasn't happy to contribute to them. Fortunately, misgivings about his work were something that could be obliterated from his mind by liberal amounts of rotgut. The hangovers from such swill were the kind that made him wish he was dead, but it was a punishment Merrick gladly accepted.

A hollow thunk reverberated from the tip of his shovel and Merrick crouched in his hole to examine the casket. The varnished mahogany emerged under his brushing fingertips, a gouge in the expensive wood the only sign of his intrusion. The brass latch was exactly where it should be. After more excavation it yielded easily to his prying.

Sara Linderstead was almost as lovely in death as she had been in life. The bouquet of daffodils was still fragrant around her fair hair. He felt like an intruder into her final serenity and felt compelled to close the lid. Merrick thought about her sudden passing and the grief that had washed through the small town. A pang of remorse swept through him that her sad tale would not end with her interment. Merrick guiltily rubbed his grubby hands against his breeches, thinking that her white gown and pale skin mocked his shameful filth.

He hated touching the bodies. The coldness of dead flesh pressing against his own was terribly disturbing. Merrick thought to himself, "This is not right!" He had been doing this dirty work for far too long. It wasn't cold, but he shivered anyway. Merrick hastily buried his thoughts and tried to concentrate on the job at hand.

Rigor mortis had naturally set in. This made it easier to get Sara out of her grave because he could just hoist her over the top. Her legs were still shapely and defined. The old nag hitched to his wagon neighed impatiently as Sara's golden tresses came over the edge of her plot. Merrick was painfully conscious of his hand against her thigh. He whispered, "I'm very sorry, Sara."

Within a few minutes, Merrick and his cargo made their way along a dark, winding road. With any luck, he'd be drunk in a few hours and this terrible night would be a dim, hazy memory.

Merrick the Grave Robber, male human Com2;

Medium humanoid (5' 6", 135 lbs); CR 1; HD 2d6; hp 7; Init +0; Spd 30 ft; AL N;

Armor: AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10.

Attacks: Base Atk +1, Grp +1;

Melee: Club (shovel) +2 (+1 BAB, +1 weapon focus) (d6, x2).

Saves: Fort -1, Ref +0, Will -1.

Abilities: Str 11, Dex 10, Con 8 (-1), Int 10, Wis 9 (-1), Cha 10.

Languages: Common.

Skills and Feats: Handle Animal +1, Listen +4, Profession (grave robber) +2, Spot +3; Alertness, Weapon Focus (club).

Possessions: Shovel, cart, nag, bottle of rotgut, 5 sp, 8 cp.



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