


PYRAMID[®]



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PSIONICS



EXPANDED PSYCHOKINESIS

by Christopher R. Rice

MAGIC AS PSI

by David L. Pulver

AVERTING PSYCHIC DISASTERS!

by Rev. Jason "PK" Levine

THE EDGE OF PSIENCE

by Kenneth Peters

RANDOM PSIONIC TABLES

by Antoni Ten Monrós

THOUGHTJUSTICE

by Andy Vetromile

TOKYO PSIENCE POLICE

by David L. Pulver

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Article Colors

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

Pale Blue: In This Issue

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

Dark Blue: GURPS Features

Purple: Systemless Features

Green: Distinguished Columnists

IN THIS ISSUE

Here at *Pyramid*, we think anything is possible if you put your mind to it! What better way to prove it than with an issue devoted to mental mastery – psionics?

For those harnessing the awesome might of **GURPS Psionic Powers**, *Expanded Psychokinesis* provides new things to think about. Get six brand-new abilities: Manipulate sound! Survive impossible falls! Each ability has techniques, and the article is rounded out with new perks and psionic-power packages.

Want to create a new mentalist or determine the effects of that odd brew your hero just quaffed? *Random Psionic Tables* lets you roll on lists featuring all 108 packages from **GURPS Psis**, plus five new ones. Get mental with a handful of dice!

This month marks the dynamic debut of David L. Pulver's column, *Eidetic Memory*. In this installment, David considers what would happen if you used the **GURPS Magic** system to represent psionic abilities. This variant is especially useful for fantasy campaigns!

Get to *The Edge of Psience*, and find some new **GURPS** tools for your psychic superstar. Do you envy wizards and their familiars? No more! This article describes "familiars" for psis, including a few examples. This article also includes four psionic artifacts that might come in handy – or spell your doom.

Forget 1984's notion of "thoughtcrimes" when your powers of thought truly make you dangerous. *Thoughtjustice* examines various possibilities for enforcing laws when dealing with cranial criminals – suitable for any system with psis.

Jason "PK" Levine – **GURPS** Assistant Line Editor, author of **GURPS Psionic Powers**, and our resident expert when it comes to blasting each other with mental energy – offers his thoughts on *Averting Psychic Disasters!* Now you can keep your critical failures at bay while tapping the power of psi.

When first contact with aliens doesn't quite go as planned, Earth has to establish all kinds of new policies, especially in light of psionic uplift. Who better to deal with these new problems in the galactic spaceport of Cosmo-Tokyo than the *Tokyo Psience Police*? This generic campaign framework is David L. Pulver's second mind-blowing contribution to this issue!

Steven Marsh, *Pyramid* Editor, uses this month's *Random Thought Table* to think about how our minds work . . . and builds on that to add paranormal powers in a campaign.

We predict you'll get a chuckle out of this issue's *Murphy's Rules*, and maybe something more to think about with the rest of *Odds and Ends*. This issue has more brain-busting benefits than you can bend a spoon at!

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FROM THE EDITOR

A PSI IS NOT JUST A PSI

This month's *Random Thought Table* goes into detail about why psi is cool (see pp. 33-34), so we won't dwell too much on that. Suffice it to say, it is.

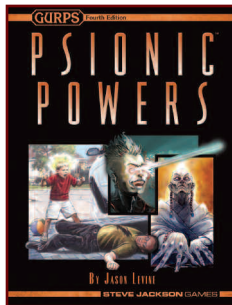
So, instead, I'll talk a bit about how versatile psionics are. At one end of the psi spectrum, you can have a campaign that revolves entirely around psychics and mental masters. At the other end, you can have a campaign that *may* feature psionics. (One of my earliest writings in the game industry took a riff from the classic *Mage: The Ascension* RPG and wondered what it would be like if the Force in *Star Wars* only worked when you couldn't prove it worked.)

Admittedly, having an adjustable dial doesn't make psi powers any different from (say) magic or super powers. However, what makes psionics particularly interesting – especially as seen in serial entertainment (comics, TV shows, etc.) – is that psi powers can be *ignored* . . . at least, at a low enough power level. And that “low power level” can actually be pretty high.

For example, let's say that you've established a fairly hard science-fiction campaign. A wizened old man in a long white beard shows up and starts throwing fireballs; it's proof positive that there's magic in the world. That's hard to sweep under the rug. However, if someone claiming to be a telepath showed up for an adventure (despite psionic powers not being part of the campaign before) and started making mayhem, it'd be easy to revert back to “business as usual” if psi isn't brought full time into the campaign.

This is because the veneer of science attached to psi means it can be ignored, in the way that all manner of wonder is ignored in our day-to-day lives. Sure, we humans are able to smash atoms or clone animals, but unless it interacts with us directly, we can forget about it. And, really, until the point where technology becomes ubiquitous, it's easy to ignore.

It's the same way with psis; unless they're everywhere, you can ignore 'em, if you want to . . . they fade into the same high-tech background that atom smashers and cloners do.



WRITE HERE, WRITE NOW

Speaking of clones and atom smashers . . . Were there any articles so excellent that we should make sure we clone them in the future? Or any so questionable we should stick 'em in an atom smasher? You can beam your innermost secrets privately to pyramid@sjgames.com, or broadcast your thoughts publicly online at forums.sjgames.com.

An Intro to Eidetic Memory

This month, we welcome a new featured columnist: David Pulver, co-author of the GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition and too many other cool projects to mention. We asked him for a few words to introduce his column (which appears on pp. 16-18). Take it away, David!

I love being a GM, and *GURPS* is one of my two favorite systems. My first *GURPS* campaign began as a variant *Traveller* game, but I converted it to *GURPS Space* in 1987. Not wanting to waste any later worldbooks, things quickly got stranger, as the heroes (and eventually, their children) left their starships to visit other dimensions, fight dragons, sail as pirates, travel back in time, develop super powers, pilot mecha, and even hunt the Loch Ness monster!

Each month in *Eidetic Memory*, I'll share some of the crunchier bits from this and other *GURPS* games I've run over the last few decades: my favorite house rules, new gadgets, NPCs, situations, and memorable screw-ups. Only the names have been changed to protect the innocent . . .

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EXPANDED PSYCHOKINESIS

BY CHRISTOPHER R. RICE

The only problem with *GURPS Psionic Powers* is that you can never have enough powers to pick from! Moreover, designing heroes using some of the categories with smaller ability lists can make for similarly created characters. To help with this situation, this article expands the Psychokinesis power and adds a new subcategory, Sonokinesis.

Other than Teleportation, Psychokinesis is one of the most *dramatic* of the main psi power groups. While it does have several abilities, a few more never hurt anyone . . .

Psychotronics, unidentified flying objects (UFO's), and paranormal phenomena such as psychokinesis, telepathy, and precognition all have one thing in common: both mind and matter-energy are involved.

– Thomas Bearden,
The Excalibur Briefing

TELEKINESIS

Focused telekinetic energy can accomplish more than just movement.

TK Burst

6 points/level

Skill: TK Burst (IQ/Hard).

You can make things blow up! By weakening the molecular bonds of your target, you can cause microscopic telekinetic explosions. Roll a Quick Contest of skill vs. the subject's HT; regular range modifiers apply. If you win, the subject takes 1 point of crushing damage for every level of TK Burst, *doubled* for the purpose of knockback. DR does not protect against this! You may do less damage if you prefer.

In addition to damaging the subject, anything nearby takes "collateral damage" in two ways. First, everything within (TK Burst × 2 yards) takes crushing damage equal to basic damage divided by (three times the distance in yards from the blast),

rounded down. Second, everything within five yards is vulnerable to psychokinetic "force-shrapnel"; for each such target, make an attack roll against an effective skill of 15, plus your Psychokinesis Talent, minus standard range penalties to the original subject. Multiple "shards" may hit; treat it as a Rcl 3 attack. The "shrapnel" does cutting damage based on your TK Burst level: 1 point at level 1, 1d-2 at level 2, 1d-1 at level 3, and 1d at level 4 or higher.

At higher levels, the GM may wish to use *Modifying Dice + Adds* (p. B269) to convert basic damage to dice. For example, TK Burst 12 would do 3d+1 [1d] damage.

Statistics: Crushing Attack 1 point (Based on HT, +20%; Based on IQ, Own Roll, +20%; Double Knockback +20%; Explosion 1, +50%; Fragmentation 1, +15%; Malediction 2, +150%; No Signature, +20%; Psychokinesis, -10%; Variable, +5%) [5/level].

Soften

Hard

Default: TK Burst-6. Cannot exceed TK Burst.

Rather than damaging your target, you can reduce his DR! Use *half* your normal TK Burst level, rounded down, to determine damage – but this damage causes no injury, knockback, fragmentation, etc. Instead, the target's DR is reduced by 1 for every 5 points of damage you would have inflicted. These effects are cumulative. Living beings heal DR at the same rate as HP.

OTHER PSYCHOKINESIS ABILITIES

The following ability can be invaluable for levitating psis – especially the unlucky ones!

Belaying

5/9/11/21/26/31/36 for levels 1-7

Skill: Belaying (DX/Hard).

You can use psychokinetic force to slow your falls, reducing the damage you take. At higher levels, even falls from skyscrapers may not kill you!

At level 1, you automatically subtract five yards from a fall. This is a passive ability, though you must have your limbs unbound and be able to twist your body. If the fall is less than five yards you take no damage and land on your feet!

At level 2, you may roll your against your Belaying skill. If you succeed, you halve any damage you would have taken from a fall after determining how far you fell.

At level 3, you may make a skill roll even if bound or handcuffed. At level 4, divide all damage you take from a fall with a successful roll by four. At level 5, divide damage by six. At level 6, divide damage by eight. At level 7, divide all damage by 10.

Statistics: Catfall (No roll to save for half damage, -40%; Psychokinesis, -10%) [5]. Further levels remove “No roll to save for half damage” [9], then add Featherfall [11]. Level 4 adds Injury Tolerance (Damage Reduction 2; Limited, Falls, -60%; Psychokinesis, -10%; Requires DX roll, -10%) [21]. Further levels increase the level of Injury Tolerance by 1 [+5/level].

Expansion

Hard

Default: Belaying-10; cannot exceed Belaying.

You can expand your psychokinetic field and affect one target within two yards of you. For every 5 points by which you succeed your roll, you may either affect an additional target or double the area of effect.

SONOKINESIS

Sonokinesis is the ability to manipulate sound waves with the mind. Most of its abilities involve the use of air or water as a “transport” medium, meaning that *none* of these abilities will function in a vacuum. This is a subcategory of the Psychokinesis psi power; like Divination and Remote Senses are subcategories of ESP.

Acoustic Manipulation

5/8/10/13/15/18/20/23/25/28
points for levels 1-10*

Skill: Acoustic Manipulation (IQ/Hard).

By manipulating and redirecting nearby sound waves, you can create any sort of sound you want in a two-yard area! This sound extends into both the subsonic and ultrasonic hearing range. This requires constant concentration on your part and a skill roll. The GM might allow the user to make an IQ-based roll against the better of his Singing, Musical Instrument, or even Electronics Operation (Media) when using this ability to create music or act as a “one-man-band.”

Note the amount you succeed by; listeners can make a Per roll at a penalty equal to your margin of success to notice something wrong or “off” with the created sounds. This roll should be modified by how believable a particular sound might be in the current environment, giving a +4 bonus to the roll if the sound the target is hearing should also be accompanied by a visual cue. For instance, the sound of a bulldozer coming right at the target would be fine on a construction site, but might be off on a city thoroughfare. If the sound were coming *directly* in front of him, he would get a additional +4 bonus.

It's Telekinesis, But Not as We Know It!

The following psi technique is *extremely* cinematic and only belongs in games where other uber-techniques (*GURPS Psionic Powers*, p. 76) are also available to PCs.

Ultimate TK

Hard

Default: TK Grab-20; cannot exceed TK Grab.

This technique amps up the psis TK Grab ability to god-like levels; it must be used in conjunction with the *Extra-Effort* rules (*GURPS Psionic Powers*, p. 7). Instead of receiving the normal bonus to power level, look up *half* your TK Grab level on the *Size* column of the *Size and Speed/Range Table* (p. B550), read across to the *Linear Measurement* column, and use that number as your TK Grab level for the next use of that ability to a lift subject. For an additional -25 penalty (that can be bought off, at the GM's option), you can use your higher value to *damage* a subject as well.

Alternatively – if the GM allows it – the following *optional* build for TK Grab might be available.

TK Grab (Hyper)

27 points/level*

Skill: TK Grab (IQ/Hard).

As per TK Grab (*GURPS Psionic Powers*, p. 54) except when using *Extra-Effort* rules (*GURPS Psionic Powers*, p. 7). Instead of receiving the normal bonus to power level, look up your TK Grab level on the *Size* column of the *Size and Speed/Range Table* (p. B550), read across to the *Linear Measurement* column, and use that number as your TK Grab level for the next use of your ability.

Statistics: Telekinesis (Based on IQ, +20%; Cannot Affect Self, -20%; Cannot Punch, -10%; Increased Range, LOS, +70%; Psychokinesis, -10%; Requires IQ Roll, -10%; Super-Effort, +400%) [27/level]. Short Ranged reduces Increased Range to $\times 2$ [24/level].

* The cost of TK Grab (Short-Ranged; Hyper) is 24/level.

Success means the target is not fooled – but this doesn't mean the sounds disappear.

You can also attempt to scare everyone in your area of effect by creating a frightening sound; this requires a skill roll vs. the *higher* of his IQ or Per (those with Protected Hearing are immune). Success means all of those who are affected must then make a Fright Check with the usual consequences.

Find your range on the *Psionic Range Table* (*GURPS Psionic Powers*, p. 22), using your level+3. For example, at level 5, your range would be 200 yards. You can also create sounds at very short ranges if necessary, but any sound you cannot hear (e.g., because you're too far away) is “disbelieved” at +2, as it's harder to get it right.

* This is an open-ended ability. Further levels cost 2 points for *odd* levels and 3 points for *even* levels, continuing the progression shown.

Statistics: Illusion (Auditory Only, -70%; Environmental, Sound-transmitting mediums, -10%; Extended, Ultrahearing, and Subsonic Hearing, +10%; Psychokinesis, -10%; Ranged, +40%; Reduced Range 1/10, -30%; Requires IQ Roll, -10%). Further levels remove Reduced Range and add Increased Range, one level at a time [+2.5/level].

The Power to Be Heard

Integrating Sonokinesis into a new campaign is easy – just offer it along with other options during character creation. Integrating it into an existing campaign is a bit more tricky. Suddenly, a whole new branch of psi comes into existence. How did this happen? Was it always there? Did some enterprising teke suddenly discover that he could manipulate sound waves as well as objects? Or perhaps was it intentionally hidden by the invading aliens who just happen to be vulnerable to sound-based attacks? In any case, the GM should allow those who already possess Psychokinetic abilities to purchase any of the new Sonokinetic psi powers, using unspent points or perhaps even going into point debt!

Aural Autonomy

Hard

Default: Acoustic Manipulation-10; cannot exceed Acoustic Manipulation.

You can hand off control of any of your created sounds to your subconscious mind. This frees you from having to concentrate to maintain it. Ongoing sounds can still “react” to outward stimuli. For instance if you create the sound of a man having a conversation and pacing back and forth, he would continue to pace back and forth (creating echoed steps) and continue to carry on his conversation – even reacting to you telling him to be quiet.

Expanded Area

Hard

Default: Acoustic Manipulation-5; cannot exceed Acoustic Manipulation.

Your area of effect becomes four yards across instead of two. You may double this radius, cumulatively, for every 5 points by which you make your (modified) skill roll.

Extended Range

Hard

Default: Acoustic Manipulation-4; cannot exceed Acoustic Manipulation.

Your sounds are capable of fooling Sonar and Vibration Sense as well. True Sight (*GURPS Psionic Powers*, p. 25) will still be able to ignore it, however.

Echolocation

11 points for level 1, plus 2 points for each additional level

Skill: Echolocation (Per/Hard).

You can emit and analyze ultrasonic sound waves that can substitute for sight. This covers a 120° arc in front of you (as for normal vision) and ignores darkness penalties. You must

roll against skill each minute of use, as well as when trying to make out fine details (reading an engraved relief, discerning faces, etc.).

Find your range on the *Psionic Range Table* (*GURPS Psionic Powers*, p. 22), using your level+1 (e.g., at level 1 you can see out to two yards). Because sound propagates much better in a liquid medium, use level+6 to determine range underwater (instead of level+1).

Echolocation does not work if you are deafened. It can be jammed or fooled by very loud noises (anything over 170 decibels, such as explosions or artillery fire), and is completely ineffective in a vacuum. Your emitted sound waves can also be detected by those with Ultrahearing or sonar detectors at 1.5 times this distance, though at a -4 to skill unless they are specifically calibrated for “sonokinetic sonar.”

Statistics: Sonar (Cannot switch off LPI, -5%; LPI, +10%; Psychokinesis, -10%; Reduced Range 1/10, -30%; Reduced Range 1/2, Underwater, -5%; Requires Per Roll, -5%). Further levels remove Reduced Range and add Increased Range, one level at a time [+2/level].

Extended Arc

Hard

Default: Echolocation-8; cannot exceed Echolocation.

You can scan an arc greater than 120°. Choose before attempting this technique: a 240° arc (see *Peripheral Vision*, p. B74) at full range, or a 360° arc (see *360° Vision*, p. B34) at 1/100 normal range.

Lock-On

Hard

Default: Echolocation-2; cannot exceed Echolocation.

You lock onto a target with your radar, giving you detailed targeting information. Any aimed attack you make against this target (until it leaves your Echolocation range or you lock onto a new target) is at +3.

Salient

Hard

Default: Echolocation-5; cannot exceed Echolocation.

Your Echolocation becomes *completely* undetectable to sonar detectors, those with Ultra Hearing, etc. It is, however, still detectable by psionic means such as Psi Sense.

Muffle

7 points/level

Skill: Muffle (IQ/Hard).

By psychokinetically “buffering” sound waves, you can reduce the amount of noise you or a target produces. When you activate this ability (which requires a skill roll once each minute), you and everything in the hex you are occupying become difficult to hear, resulting in -1 per level of Muffle to Hearing rolls.

Alternatively, you can project this zone of silence outward, allowing you to affect a hex other than your own up to 100 yards away. At level 10, you are completely silent; others do not even get a roll to hear you. You may exclude anyone you wish from this effect, if you want. You could, for instance, diminish the sound of your own footsteps or silence the warning shouts of a foe you are attacking.

You may use Muffle to make a variant power defense (*GURPS Psionic Powers*, pp. 8-9) – doubling the normal penalty on a success or dropping the Muffle on a failure – if you know someone is about to look for you.

Statistics: Obscure (Hearing; Extended, Sonar, Subsonic Hearing, Ultrasonic Hearing, and Vibration Sense, +80%; Psychokinesis, -10%; Ranged, +50%; Requires IQ Roll, -10%; Selective Effect, +20%; Stealthy, +100%; Underwater, +20%) [7/level].

Expansion

Hard

Default: Muffle-5. Cannot exceed Muffle.

You can expand your zone of silence and affect others within two yards of you. This area doubles for every 5 points by you succeed your roll.

Muted Movement

Hard

Default: Muffle-8. Cannot exceed Muffle.

Instead of giving a penalty to others to hear you, you may instead give yourself a bonus to Stealth rolls. This bonus equals +1 to Stealth per level of Muffle (+2 if you are completely still and unmoving). For an additional -2 penalty (which can be bought off), you can instead gain a +2 to Stealth regardless of whether you are moving or not. These bonuses only help in the dark, or against listening devices, blind creatures, or those who must rely on hearing to find you.

Sonic Dampening

Hard

Default: Muffle-10. Cannot exceed Muffle.

Using this technique, you can temporarily turn your Muffle into a more active sound damper, giving you DR 1 per level against sound-based attacks, such as ultra-tech screamers, other Sonokinesis abilities, etc. This ability cannot be used at range.

Wail

10 points/level

Skill: Wail (HT/Hard).

You can create destructive harmonics and use them against a target by screaming at them. Your target must be within two yards of you to take full damage (five yards for half damage). This is range is *tripled* underwater.

Your attack functions similarly to a flamethrower: A “jet” of sound emanates from you to your target. However, this jet is treated like a melee weapon with a long reach rather than a ranged attack. This allows you to use melee-only maneuvers such as All-Out Attack (Double), Deceptive Attack, Feint, and

Rapid Strike; using All-Out Attack (Determined) gives +4 to skill (instead of +1).

Damage is 1d burn per level of Wail, but lacks the capability to start fires as it does not have the incendiary modifier. You can do less damage if you wish.

If you injure the target, he must roll against HT, at -1 for every 2 full points of injury taken, or be physically stunned from your attack. He may roll HT (at no penalty) to recover each turn. In addition, a failed HT roll leaves the target not only stunned, but suffering from the Hard of Hearing disadvantage for (20-HT) minutes (minimum 1 minute). Failure by 5 or more results in Deafness (instead of Hard of Hearing), retching (p. B429), and lose of sphincter control, resulting in the Bad Smell disadvantage until he is clean up. This ability does not work in a vacuum.

Statistics: Burning Attack 1d (Based on HT, Own Roll, +20%; Environmental, sound-transmitting mediums, -10%; Increased Range 3, Underwater only, +15%; Jet, +0%; No Incendiary, -10%; Nuisance Effect, Must scream directly at the subject, -5%; Psychokinesis, -10%; Reduced Range 1/2, -10%; Side Effect, Hard of Hearing, Secondary Bad Smell, Secondary Deafness instead of Hard of Hearing, Secondary Retching, Stunning, +84%; Underwater, +20%; Variable, +5%) [10/level].

Sonokinesis Perks

Good Vibrations: You can emit a low-level vibration that can shake a can of paint, agitate water to do laundry, or for more personal effects . . . For trivial tasks that you would already receive a +2 or higher bonus from Task Difficulty modifiers add a additional +1 bonus; appropriate skills include Carpentry, House-keeping, Erotic Art, and any other skill where being able to create a vibration effect could be useful.

Speaker Boxx: By spending 1 FP, you can touch any music player or other object capable of emitting sounds and “play” those sounds through your own body as if you were a speaker for as long as you touch it. Make a HT + Psychokinesis roll – success means high fidelity; failure means grainy sound. Critical failures causes you to lose your hearing for 1 minute per point you failed by, while critical success means you don’t spend the FP and can let go of the music player while still maintaining the effect.

Vibrate Weapon: By spending 1 FP per second, any edged weapon that does cutting or impaling damage that you are currently holding gains traits similar to a vibroblade (*GURPS Ultra-Tech*, p. 164). Thus, the edge gains +1 cutting damage and an armor divisor of (2). If the weapon leaves your grasp for any reason (because you threw it, you were disarmed, etc.) it instantly loses these properties.

In addition to the above, the following perks from *GURPS Power-Ups 2: Perks* are excellent ones for Sonokinetic psis: Controllable Disadvantage (Disturbing Voice), Extended Hearing, Penetrating Voice, and Robust Hearing.

Conic Blast

Hard

Default: Wail-10; cannot exceed Wail.

Your projected burst of sound temporarily becomes a *cone* attack with a five-yard width and 10-yard length (*triple* underwater). Subjects further away than two yards (six yards underwater) take half-damage. See the rules for *Area and Spreading Attacks* (p. B413).

Heterodyning

Hard

Default: Wail-8; cannot exceed Wail.

By mixing ultrasonic and subsonic frequencies, you can create an attack that is *exceedingly* disruptive to both living and unliving objects. You only inflict *half damage* but change damage type from burning to corrosion, which in turn reduces the target's DR by 1 per 5 points of damage sustained.

High-Note

Hard

Default: Wail-5; cannot exceed Wail.

By shifting your vocal range up several octaves you can create a harmonic resonance within inanimate objects that makes them more susceptible to future attacks. Once the target has taken more than 1/3 HP from this attack, whether all at once or over multiple turns, it gains the Fragile (Brittle) disadvantage (p. B136) until repaired above 2/3 HP again!

Infrasonic

Hard

Default: Wail-3; cannot exceed Wail.

By using a weird-band infrasonic frequency your attack becomes nearly impossible to perceive. You to use the ability "quietly" against a foe and without screaming at your target. This technique cannot be used in conjunction with the High-Note psi technique (above).

Penetrating Shout

Hard

Default: Wail-10; cannot exceed Wail.

Using this psi technique adds an armor divisor of (3) to your attack.

Threnody

Hard

Default: Wail-15; cannot exceed Wail.

You can target your foe's vital organs, causing a heart attack if you do it often enough. Roll the attack normally, except that you do *half damage*. Once the target has taken more than 2/3 HP from this attack, whether all at once or over multiple turns, he drops to the ground and begins to have a heart attack (p. B429) and will die within minutes without medical care. This psi technique borders on being an uber-technique (*GURPS Psionic Powers*, p. 76) so it might not be available in all campaigns.

Thunderclap

Hard

Default: Wail-10; cannot exceed Wail.

Prerequisite: Wail 5+.

Instead of generating sound on your own, you use an active thunderstorm! You and your target(s) must be standing under an active (that is, already producing thunder) storm cloud. Your target and everyone within eight yards of him (except you) must make a Quick Contest of your skill vs. HT; standard range penalties apply. Failure results in being physically stunned and deafened; roll HT every round to recover from being stunned, while the deafness lasts for one minute per point the target failed his roll by. This ability functions normally underwater as long as a storm cloud is overhead.

This technique cannot usually be attempted by psis who have Wail 4 or less, though the GM might allow it at an extra -8 penalty per level below 5.

Thunderstruck!

The following psi technique combines an Electrokinesis and Sonokinesis ability in a manner reminiscent of the Double Strike psi technique (*GURPS Psionic Powers*, p. 66) for the Mental Stab and Mental Blow abilities described therein.

Thunder & Lightning

Hard

Default: The *lower* of your Thunderbolt or Thunderclap psi techniques-4; cannot exceed *lower* Thunderbolt or Thunderclap.

You can attack someone with Thunderbolt (*GURPS Psionic Powers*, p. 34) and Thunderclap (above) simultaneously. If the abilities are at different levels, use the range penalties for the lowest one. Make a single roll against your Thunder & Lightning technique to hit with *both* attacks.

Additional Sonokinesis Abilities

The following traits require no special modifiers to be Sonokinesis abilities.

- Acute Hearing (Psychokinesis, -10%) [1.8/level]. No skill needed; passive ability. The GM may wish to limit this trait to Talent×2 in more realistic games, while allowing any number of levels in a cinematic game.
- Damage Resistance (Limited, Sound, -40%; Psychokinesis, -10%) [2.5/level]. No skill needed; passive ability. The GM may wish to limit this trait to the psi's HT in more realistic games.
- Discriminatory Hearing (Psychokinesis, -10%) [14]. No skill needed; passive ability.
- Mimicry (Psychokinesis, -10%) [9]. *Skill:* Mimicry (IQ/Hard), *Psi Technique:* Voice Library (skill-5) – as for the enhancement in *GURPS Powers* (p. 61).
- Parabolic Hearing (Psychokinesis, -10%) [3.6/level]. No skill needed; passive ability.
- Protected Hearing (Psychokinesis, -10%) [5]. No skill needed; passive ability.

- Subsonic Hearing or Speech (Psychokinesis, -10%) [5 or 9]. No skill needed; passive ability.
- Ultrasonic Hearing or Speech (Psychokinesis, -10%) [5 or 9]. No skill needed; passive ability.
- Vibration Sense (Psychokinesis, -10%) [9]. *Skill*: Vibration Sense (Per/Hard). *Psi Techniques*: Universal (skill-5) – as for the enhancement on p. B96. Targeting (skill-2) – as for the enhancement in *GURPS Powers* (p. 86).

NEW PSYCHOKINESIS PACKAGES

The following are new psionic packages that can be used in a campaign featuring powers from this article.

Audio Engineer

100 points

You are a walking, talking sound board and audio F/X machine; you can create any sort of sound you like out to 50 yards in a two-yard area. You can completely silence yourself, making it impossible for others to hear you, or silence someone *else* up to 100 yards away. When you are asked to DJ your friends' parties, all you need to bring is your MP3 player as you can function as a speaker yourself!

Advantages: Acoustic Manipulation 3 [10]; Muffle 10 [70]; Psychokinesis Talent 2 [10].

Perks: Good Vibration; Speaker Boxx. [2]

Skills: Acoustic Manipulation (H) IQ+2 [4]*; Muffle (H) IQ+2 [4]*.

*Includes +2 from Psychokinesis Talent.

Banshee

50 points

You can use your ability to cause *severe* damage (4d burn) with numerous side-effect follow-ups, including hearing penalties and stunning. Additionally, *you've* built up a defense against sound-based attacks, giving you a +5 on all resistance rolls for things such as deafness, sound attacks, etc.

When you want to be heard, you can bellow as good as any mother for her child, providing others with a +3 to their Hearing rolls. Likewise, you have a fierce battle cry; if you catch an opponent by surprise, you get a +1 to Intimidation against him.

Advantages: Protected Hearing (Psychokinesis, -10%) [5]; Wail 4 [40].

Perks: Penetrating Voice. [1]

Skills: Wail (H) HT [4]

Mind vs. matter . . . Mind wins!

PK Bomber

50 points

Who needs nitro? Your mind is capable of creating explosions on a microscopic scale! With a successful Quick Contest,

Supa Psis!

GURPS Supers offers a wealth of information on running a supers campaign, creating characters, and keeping in genre; it's also a nifty resource for more than just super-style games. After all, some psionic based games are just thinly veiled supers campaigns. Two of the traits it introduced that are a particularly good fit for tekes are: *Super-Strength* and *Super Throw* (*GURPS Supers*, pp. 24-25 and 30). The first allows for some *massive* touch-range telekinesis lifts, while the second can be explained as telekinetically hurling an object farther and faster. If the GM allows, both of these advantages can be used as is:

- Extra ST without HP (Psychokinesis, -10%; Super-Effort, +300%) [31.2/level]. No skill needed; passive ability.
- Super Throw (Psychokinesis, -10%) [9/level]. No skill needed; passive ability.

you can do 7 points (2d) of crushing damage with the double knockback and explosive modifiers as well as 1d of follow-up fragmentation damage. Against heavily armored targets, you can even cause their DR to soften enough to where your power can get through more easily.

Advantages: TK Burst 7 [35].

Skills: TK Burst (H) IQ+1 [8].

Techniques: Soften (H) TK Burst [7].

Psi-Sonar

25 points

You can, by sending out waves of sound, "see" clearly out to 20 yards even in complete darkness, and out to 1,000 yards if underwater. By taking a second of concentration, you can switch your hearing range to a higher band or make your hearing much more discerning, giving a +4 bonus on any task that utilizes hearing, including using Shadowing against a noisy subject.

Advantages: Discriminatory Hearing (Psychokinesis, -10%) [3]*; Echolocation 4 [17]; Ultrahearing (Psychokinesis, -10%) [1]*.

Skills: Echolocation (H) Per [4].

* Alternative Abilities (x1/5 cost) to Echolocation.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Christopher R. Rice is currently working part time as computer repairman. From Portsmouth, Virginia, he plots the doom of his gaming group, who manage to thwart his every move with grace and style. He is currently (trying to) earning a degree in Electrical Engineering and dreams of being able to write for a living one day. Having gamed over 17 years, he likes to think he knows a thing or two about the subject. He wishes to thank L.A., his own personal muse, as well as the rest of his gaming group and family. He gives special thanks to Antoni Ten for his continued patience. Also, thank you for all you did for me, Donald R. Johnston, a better man I have never known; you may be gone, Dad, but not forgotten. I love you, Pop, rest in peace.

RANDOM PSIONIC TABLES

BY ANTONI TEN MONRÓS

“Temperature . . . High, but dropping. Pulse . . . Stable. Intracranial pressure . . . High but normalizing.”

The doctor continued droning his endless checklist of tests, in a monotone. It was interesting to observe him, as he continued to examine my still inert body. He did not know it yet, but the experiment had been a huge success.

GURPS is a carefully balanced system, which emphasizes player choice over randomness. However, it's hard to forget the thrill of rolling the dice and facing unknown emergent powers. This article tries to recreate the feeling of old school Superhero games, allowing the player to randomly generate his adventurer's psionic powers. It draws heavily on **GURPS Psionic Powers** and **GURPS Psis**, the first one to build the psi framework, and the second one to provide compact, well-built, and balanced packages of psionic powers. Along with the templates in **GURPS Psis**, these tables can make character creation fast!

The next time the protagonists try an experimental psycho-active drug, or submit themselves to risky surgery in a dubious locale, by a doctor with a strange eastern accent, you'll be prepared.

HOW TO USE THESE TABLES

GURPS Psis presents 108 psionic packages; this article provides another five more. The standard way of using the tables involves randomness at all steps of the process, but care has been taken in separating out the steps, in order to maximize flexibility. Should you wish to, for example, have a psychokinetic, but want to leave the exact powers to fate, simply ignore the section on rolling the number and type of different powers the person has.

When a table instructs you to roll a series of dice separated by commas (for example, “roll 1d, 1d”), roll the dice individually; do not add them together. Before rolling, you may want to designate one die as the first, one as the second, and so on. Then find the corresponding result in the table.

The Process

First, select how many points you want to devote to psionic powers. The GM might set limits on this, or even mandate a fixed value! For example, the templates in **GURPS Psis** assume 50 points in psi packages. Permitted values are 25, 50, 75, and 100 points, but it's easy to adapt for any multiple of 25 points.

Next, determine how many different psionic packages the psi will have, and their size, using the *Number of Packages Table* (p. 11). Then figure out how many different psionic powers he'll have with the *Number of Powers Table* (p. 11). If necessary, decide how many packages are in each power. (For example, you might roll “Three 25-point packages” on the *Number of Packages Table* and “They're split between two different powers” on the *Number of Powers Table*.)

Now, find out what the powers are with the *Powers Table* (p. 11). Reroll duplicate powers. Finally, for each package value, roll on the corresponding package table in the correct power subsection to determine the specific set of abilities, rerolling duplicates.

Some powers override those steps; details for this are in the corresponding section. Keep in mind the abilities from different packages can overlap; refer to *Overlapping Abilities* (**GURPS Psis**, p. 21) in this case.

Example: Charlie is built using the child template (**GURPS Psis**, pp. 10-11), which mandates 50 points in psi packages. He rolls 1d on correct section of the *Number of Packages Table*, and gets a 5 – a single 50-point package. Since he only has one package, he skips the *Number of Powers* table, and rolls 1d, 1d on the *Powers Table*, turning up 4, 5. He's going to be a psychokinetic. Now, he goes to the *50-Point Package Table* under *Psychokinesis Tables*. He rolls 1d, 1d and gets 6, 2, resulting in the Firestarter package.

*The next time
the heroes submit
themselves to risky
surgery in a dubious
locale, by a doctor with
a strange eastern accent,
you'll be prepared.*

Selective Power Use

This article assumes that you're using all the packages found in *GURPS Psis*. However, it's likely that some abilities are not available in your campaign world. (For example, the Psychokinesis packages assume that you can have both unified and non-unified telekinesis). It's even possible that some powers are not available for all characters (maybe the PCs cannot take Anti-Psi, or maybe Ergokinesis isn't going to do a lot of good in a Victorian campaign). In this case, it's simply a matter of re-rolling the inappropriate result. It should also be easy for the GM to add packages or new powers. This article tries to make all powers, and all abilities within the same point cost group, equally probable. This is not set in stone! If these assumptions do not correspond to your campaign world, just change them; the tables are set up to make alterations as easy as possible.

GENERAL TABLES

These tables are the start of the process, and the ones where it's easier to tinker.

Number of Packages Table

If you will only devote 25 points to psionics, skip this section, and roll once on the *Powers Table* (below).

If you plan to devote 50 points to psionics, roll 1d.

1-4 – Two 25-point packages.

5-6 – One 50-point package.

If you will allocate 75 points to psionics, roll 1d.

1-4 – Three 25-point packages.

5-6 – One 50-point package and one 25-point package.

If you decide to devote 100 points to psionics, roll 1d.

1-2 – Four 25-point packages.

3-4 – Two 25-point packages and one 50-point package.

5 – Two 50-point packages.

6 – One 100-point package.

Number of Powers Table

If you rolled a total of two packages, roll 1d.

1-4 – Both are part of the same power.

5-6 – They belong to different powers.

If you rolled a total of three packages, roll 1d.

1-3 – All three are part of the same power.

4-5 – They're split between two different powers.

6 – Each package belongs to a separate power.

If you rolled a total of four packages, roll 1d.

1 – They are all part of the same power.

2-3 – They're split between two different powers.

4-5 – They're split between three different powers.

6 – Each package belongs to a separate power.

Powers Table

For each power rolled in the above table, roll 1d, 1d. Then go to the indicated table in this article to determine the specific ability.

1, 1-3 – Anti-Psi* (below).

1, 4-6 – Astral Projection (p. 12).

2, 1-3 – Ergokinesis (p. 12).

2, 4-6 – ESP (p. 13).

3, 1-3 – Probability Alteration (p. 13).

3, 4-6 – Psychic Healing (p. 13).

4, 1-3 – Psychic Vampirism (p. 14).

4, 4-6 – Psychokinesis (p. 14).

5, 1-3 – Telepathy (p. 15).

5, 4-6 – Teleportation (p. 15).

6, 1-6 – Your choice, or roll again†

* Since Anti-Psi is incompatible with other psi powers, there are two options: (1) If Anti-Psi is the first power rolled, then all the packages belong to the Anti-Psi power. If it was not the first power rolled, re-roll any later Anti-Psi results. (2) If any roll indicates that one of the powers is Anti-Psi, then disregard all previous rolls. All packages belong to Anti-Psi. Since Anti-Psi is mostly passive and reactive in nature, it is recommended that you use the former method (rather than the latter) for PCs.

† If you decide to create packages for the lesser psionic powers, presented in *GURPS Psionic Powers*, you could replace this entry with the following subtable. You will need to come up with your own power packages for each one. (Packages should include relevant advantages, perks, and skills.)

6, 1 – Animal Telepathy (*GURPS Psionic Powers*, pp. 71-72).

6, 2 – Biokinesis (*GURPS Psionic Powers*, pp. 72-73).

6, 3 – Dream Control (*GURPS Psionic Powers*, pp. 73-74).

6, 4 – Psychometabolism (*GURPS Psionic Powers*, pp. 75-76).

6, 5-6 – Your choice, or roll again.

*Odd. He's immune
to our psionic attack.
– Giant Brain, in
Futurama #5.8*

ANTI-PSI TABLES

Use the information determined from the *Number of Packages Table* (above) to decide which table(s) in this subsection to roll on.

25-Point Package Table

Roll 1d.

1-3, 1-3 – Basic Anti-Psi (*GURPS Psis*, p. 20).

1-3, 4-6 – Disbeliever (p. 12).

4-6, 1-3 – Highly Resistant (*GURPS Psis*, p. 20).

4-6, 4-6 – Simple Screamer (*GURPS Psis*, p. 20).

50-Point Package Table

Roll 1d.

1-3 – Perception Master (*GURPS Psis*, p. 20).

4-6 – Psychic Null (*GURPS Psis*, p. 21).

100-Point Package Table

Roll 1d.

1-3 – Disruptor (*GURPS Psis*, p. 21).

4-6 – Strong Screamer (*GURPS Psis*, p. 21).

New Anti-Psi Package

Disbeliever

25 points

You're thoroughly a skeptic. How could you be otherwise, when all so-called psychics seem to experience "unforeseen complications" when they try to show you their gifts? Any tangible results they try to demonstrate prove to be just trickery when you approach them!

Advantages: Cancellation 1 [20].

Perks: Skeptic. [1]

Skills: Cancellation (H) IQ [4].

ASTRAL PROJECTION

Astral Projection is another special case. First, of the four 25-point packages, two require Astral Travel, which is available only through the 50- and 100-point packages. This means that if you roll four 25-point packages for Astral Travel, you should instead roll once on the *50-Point Package Table*, and twice on the *25-Point Package Table*. Also, since the 50-point packages are mutually exclusive, if you roll two Astral projection 50-point packages, you should instead roll once on the *100-Point Package Table*. Additionally, if you determined that your psi should have only two 25-point Astral Projection packages, you may instead choose to roll on the *50-Point Package Table*.

25-Point Package Table

Roll 1d,1d.

1-3, 1-3 – Astral Perception (*GURPS Psis*, p. 21).

1-3, 4-6 – Extra Speed* (*GURPS Psis*, p. 21).

4-6, 1-3 – Spirit Warrior† (*GURPS Psis*, p. 21).

4-6, 4-6 – Visual Hunter (*GURPS Psis*, p. 22).

* Requires Astral Travel. If you do not have it, treat this result as Astral Perception.

† Requires Astral Travel. If you do not have it, treat this result as Visual Hunter.

50-Point Package Table

Roll 1d.

1-2 – Basic Projector (*GURPS Psis*, p. 22).

3-4 – Dual Plane Projector (*GURPS Psis*, p. 22).

5-6 – Phantasm (*GURPS Psis*, p. 22).

100-Point Package Table

Roll 1d.

1-3 – Fast Projector (*GURPS Psis*, p. 22).

4-6 – Long-Term Projector (*GURPS Psis*, p. 22).

ERGOKINESIS

Use the information determined using the *General Tables* (p. 11) to decide which table in this subsection to roll on.

25-Point Package Table

Roll 1d.

1 – Amperage Regulator (*GURPS Psis*, p. 22).

2 – EM Sense (*GURPS Psis*, p. 22).

3 – Energy Absorber (*GURPS Psis*, p. 22).

4 – Hacker's Touch (*GURPS Psis*, p. 23).

5 – Illusionist (*GURPS Psis*, p. 23).

6 – System Control (*GURPS Psis*, p. 23).

50-Point Package Table

Roll 1d.

1-2 – Computer Domination (*GURPS Psis*, p. 23).

3-4 – Photon Projection (*GURPS Psis*, p. 23).

5-6 – Spark Slinger (*GURPS Psis*, p. 23).

100-Point Package Table

Roll 1d.

1-3 – EM Warrior (*GURPS Psis*, p. 23).

4-6 – Ghost in the Machine (*GURPS Psis*, p. 23).

Let our coming then be the confounding of psychotronics, of astral counterfeit rays. Let our oneness be the mighty zzz that will surely scramble every antiself counterfeit scrambling of the sound of light, the sound of the Word.

– Elizabeth Prophet, Where Eagles Gather

The authors [Elizabeth Rauscher and Russell Targ] believe psi abilities are “fundamental to our understanding of consciousness itself.”

*– Marie D. Jones, **PSIence***

ESP

Use the information determined using the *General Tables* (p. 11) to decide which table in this subsection to roll on.

25-Point Package Table

Roll 1d, 1d, 1d.

1-3, 1-3, 1-3 – Fortune Teller (*GURPS Psis*, p. 24).

1-3, 1-3, 4-6 – Ghost Sight (*GURPS Psis*, p. 24).

1-3, 4-6, 1-3 – Hard to Hit (*GURPS Psis*, p. 24).

1-3, 4-6, 4-6 – Intuitive Divination (*GURPS Psis*, p. 24).

4-6, 1-3, 1-3 – Psi Detector (*GURPS Psis*, p. 24).

4-6, 1-3, 4-6 – Psychic Tracker (*GURPS Psis*, p. 24).

4-6, 4-6, 1-3 – Visions of Future and Past (*GURPS Psis*, p. 24).

4-6, 4-6, 4-6 – X-Ray Specs (*GURPS Psis*, p. 24).

50-Point Package Table

Roll 1d.

1-2 – Past Scanner (*GURPS Psis*, p. 24).

3-4 – Sensory Projection (*GURPS Psis*, p. 25).

5-6 – Spotter (*GURPS Psis*, p. 25).

100-Point Package Table

Roll 1d.

1-3 – Hyper-Observant (*GURPS Psis*, p. 25).

4-6 – Precognitive Master (*GURPS Psis*, p. 25).

PROBABILITY ALTERATION

Use the information determined using the *General Tables* (p. 11) to decide which table in this subsection to roll on.

25-Point Package Table

Roll 1d, 1d.

1-3, 1-3 – Beginner’s Luck (*GURPS Psis*, p. 25).

1-3, 4-6 – Chess Master (*GURPS Psis*, p. 25).

4-6, 1-3 – Hard to Hit (*GURPS Psis*, p. 25).

4-6, 4-6 – Situational Manipulator (*GURPS Psis*, p. 25).

50-Point Package Table

Roll 1d.

1-2 – Doom Bringer (*GURPS Psis*, p. 25).

3-4 – Lucky Devil (*GURPS Psis*, p. 25).

5-6 – Rain Dancer (*GURPS Psis*, p. 26).

100-Point Package Table

Roll 1d.

1-3 – Combat Fixer (*GURPS Psis*, p. 26).

4-6 – Weather Wizard (*GURPS Psis*, p. 26).

PSYCHIC HEALING

Use the information determined using the *General Tables* (p. 11) to decide which table in this subsection to roll on.

25-Point Package Table

Roll 1d.

1 – Antibodies (*GURPS Psis*, p. 26).

2 – Iron Metabolism (below).

3 – Empathic Bond (*GURPS Psis*, p. 26).

4 – Regulate Body (*GURPS Psis*, p. 26).

5 – Restore Damage (*GURPS Psis*, p. 26).

6 – Treat Disease (*GURPS Psis*, p. 26).

50-Point Package Table

Roll 1d.

1-2 – Anesthesiologist (*GURPS Psis*, p. 27).

3-4 – Cellular Control (*GURPS Psis*, p. 27).

5-6 – Lay on Hands (*GURPS Psis*, p. 27).

100-Point Package Table

Roll 1d.

1-3 – Accelerated Recovery (*GURPS Psis*, p. 27).

4-6 – Sainly Healer (*GURPS Psis*, p. 27).

New Psychic Healing Package

Iron Metabolism

25 points

Your healing capabilities are directed inward, making your metabolism more efficient, improving your resistance against all sorts of diseases and poisons while also making you heal faster.

Advantages: Reduced Consumption 1 (Psychic Healing, -10%) [2]; Regeneration (Slow; Psychic Healing, -10%) [9]; Resistant to Disease (+8) (Psychic Healing, -10%) [5]; Resistant to Poison (+8) (Psychic Healing, -10%) [7]

Perks: No Hangover; Sanitized Metabolism. [2]

PSYCHIC VAMPIRISM

Use the information determined using the *General Tables* (p. 11) to decide which table in this subsection to roll on.

25-Point Package Table

Roll 1d.

- 1 – Basic Weakening (ST) (*GURPS Psis*, p. 27).
- 2 – Basic Weakening (DX) (*GURPS Psis*, p. 27).
- 3 – Basic Weakening (IQ) (*GURPS Psis*, p. 27).
- 4 – Basic Weakening (HT) (*GURPS Psis*, p. 27).
- 5 – Dream Theft (*GURPS Psis*, p. 27).
- 6 – Emotional Vampire (*GURPS Psis*, p. 27).

50-Point Package Table

Roll 1d.

- 1 – Energy Theft (*GURPS Psis*, p. 27).
- 2 – Foolishness (*GURPS Psis*, p. 28).
- 3 – Life-Force Devourer (*GURPS Psis*, p. 28).
- 4 – System Shock (*GURPS Psis*, p. 28).
- 5 – Walking Nightmare (*GURPS Psis*, p. 28).
- 6 – Zone of Logic (*GURPS Psis*, p. 28).

100-Point Package Table

Roll 1d.

- 1-3 – Debilitation (*GURPS Psis*, p. 28).
- 4-6 – Psi Theft (*GURPS Psis*, p. 29).

PSYCHOKINESIS

The packages in *GURPS Psis* include both Telekinetic Control and the four standard TK abilities. If you end up with both Telekinetic Control and one of the basic abilities, add the points from the ability to raise the level of Telekinetic Control, using any leftover points, plus the points spent on the specialized

skills, to raise the TK Control skill. For the rest, proceed as per *Overlapping Abilities* (*GURPS Psis*, p. 21).

For tables that include the packages described in *Expanded Psychokinesis* (pp. 4-9), see *Alternate Psychokinesis Tables* (below).

New Psychokinesis Package

TK Slinger

25 points

You can shoot stones as if they were bullets, inflicting 3d piercing damage, and you always remember to carry a couple of pebbles with you in case there's no ammo nearby.

Advantages: TK Bullet 4 [20].

Perks: Standard Operating Procedure (Always carries a couple of pebbles suitable to be used with TK Bullet). [1]

Skills: TK Bullet (H) IQ [4].

25-Point Package Table

Roll 1d, 1d, 1d.

- 1-3, 1-3, 1-3 – Basic Telekinesis (*GURPS Psis*, p. 29).
- 1-3, 1-3, 4-6 – Deflector Shield (*GURPS Psis*, p. 29).
- 1-3, 4-6, 1-3 – Flying Burglar (*GURPS Psis*, p. 29).
- 1-3, 4-6, 4-6 – Hoover-Step (*GURPS Psis*, p. 29).
- 4-6, 1-3, 1-3 – Ice Maker (*GURPS Psis*, p. 29).
- 4-6, 1-3, 4-6 – Space Heater (*GURPS Psis*, p. 30).
- 4-6, 4-6, 1-3 – TK Slinger (above).
- 4-6, 4-6, 4-6 – Utility Lifting (*GURPS Psis*, p. 30).

Alternate Psychokinesis Tables

The GM who plans to incorporate the packages introduced in *Expanded Psychokinesis* (pp. 4-9) should use these tables instead of the ones listed in the text.

25-Point Abilities Table

Roll 1d, 1d.

- 1-2, 1-2 – Basic Telekinesis (*GURPS Psis*, p. 29).
- 1-2, 3-4 – Deflector Shield (*GURPS Psis*, p. 29).
- 1-2, 5-6 – Flying Burglar (*GURPS Psis*, p. 29).
- 3-4, 1-2 – Hoover-Step (*GURPS Psis*, p. 29).
- 3-4, 3-4 – Ice Maker (*GURPS Psis*, p. 29).
- 3-4, 5-6 – Psi-Sonar (p. 9).
- 5-6, 1-2 – Space Heater (*GURPS Psis*, p. 30).
- 5-6, 3-4 – TK Slinger (p. 9).
- 5-6, 5-6 – Utility Lifting (*GURPS Psis*, p. 30).

50-Point Abilities Table

Roll 1d.

- 1 – Advanced Telekinesis (*GURPS Psis*, p. 30).
- 2 – Banshee (p. 9).
- 3 – Fast Flight (*GURPS Psis*, p. 30).
- 4 – Firestarter (*GURPS Psis*, p. 30).
- 5 – Organ Grinder (*GURPS Psis*, p. 30).
- 6 – PK Bomber (p. 9).

100-Point Abilities Table

Roll 1d.

- 1-2 – Audio Engineer (p. 9).
- 3-4 – Psychokinetic Warrior (*GURPS Psis*, p. 30).
- 5-6 – Ultra-Telekinesis (*GURPS Psis*, p. 30).

50-Point Package Table

Roll 1d, 1d.

- 1-3, 1-3 – Advanced Telekinesis (*GURPS Psis*, p. 30).
- 1-3, 4-6 – Fast Flight (*GURPS Psis*, p. 30).
- 4-6, 1-3 – Firestarter (*GURPS Psis*, p. 30).
- 4-6, 4-6 – Organ Grinder (*GURPS Psis*, p. 30).

100-Point Package Table

Roll 1d.

- 1-3 – Psychokinetic Warrior (*GURPS Psis*, p. 30).
- 4-6 – Ultra-Telekinesis (*GURPS Psis*, p. 30).

TELEPATHY

Use the information determined using the *General Tables* (p. 11) to decide which table in this subsection to roll on.

25-Point Package Table

Roll 1d, 1d.

- 1-2, 1-2 – Eavesdropper (*GURPS Psis*, p. 31).
- 1-2, 3-4 – Empath (*GURPS Psis*, p. 31).
- 1-2, 5-6 – Hidden Communication (*GURPS Psis*, p. 31).
- 3-4, 1-2 – Likable (*GURPS Psis*, p. 31).
- 3-4, 3-4 – Local Scan (*GURPS Psis*, p. 31).
- 3-4, 5-6 – Mental Guard (*GURPS Psis*, p. 31).
- 5-6, 1-2 – Reprogrammer (*GURPS Psis*, p. 31).
- 5-6, 3-4 – Shadow (*GURPS Psis*, p. 31).
- 5-6, 5-6 – Trade Bodies (*GURPS Psis*, p. 31).

50-Point Package Table

Roll 1d.

- 1 – Communications Hub (*GURPS Psis*, p. 32).
- 2 – Mental Override (*GURPS Psis*, p. 32).
- 3 – Mem Shredder (below).
- 4 – Puppeteer (*GURPS Psis*, p. 32).
- 5 – Shout (*GURPS Psis*, p. 32).
- 6 – Thought Thief (*GURPS Psis*, p. 32).

New Telepathy Package

Mem Shredder

50 points

You can remove the memories of the last few minutes from any target you can perceive. You can also target groups with only slightly diminished results, using the Mass Wipe technique.

Advantages: Mindwipe 5 [35].

Skills: Mindwipe (H) IQ+1 [8].

Techniques: Mass Wipe (H) Mindwipe-1 [7].

100-Point Package Table

Roll 1d.

- 1-3 – Mental Mastery (*GURPS Psis*, p. 32).
- 4-6 – Psychic Ninja (*GURPS Psis*, p. 32).

TELEPORTATION

Use the information determined using the *General Tables* (p. 11) to decide which table in this subsection to roll on.

New Teleportation Package

Stabilizer

25 points

You can soften or harden the fabric of reality by a small amount, helping or hindering other teleporters. The full write-up of this ability is found in the Infinite Teleportation article in *Pyramid #3/20: Infinite Worlds* (p. 7).

Advantages: Reality Stabilization 1 [23].

Skills: Reality Stabilization (H) IQ-1 [2].

25-Point Package Table

Roll 1d, 1d.

- 1-3, 1-3 – Evisceration (*GURPS Psis*, p. 33).
- 1-3, 4-6 – Grounded (*GURPS Psis*, p. 33).
- 4-6, 1-3 – Hop (*GURPS Psis*, p. 33).
- 4-6, 4-6 – Stabilizer (above).

50-Point Package Table

Roll 1d, 1d.

- 1-3, 1-3 – Fetching (*GURPS Psis*, p. 33).
- 1-3, 4-6 – Hop Other (*GURPS Psis*, p. 33).
- 4-6, 1-3 – Object Sending (*GURPS Psis*, p. 33).
- 4-6, 4-6 – Tele-Dodge (*GURPS Psis*, p. 33).

100-Point Package Table

Roll 1d.

- 1-3 – Personal Teleportation (*GURPS Psis*, p. 33).
- 4-6 – Versatile Teleportation (*GURPS Psis*, p. 33).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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EIDETIC MEMORY

MAGIC AS PSI

BY DAVID L. PULVER

It started with my ultra-tech *GURPS Space* campaign. Most of the PCs were built on 150-250 points . . . but only a few had psi powers. That proved to be a problem.

In the past, I'd run psi-centric games, notably in a modern-day setting (1970s London) in which all the player characters had psi abilities. They worked fine. However, this campaign had a mix of mundanes and psis, and it was set at TL10-12 with superscience. With all the grav belts, personal force screens, exotic neurotech, and gamma-ray lasers, it was hard to create a powerful psi on the same point budget that could compete with the sort of gear that the other adventurers could pick up at the local hardware store. Over a period of several months, the players who spend 100 points or so on psi found their PCs marginalized, while those who spent the same on attributes, skills, or wealth dominated.

For a possible solution, I remembered the other long-running campaign I had been GMing: a *GURPS Magic*-based dungeon-fantasy-style game. Despite a mix of wizards and warriors, everything was fairly balanced. The *GURPS Magic* rules were a skill-based rather than an advantage-based system. Skills are, relatively speaking, pretty cheap compared to advantages. The point builds of the mages were in line with the fighters. Meanwhile, the psionic characters spent a heck of a lot more for what they received. No problem in a psi-heavy modern-day game, where psi powers were well beyond what the local technology could manage. Big problem when the tech was a miracle in itself.

Taking a second look at *GURPS Magic*, I realized that its spell list had grown to encompass nearly all the psi abilities I actually *wanted* in my ultra-tech campaign. In particular, the College of Communication and Empathy was full of "spells" with names like Mind-Reading and Telepathy. They all used the skill system, and were also nicely play-balanced with more intrinsic built-in limitations and countermeasures than the open-ended power-based system. And there were rules for gestalts ("ceremonial magic") and even psi crystals (Powerstones).

So, why not replace the psi rules with the magic rules?

I tried it . . . and it worked. It wasn't as flexible, but it was easier to use for players who were comfortable with the *GURPS Magic* rules, and proved to be a good fit for some types of campaigns.

INTRODUCTION TO THE SYSTEM

GURPS has a potent psionic system in *Psionic Powers*. However, since the psionic abilities are based on advantages, they can be quite expensive. They are well-suited for modern-day, historical, or supers games, but problems can occur in ultra-tech settings where powers must compete with inexpensive technology. Similarly, in low-tech fantasy campaigns, a high cost of psi powers compares unfavorably to that of the magic system.

The first rule is that *GURPS Magic* rules remain intact . . . unless specified below.

*Sufficiently limited magic is
indistinguishable from psionics.*

GLOSSARY

Change these terms that appear in *GURPS Magic*:

Magic to Psi Table

<i>Original Term</i>	<i>Psionic Term</i>
Casting	Concentration
Casting Time	Concentration Time
Ceremonial	Gestalt
College	Power Group
Enchantment	Attunement
Item	Artifact
Magic	Psi
Magical	Psionic
Magery	Psi Talent
Mage, Wizard	Psi
Powerstone	Psi Crystal
Spell	Ability

Psi Talents and Power Groups

The colleges are replaced by several power groups: Animal Psi, Anti-Psi, Attunement, Ergokinesis, ESP, Healing, Pyrokinesis, Psychic Vampirism, Telekinesis, Telepathy, and Teleportation. Each has an associated Psionic Talent, equivalent to Magery but priced at 5 points per level. Like Magery, they add to the user's IQ when purchasing psi abilities . . . but only within their respective power group.

Those **GURPS Magic** spells (now termed "psi abilities") that fit the psionic paradigm are allocated to power groups matching each of the Psi Talents – e.g., Animal Psi, Pyrokinesis, etc. Someone can only learn an ability if he has the appropriate power's Psi Talent.

Mana

Mana exists. Effectively, the entire universe is normal mana.

Psi Rituals

The "magic rituals" rule is still used, with the exception that no gestures or speech are required, just concentration! The effect on concentration time for skill 9- and skill 20+ and on the cost of skill 15+ is unchanged.

The replacement of the need to speak and gesture with mere silent concentration is significant, but is balanced out by the elimination of a great many spells and colleges.

Magic Staffs

Not used – their removal helps balance out the lack of need for gestures and speech.

Prerequisites

One of the most important changes is an overhaul of the prerequisite system. These are based on the guidelines for *Alternate Prerequisites* (**GURPS Magic**, p. 200) and either the prerequisite count column in the *Spell Table* (either **GURPS Magic**, p. 223-237) or the *Spell Prerequisite Table* in **GURPS Thaumatology** (pp. 261-267) as desired by the GM.

All existing prerequisites are replaced with the following across-the-board rule:

The minimum prerequisite for a psi ability is Will + (the Psi Talent for the ability's power group) equal to 10 + (the prerequisite count for the spell upon which the ability is based).

Example: Morgaine Daniels wishes to learn the psionic ability Trace Teleport. According to **GURPS Thaumatology**, this has a prerequisite count of 5, so under these rules, it now

requires a (Will + Teleportation Talent) score of 15+. Morgan has Will 13 and Teleport Talent 3 (adding to 16), so she can easily learn it.

LIST OF PSI ABILITIES

Deciding which spells make good psionic abilities is a challenging task. For flavor, some spells were renamed. The original name is shown in parenthesis in the following format, e.g., "Detect Psi (formerly Detect Magic)."

Animal Psi Power

Beast-specific telepathy. This includes:

Animal Spells: Beast-Soother, Beast-Rouser, (Animal) Control, Beast Summoning, Master, Beast Link, Beast Speech, Rider, Rider Within, Beast Seeker, Beast Possession, Permanent Beast Possession.

Anti-Psi Power

Psi Talent: Anti-Psi.

These abilities interfere with or detect other psi powers.

Meta-Spells: Counterpsi (formerly Counterspell), Scryguard, Suspend Psi Ability (formerly Suspend Magery), Ward, Seek Psi (formerly Seek Magic), Conceal Psi (formerly Conceal Magic), Reflect, Scrywall, Great Ward, False Aura, Psi Resistance (formerly Magic Resistance), Scryfool, Catch Psi Abilities (formerly Catch Spell), Suspend Psi (formerly Suspend Magic), Psi Shield (formerly Spell Shield), Psi Wall (formerly Spell Wall), Dispel Psi (formerly Dispel Magic), Remove Curse, Charge Powerstone, Psiguard (formerly Spellguard), Remove Aura, Steal Psi (formerly Steal Spell), Suspend Psi Talent (formerly Suspend Magery), Drain Psi Talent (formerly Drain Magery).

Attunement Power

Psi Talent: Attunement.

This is the ability to create or neutralize psionic artifacts.

Enchantment: Attune (formerly Enchant), Temporary Attunement (formerly Temporary Enchantment), Power, Speed, Remove Attunement (formerly Remove Enchantment), Suspend Attunement (formerly Suspend Enchantment), Resist Attunement (formerly Resist Enchantment), Amulet, Impression Blocker, Limit, Name, Password, Link, Powerstone, Psi-Stone (formerly Manastone), One-Power Powerstone (formerly One-College Powerstone).

Now since "paranormal" is a long word, and I am basically lazy, we can now introduce the word "psi." . . . I'm sorry to have to keep doing this, but as we said before, in magic things often become what we call them.

– Isaac Bonewits, Real Magic

Ergokinesis Power

Psi Talent: Ergokinesis.

This is the psychokinetic power to control light and electricity. It is drawn from a subset of three colleges.

Air: Resist Lightning, Lightning, Shocking Touch, Ball of Lightning.

Light and Darkness: Light, Colors, Shape Light, Glow, Gloom, Flash, Light Jet, Blur, Sunlight, Shade, Invisibility, and Laser (formerly Sunbolt).

*Technological:** Glitch, Machine Control, Malfunction, Seek Power, Stop Power, Lend Power, Conduct Power, Steal Power, Draw Power.

* Instead of affecting any machine, these abilities *only* work on electrical machines or electrical power sources.

Extrasensory Perception (ESP) Power

Psi Talent: ESP.

ESP consists of various sixth sense and clairvoyant abilities.

Knowledge: Detect Psi (formerly Detect Magic), Aura, Identify Psi Ability (formerly Identify Magic), Psi Sense (formerly Magic Sense), Seek Psi (formerly Seek Magic), Analyze Psi (formerly Analyze Magic), Pathfinder, Projection, Seeker, Trace, History, Ancient History, and Prehistory.

Protection and Warning: Sense Danger, Watchdog, and Sense Observation.

Healing Power

Psi Talent: Healing.

This is the ability to heal injury and illness and channel positive energy.

Healing: Use any of the Healing spells except Final Rest and Resurrection.

Psychic Vampirism Power

Psi Talent: Psychic Vampirism.

These abilities involve draining energy, dreams, or memories from others. The ability is useful but highly specialized and is drawn from three colleges.

Body Control: Debility.

Mind Control: Foolishness, Forgetfulness, and Weaken Will.

Necromancy: Steal Energy, Steal Vitality, Steal (Attribute), Age, Steal Skill, and Steal Youth, Steal Dreams*, Soul Jar.

* New ability: Identical to Dream Viewing – the subject does not experience the dream he would have dreamt; it flows to the psi instead.

Pyrokinesis Power

Psi Talent: Pyrokinesis.

These psychokinetic abilities can alter molecular motion and manipulate hot plasma.

Fire: Ignite Fire, Create Fire, Extinguish Fire, Shape Fire, Fireproof, Slow Fire, Fast Fire, Deflect Energy,* Flame Jet, Fireball, Explosive Fireball, Heat, Cold, Warmth.

* The Pyrokinesis version of Deflect Energy only blocks ranged or jet fire-type attacks: Flame Jet, Fireball, a plasma bolt, a flamethrower, etc.

Telekinesis Power

Psi Talent: Telekinesis.

These abilities involve the psi using his mind to move objects. They are drawn from several colleges.

Movement: Apportation, Holdfast, Deflect Missile, Levitation, Locksmith, Poltergeist, Slow Fall, Manipulate, Undo, Winged Knife, Flight, Light Tread, Hawk Flight.

Making and Breaking: Find Weakness, Weaken, Restore, Clean, Shatter, Stiffen, Knot, Rive, Explode, and Fasten.

Necromancy: Evisceration.

Protection and Warning: Shield, Armor, and Catch Missile.

Telepathy Power

Psi Talent: Telepathy.

Telepathy is the power of mental communication and possession. Telepathic abilities have been drawn from two colleges.

Communication and Empathy: Sense Life, Sense Foes, Sense Emotion, Hide Emotion, Persuasion, Vexation, Truthsayer, Dream Viewing, Dream Sending, Dream Projection, Hide Thoughts, Lend Language, Borrow Language, Mind-Reading, Mind-Search, Mind-Sending, Telepathy, Retrogression, Lend Skill, Borrow Skill, Compel Truth, Compel Lie, Insignificance, Presence, Communication, Soul Rider, Control Person, Possession, Dispel Possession, Permanent Possession, Exchange Bodies.

Mind Control: Fear, Daze, Panic, Mental Stun, Fascinate, Sleep, Command, Madness, Emotion Control, Mindlessness, Mass Daze, Mass Sleep, Peaceful Sleep, Charm, Ecstasy, False Memory, Nightmare, Hallucination, Suggestion, Mass Suggestion, Enslave, Great Hallucination, Lesser Geas, Great Geas.

Teleportation Power

Psi Talent: Teleportation.

The ability to move to a new location instantaneously. This psi power draws from two colleges.

Gate: Beacon, Trace Teleport, Divert Teleport, Teleport Shield, Control Gate, and Create Gate.

Movement: Teleport and Teleport Other.

ABOUT THE COLUMNIST

David L. Pulver is a Canadian freelance author. An avid SF fan, he began roleplaying in junior high with the newly released *Basic Dungeons & Dragons*. Upon graduating from university, he decided to become a game designer. Since then, David has written over 70 roleplaying game books, and he has worked as a staff writer, editor, and line developer for Steve Jackson Games and Guardians of Order. He is best known for creating *Transhuman Space*, co-authoring the *Big Eyes, Small Mouth* anime RPG, and writing countless *GURPS* books, including the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition*, and the recent *GURPS Spaceships* series.

THE EDGE OF PSIENCE

BY KENNETH PETERS

Free yourself from the bonds of consensus psience! Herein we utilize the flexible framework for psionic abilities presented in *GURPS Psionic Powers* and extend it to cover two concepts

seen in contemporary fiction: the psionically enhancing critter companion and the indecipherable artifact of power.

Czechoslovakian scientists actually coined the term “psychotronics” in order to pursue their investigations into “psychic” phenomena unencumbered by Communist censors. Out of this study a whole new set of strange devices originated, “machines” whose power seemed to work solely on the basis of two things: their shape, and the ability of their own individual owners to “charge” them or “tune” them to their own individual psyches.

– Joseph Farrell, *The Giza Death Star Destroyed*

CATALYST CREATURES

In *GURPS*, *catalyst creatures* are animals that bond with a psi, augmenting existing powers or serving as conduits for additional abilities. These psionic familiars may be normal animals with psi power, bioengineered results of cutting-edge research, or bizarre aliens that react strangely to human neurochemistry; their exact origins are often similar to that of human psis (e.g., if psis are mutant humans, then catalyst creatures may be mutant cats and dogs that have evolved alongside them). Regardless of their origin, catalyst creatures are treated as Ally familiars (p. B38), fonts of psychological power, and a valued partner or companion.

THE BOND

The defining characteristic of many catalyst creatures is the deep connection that they form with their partner. The mental rapport that develops is powerful and enduring; it goes beyond a simple Sense of Duty and entangles the fates of the two beings. Those catalyst creatures that can choose their partners will be quite discerning, as they lose a great deal of independence in the exchange!

The bonding process *usually* requires willing partners (at least initially – Unwilling can develop later), but Animal

Empathy or powers such as Beast Control can sway even the wariest animal into accepting the connection. The timing of the bonding can also be critical. A common trope is that the bond must take place when the creature hatches from its egg, before it first molts, or before it mates.

A bond consists of one or more *GURPS* advantages:

Mindlink. This advantage is very useful for communicating with the catalyst creature over long distances using Telesend.

Mind Reading. With the Sensory (+20%) modifier, this advantage allows the partner to look through the catalyst creature's eyes for surveillance. Even if psionic in origin, the GM may allow this advantage to be purchased without the power modifier, representing the deeper level of communion. Some psis add Telesend, making this a two-way ability.

Special Rapport. This is *required* in order to have a successful bond. If purchased with the Telepathy (-10%) modifier, then the abilities given by the catalyst could be negated with various Anti-Psi abilities or psychotronic devices. Remember, both partners need to have this ability (see p. B88).

Sympathy. This limitation (on the Ally advantage) represents the deleterious side effect of some bonds. Sympathy is rare except for the most closely linked and powerful partners; simple affection and friendship are more common.

At the GM's discretion, a bonded catalyst creature will have the same psionic signature as its partner. This can potentially provide a useful distraction, alibi . . . or inadvertently leave crucial evidence at the scene of a crime if the catalyst used its own abilities.

Once forged, only death or significant mental trauma (such as memory erasure) can break a bond between the catalyst creature and its partner. The death of a catalyst is usually traumatic, but a dead catalyst may pass on its remaining power in the form of new advantages, assist as an incorporeal spirit, or even return – reincarnated in one of its offspring or possessing the body of another creature (see *Allies in Play*, p. B37).

CATALYST CREATURE STATISTICS

Any existing animal or monster can serve as the basis of a catalyst creature. For those write-ups that use the abbreviated descriptions from the *Basic Set* (*Animals and Monsters*, p. B455) they can be converted into full racial templates using the guidelines from *GURPS Fantasy* (*From Creature to Character*, p. 106). Of course, catalyst creatures are often exemplary, and can have significantly better attributes and traits, depending on how many character points are spent on the Ally advantage.

One common way that catalyst creatures are extraordinary is in their IQ and Will. Many are actually sapient, although this may be the result of a spirit possessing the animal or a byproduct of the mental link, rather than any innate intelligence. An intelligent catalyst can be useful, but as it is a GM-controlled NPC, the player (and his character) may have to put up with ornery stubbornness and bizarre habits due to its animal nature.

APPEARANCE

Catalyst creatures in fiction often are small and cute; many are miniature dragons, cats, or aliens that resemble them . . . This can be a useful disguise, allowing the catalyst to blend into the environment and enter prohibited areas and observe events – or a frustrating source of attention and hassles (“Look at that glowing dragon! Let’s capture it for vivisection!”).

Catalyst creatures often have Social Stigma (Valuable Property), Supernatural Features, or Unnatural Features, with all the attendant problems in dealing with anyone but their partner and colleagues.

Even if they elude casual attention, a catalyst may find itself the target of thieving psi-snatchers, sugar-crazed children, superstitious zealots, and paranoid bodyguards; evading capture can be used to justify low frequency of appearance!

At the GM's discretion, a catalyst that can disguise itself as an unassuming example of its species may require the Honest Face perk (p. B101), and possibly the Acting skill, to divert attention from itself should it do anything suspicious. Conversely, those that are especially notable in some way may possess Distinctive Features (p. B165) and be scrutinized by suspicious onlookers (“what is an albino falcon doing in the research labs, anyways?”).

CATALYST ABILITIES

Aside from companionship, catalyst creatures provide Special Abilities to the partner, serving as a focus for latent or weak psi abilities. Purchase these as psionic abilities with the Granted by Familiar limitation. Some additional possibilities:

Catalyst: The eponymous catalyst creature helps awaken dormant psionic potential (see *Latent Powers*, *GURPS Psionic Campaigns*, p. 14). These powers will remain even if the creature leaves or dies.

Lucky Charm: The catalyst may be able to mitigate the effects of a critical failure its partner suffers when using psi abilities, counting them as ordinary failures. This transfers the results of the critical failure to the catalyst (which can still be a problem if there is a Sympathy link!) as long as it is within a short distance.

Power Boost: The mental bond adds additional levels to an existing psionic Talent or ability. If the catalyst is killed or incapacitated the boosts are temporarily unavailable.

Psychic Font: The catalyst reinforces its partner's willpower and life force. The catalyst only provides extra FP or Energy Reserve (Psi) (see *GURPS Powers*, p. 119). The bond may also justify Fearlessness, Indomitable, or extra Will.

“My Cat Will Mind Stab You”

It can be tempting to create powerful catalyst creatures simply as a ploy to get large discounts on psionic abilities. Keep in mind that the Granted by Familiar limitation is a *significant drawback*. If the abilities that the catalyst provides are never in any danger of being cut off, then its presence is a special effect and not a limitation!

This often means that the catalyst must be in contact with the psi (carried on a shoulder, hidden in a pocket, etc.); hiding the creature in your apartment may allow you to keep an eye on what's happening back home but not access its powers! Also, the catalyst is still an animal. In a low-tech setting, an unusually inquisitive creature may be mistaken for a witch's familiar. In a modern setting, you will have to put it in an animal carrier for travel, and it can be subject to quarantine inspections – you may be out of

luck if terrorists hijack your plane and your catalyst creature is down in the baggage compartment! Finally, many businesses may not allow, or be very uncomfortable with, strange animals running around, even with a leash.

A catalyst creature is a reliable companion and loyal in the face of danger, but not the psi-user's slave (although a Minion is certainly close!). Catalysts will prioritize their own self-preservation, and under most situations, will not simply throw themselves into a hopeless situation because it is convenient. Those with Slave Mentality may do so, but will require explicit direction. Additionally, if it has Sympathy, the presence of a catalyst can be a significant problem because of its (usually) much lower HP and combat abilities. Canny opponents may specifically target the catalyst for this reason!

The catalyst creature will often have instinctual psionic abilities that it can use to defend itself and its partner. These abilities are not accessible to the character. Common traits include Emotion Sense, Psi Sense, Telesend, and True Sight (see *GURPS Psionic Powers* for further details).

“But the catalyst creature.” Brorar waved a hand toward the flying snake drifting above Flinx.

“We don’t know that it’s catalyzing anything,” Haithness reminded him, “because we don’t know what the boy’s abilities are as yet. They are only potentials. The minidrag may be doing nothing for him because it has nothing to work with as yet.”

– Alan Dean Foster,
For Love of Mother-Not

A HELPING PAW OR CLAW

A bonded catalyst can hold tools (assuming it has appropriate limbs), fetch items, and otherwise aid its partner in a number of tasks. Even a relatively unintelligent catalyst can perform fairly complex tasks if carefully supervised or instructed (see *Animal Training*, pp. B458-459). A sapient catalyst may be able to assist in more complex work if it has the appropriate training or can use Borrow Skill to acquire it temporarily.

The catalyst can also form a gestalt (*GURPS Psionic Powers*, p. 9), but this requires physical contact or Telesend. Note that Mindlink does not directly provide any bonus to the joining attempt.

BOND CREATURES BIG AND SMALL

The following are two examples of unique bond creatures that a GM can use in his campaign.

Dreamhunter Snakes (Iassa)

38 points

These 4’ long; 5-lb. furry “snakes” have a natural affinity for *Dream Control* (*GURPS Psionic Powers*, pp. 73-74). They could be discovered on an alien planet, or perhaps even in the remote jungles of Earth; their shy nature and innocuous powers may make them difficult to find. In their native habitat, they prowl the dream world, feeding on the atavistic urges of other animals; as catalyst creatures, they jealously guard their masters’ dreams.

Bond Powers: The Dreamhunter allows its partner to purchase Less Sleep, Mind Shield (with Accessibility, Only while

sleeping, -20%), and Visualization. It can also boost levels of Drain Emotion and Steal Dreams.

ST: 4 [-60] **HP:** 4 [0] **Speed:** 6.00 [0]
DX: 14 [48]* **Will:** 10 [5] **Move:** 6 [0]
IQ: 9 [-20] **Per:** 8 [-5]
HT: 10 [0] **FP:** 10 [0] **SM:** -1
Dodge: 9 **Parry:** N/A **DR:** 1

Fangs (16): 1d-5 impaling.

Advantages: Constriction Attack [15]; DR 1 (Tough Skin, -40%) [3]; Dream Projection 2 [40]; Fur [1]; Mindlink (Single Person, Partner; Telepathy, -10%; Vague, -50%) [2]; Special Rapport (Partner) [5]; Steal Dreams 5 [67].

Disadvantages: Domestic Animal [-30]; Restricted Diet (Fresh meat) [-10]; Vermiform [-35].

Skills: Brawling (E) DX+2 [4]-16; Dream Projection (H) IQ [4]-9; Steal Dreams (H) Will-1 [2]-9; Stealth (A) DX [2]-14.

* Includes -40% from No Fine Manipulators (in Vermiform).

Psychichu

88 points

Psychichu is a fuzzy bundle of fun . . . until you get him wet! While dry, Psychichu appears to be an ordinary, if brightly colored, cat of indeterminate breed; he is playful and carefree, and can speak, albeit with a distinctive German accent. Psychichu is deathly afraid of water, because if he becomes soaked, it triggers an amazing transformation! In a puff of candy-scented smoke, the small cat is replaced . . . with a giant crab! As a crab, he is cantankerous, voicing his displeasure with a high-pitched Japanese accent at his partner’s every action.

Psychichu is 3’ long and 7 lbs. when in his cat-monster form.

Bond Powers: Psychichu is an Electrokinetic powerhouse, and can boost his partner’s levels of Ergokinesis Talent, or awaken latent Electrokinesis abilities.

ST: 5/50 [0]* **HP:** 10/55 [0]* **Speed:** 5.50/5.25 [0]*
DX: 12/10 [0]* **Will:** 8 [0] **Move:** 5 [0]
IQ: 8 [-40] **Per:** 8 [10]
HT: 10/11 [0]* **FP:** 10/11 [0]* **SM:** -2/+4*
Dodge: 8 **Parry:** 10/9* **DR:** 0/20*

Burning Attack (8): 5d burning surge + stunned (p. B420). Range 100/200, RoF 1, Recoil 1. Cat-Monster Form only.

Claws (14): 1d-3 crushing. Cat-Monster Form only.

Claws (12): 5d+11 crushing. Battle Crab Form only.

Advantages: Alternate Form (Psychichu Battle Crab Form; Uncontrollable Trigger, Water, -15%) [38]; Mindlink (Single Person, Partner; Telepathy, -10%; Vague, -50%) [2]; Psychichu Cat-Monster Form [76].

Disadvantages: Native Language (Accented) [-2]; Social Stigma (Valuable Property) [-10].

Skills*: Brawling (E) DX+2 [4]-14/12; Dancing (A) DX+2 [8]-14/12; Stealth (A) DX [2]-12/10.

* The level before the slash applies to Cat-Monster Form; the level after the slash is for Battle Crab Form; see p. 21.

Psychichu Cat-Monster Form

76 points

Psychichu has the physical capabilities of a house cat in his normal form. A house cat that can shoot lightning and fly, that is.

Attribute Modifiers: ST -5 [-50]; DX+2 [40].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: SM -2.

Advantages: Burning Attack 5d (Ergokinesis, -10%; Increased 1/2D, ×10, +15%; Increased Max, ×2, +5%; Side Effect, Stunning, +50%; Surge, +20%) [45]; Claws (Blunt) [3]; Empathy (ESP, -10%) [14]; Flight (Low Ceiling 30', -10%; Psychokinesis, -10%) [32].

Perks: Fur [1]; Honest Face [1].

Disadvantages: Curious (6) [-10].

Feature: Speaks with a German accent.

Psychichu Battle Crab Form

103 points

Psychichu in his battle crab form becomes much larger and more difficult to kill . . . unless a foe discovers his weak spot and attacks it for maximum damage!

Attribute Modifiers: ST +40 (No Fine Manipulators, -40%; Size, -40%) [80]; HT +1 [10].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: SM +4.

Advantages: Claws (Blunt) [3]; DR 20 (Can't Wear Armor, -40%; Hardened 1, +20%; Semi-Ablative, -20%) [60]; Extra

Reach Out and Claw Someone

At the GM's discretion, a bonded catalyst creature can function as an extension of its master's body as part of the Special Abilities enhancement – allowing it to deliver psionic attacks that have the Contact Agent or Melee Attack limitations. This usually requires that the creature successfully grab the target (p. B370) before the power can be channeled through it.

An extension of this allows the creature to serve as the origination point of *any* ranged psionic ability that its master can use. Both the catalyst and target must be visible to the psi, and the ability suffers a penalty of -4 to skill.

Legs (Six Legs; Cannot Kick, -50%) [5]; Flight (Low Ceiling 30', -10%; Psychokinesis, -10%) [32]; Payload 2 (Five passengers) [2].

Perks: Accessory (Sweet 8-track player) [1].

Disadvantages: Hidebound [-5]; Horizontal [-10]; No Fine Manipulators [-30]; Stubbornness [-5]; Vulnerability (×4; Occasional, Impaling attacks from bottom) [-40].

Feature: Speaks with a Japanese accent.

PSIONIC ARTIFACTS

One of the most common types of psionic devices found in fiction is the *mysterious artifact* – often an exotic crystal imbued with a complex form of energy – that can produce a powerful psionic effect when properly directed. Whatever their origin, their operation is often difficult to decipher, resulting in potentially disastrous accidents by unwary users. Their bizarre and unpredictable side effects can be represented by a roll on the *Gadget Bugs Table* (p. B476) or *Enigmatic Device Table* (p. B478) during each use – until it has been researched, which usually requires Engineer (Psychotronics).

Any suitable device in *GURPS Ultra-Tech* or *GURPS Psi-Tech* can be used as a psionic artifact if it is rare and powerful. For example, a simple mental translator (*GURPS Ultra-Tech*, p. 48) is amazingly useful in a campaign setting with multiple languages and dialects, yet it “only” provides Mind Reading enhanced with Universal. If conventional psi amplifiers (*GURPS Ultra-Tech*, p. 94) are thought to be too disruptive in a campaign, then charging character points for a gadget that provides a similar Talent bonus may be more balanced.

DESIGNING ARTIFACTS

Custom creations may be more interesting, whether created by the GM or a Gadgeteer (p. B475) PC. In play, these may be gifted by aliens, created by secret government agencies from diagrams scratched on temple ruins, or found in the lost luggage of an eccentric madman. More often than not, they cannot be replicated with the available science of the setting and are simply found (or stolen).

For game balance and simplicity, artifacts can be a package of advantages with gadget limitations (p. B116). These objects are often quirky, and the GM may wish to be inventive with the enhancements and limitations of the powers. Examples include:

- The artifact requires the Equipment Bond perk to function, and cannot be operated by anyone else.
- The device feeds on the user's emotion. This is a form of Required Disadvantage (*GURPS Powers*, pp. 21-23). These can be negative (Fanaticism, Intolerance) or positive (Disciplines of Faith, Sense of Duty) emotions.
- The device drains 1 FP from the user each day in order to function. This lost FP cannot be prevented or regained unless the object is not used at all the following day. This effectively puts a time limit on how long it can be relied on without pause.

Some artifacts are so complex that they must be built as NPC Allies or Patrons. The guidelines for *Item Drawbacks and Personalities* (*GURPS Thaumatology*, pp. 116-120) are certainly appropriate in this case.

Awakened Powers

Psionic artifacts are often so enigmatic that their true potential is locked away until a worthy user can uncover its secrets. This may be only after periods of extended research, following certain noteworthy deeds, or when the artifact is brought to a specific location. All may result in character points that can be spent on expanding the gadgets power. Some examples include:

- The artifact kills a sapient being with its Innate Attack. This may unlock an *Alternative Attack* (p. B61) or additional levels of the main ability.
- The user gains Cultural Familiarity with the creator's culture (this may be difficult if they are long-vanished or reclusive!). Alternatively, learning the language (and associated mental patterns) of its creators can be a trigger.
- The user acquires a specific Advantage or Disadvantage of some significance to the device's function (e.g., a healing artifact may be more useful to someone with Pacifism and a weapon artifact may exhibit interesting abilities in conjunction with Combat Reflexes).
- The amplifier must be attuned to the user. This requires total concentration for a significant period of time (at least one hour), followed by a Will roll at -4. Failure means the attunement must start over.

EXAMPLES

The following provide some examples of psionic artifacts built as advantages.

Astral Dynamic Filters

Varies

This is a personal protection system that restores natural psychic balance using magnets, orgone-enriched water, uncut natural crystals, and other seemingly mundane materials. Arranged in very specific configurations, the filters suppress negative chi, interruptive vibration patterns, and harmful electromagnetic waves. These artifacts can also take the user's own vital energy (chi, chakra, prana, soul energy, etc.)

and magnify it. Note that the powers are not from the Psychic Healing power source.

The ability of the filter depends on its primary construction material:

Copper: The wearer gains Hard to Kill 5 with the gadget limitations (see below). *4 points.*

Crystal: The wearer gains Filter Lungs and Recovery. Both have the standard gadget limitations. *6 points.*

Gold: The wearer gains Very Fit with the gadget limitations. *6 points.*

Platinum: The wearer gains Regrowth (Minor, -50%) and the gadget limitations. *8 points.*

Gadget Limitations

All of the filters are Breakable (DR 2), -20% and Can Be Stolen (Easily snatched with an unopposed DX roll), -40%. Implanted versions may be available (cyberpsychotronic, perhaps), using a network of wooden, bronze, or iron pins inserted under the skin at natural psychic "pressure points" and connected to each other with a fine web of hair-thin copper or gold wire. These implanted versions do not have the gadget limitations, but may have Limited Use due to their insulation from the natural environment.

Excruciator

13 points

This wicked-looking needle is driven into a nerve, causing intense pain that is then molded by the artifact into a powerful psychic barrier. Long-term use could be a justification for High Pain Threshold ... or debilitating mental disadvantages!

Torsionic Radiation

Psionic abilities may create unintended environmental effects, especially those that exceed "natural" limits. In the psychotronics literature this is often described as a particularly dangerous form of psychic energy field or particle, and may be known as deadly orgone radiation, vampiric energy, or psi-entropy depending on the researcher. Its effects are supposedly very similar to radiation; natural cosmic rays may have a psychic component when they damage living organisms! Limited exposure is harmless, quickly dissipating into the environment or negated by harmonious energies produced by natural crystals, running water, and sunlight.

Some sources (the Lifebane disadvantage, "backblast" of psi-amplifiers or psychotronic power plants, etc.) may produce too much torsionic radiation to be dealt with by natural processes, creating *psychic pollution* that causes emotional distress in sapient creatures, kills plants, and destabilizes the weather. Torsionic radiation can be intentionally focused and modulated to create deadly beams of entropic psi-energy, perhaps forming the basis of psionic beam weapons (*GURPS Ultra-Tech*, p. 132).

In *GURPS*, torsionic radiation is toxic damage with the Radiation, +100% enhancement. This is an exception to the rule that restricts this level of enhancement to burning

damage (see p. B105). Torsionic damage often has an Affliction Follow-Up and is treated as a form of Psychic Vampirism (*GURPS Psionic Powers*, pp. 49-52). Some possible powers that use torsionic radiation include:

Anti-Life Static (+220%/+30%): Toxic Attack 5d (Affects Insubstantial, +20%; Area Effect, 8 yards, +150%; Emanation, -20%; Exposure Time, 1 minute, -30%; No Signature, +20%; Psychic Vampirism, -10%; Radiation, +100%; Temporary Disadvantage, Lifebane, -10%) [64] + Affliction 1 (Will; Based on Will, +20%; Follow-Up, Toxic Attack, -20%; Moderate Pain, +20%; Psychic Vampirism, -10%; Secondary Agony, +20%) [13]. *Notes:* Parasitical anti-life energy leeches into the area. The invisible energy waves break down organic matter and cause debilitating pain. *77 points.*

Emotional Plague (+695%): Toxic Attack 1d (Cyclic, 1 Hour, 24 Cycles, Highly Contagious, +530%; Malediction 1, +100%; No Signature, +20%; Onset, 1 Hour, -20%; Psychic Vampirism, -10%; Symptoms, Chronic Depression (12) after 1/3 HP, IQ -3 after 2/3 HP, +75%) [32]. One hour after contracting the disease, the subject comes under the influence of toxic psi-energy. He suffers 1d toxic damage/hour for one day, and is extremely infectious during the entire period. *32 points.*

The inflicted pain (and the power of the psychic barrier) can be adjusted by the user with a Ready maneuver. A failsafe will deactivate the device if the user falls unconscious.

This artifact uses the *Optional Rule: Alternative Abilities* from **GURPS Powers** (p. 11). All of the abilities include the gadget limitations below (-40%), the Anti-Psi (-0%) power modifier, and some form of Backlash (**GURPS Powers**, p. 104); the latter causes constant pain while using the Excruciator. This pain persists even after it is turned off, but the user may roll against HT once per minute to recover.

Agonizer Setting: This protects as Mind Shield 10, but with Backlash, Severe Pain (-40%). 8 points.

Lamenter Setting: The user is Resistant to Psionics (+8), but suffers Backlash, Severe Pain (-40%). 3 points, or 1 point as an alternative ability.

Tormenter Setting: This provides Immunity to Psionics [30], but the user is incapacitated with Backlash, Agony (-100%) until it can be deactivated with an IQ-3 roll. 6 points, or 2 points as an alternative ability.

Gadget Limitations

The excruciator Can Be Stolen (Requires Quick Contest of DX, Cannot be immediately used), -15% and is Unique, -25%.

Psi-Blade

114 points

This spectral blade exists slightly out of phase with the material world, allowing it to harm insubstantial creatures in the outer astral plane (**GURPS Psionic Powers**, p. 27) and phase through normal matter. It is harmless against unliving items, but hungers for the energy of living creatures, draining their aura to power its own abilities. It is purchased as Fatigue Attack with a Leech follow-up, which fills the blade's Energy Reserve (Psi) and allows it to use special abilities. In desperation the user could turn it on himself to fill its reserve. Its inert form is that of a rough black crystal, cold to the touch.

Energy Reserve (Psi): This is bought with the Special Recharge, Only on successful hits (-70%) and the standard gadget limitations (see below). Ten levels are typical of most swords, which comes to 6 points.

Fatigue Attack: This is the main ability of the sword. It is purchased with Affects Insubstantial (+20%); Cosmic (+300%); Melee Attack, React C, 1, Cannot Parry (-25%); and the standard gadget limitations. This adds to +240%. Fatigue Attack 3d then ends up costing 102 points.

Leech: The ability of the sword to siphon away some of its victims spiritual energy for its own use is purchased as Leech with Contact Agent (-30%); Cosmic, Drains instantly on successful hit (+50%); Follow-Up, Melee Attack (-25%); Only Heals Energy Reserve (-20%); Steals Fatigue (-25%); and the usual gadget limitations. This adds to -80%. Leech 2 then ends up costing 6 points.

Awakened Power – Psychic Blast: The first awakened power is triggered when its user reduces a foe to 0 FP using the sword. This manifests as a psychokinetic blast that emanates from the blade. This is an alternate Crushing Attack with Explosion 1 (+50%); Costs Fatigue, 1 FP, Must come from Energy Reserve (-10%); and the standard gadget limitations. A 6d+3 blast costs 30 points; as an alternative attack, it adds 6 points to total cost (for a net 120 points).

Gadget Limitations

All abilities are purchased with the gadget limitations of Can Be Stolen (Requires stealth or trickery), -20% and Unique, -25%. As creations of psychotronic artifice, they also have the Psionic power modifier, -10%.

The Truth

Varies

Sealed in a forgotten vault, abandoned by its creators, is a terrible answer. Scratched out on an old blackboard is an elegant logic problem that can be read by anyone with a basic grasp of Mathematics (Applied). The solution is deceptively simple, but counterintuitive. The Truth is persistent; soon it's all the reader can think about. The world begins to make more sense, in all its madness and complexity. The Truth bores into the reader's consciousness, cascading into a series of inevitable emotional reactions and insights. Over time, it reworks the brain, allowing access to incredible mental power . . . at the price of temporary (and, later, permanent) madness.

The Truth tends to be subtle at first. Rarely do its carriers even realize that they have been subverted; they may not even be able to exactly remember what the original logic problem even depicted. They certainly will not be able to directly replicate it, even with Eidetic Memory. The result is psi power, but with a temporary mental disadvantage (see *Temporary Disadvantage*, p. B115) that is triggered by uncomfortable insight into the workings of the world. Common drawbacks include a curious detachment from other people (*Low Empathy*, p. B142), a volatile emotional state (*Manic-Depressive*, p. B143), and shock at how causality really works (*Phantom Voices*, p. B148, or *Stress Atavism*, p. B156). As the Truth becomes clearer these will develop into full-blown Disadvantages even as psionic power increases. A possible progression is:

Infection: Exposure to the Truth instills Illuminated (ESP, -10%) [14] with Required Disadvantage (Confused). Possible psi abilities include Awareness, Prognostication, and Psi Sense.

Insight: Knowing the Truth allows reality to be "tweaked" in subtle ways. This is Coincidence (**GURPS Psionic Powers**, p. 44) with Temporary Disadvantage (Indecisive, -10%) [26]. This may be associated with psi abilities that replicate Common Sense, Oracle, and Racial Memory, or any Probability Alteration ability.

Dissonance: The Truth eventually results in the carrier's corporeal form becoming unstuck in reality, creating disruptions in the local astral environment. This is Insubstantiality (Substantial Communication, +40%; Usually On, -40%) with Temporary Disadvantage (Lifebane, -10%) [72]. Astral Projection abilities may also manifest.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kenneth Peters can neither confirm nor deny his involvement with cyberpsychotronic research programs while working with David Pulver on **GURPS Ultra-Tech**. Allegations that he has written for **GURPS** and *Shadowrun* with the express purpose of monitoring their audience for evidence of exposure to The Truth are groundless, and those with such claims should immediately report themselves to the nearest FBI office. As outlined in National Security Directive 52 (Revision 2c), all references to his current position as a graduate student in Moscow, Idaho, are to be omitted from all publications. Obey.

THOUGHTJUSTICE

BY ANDY VETROMILE

Carver dove out the window, shards of glass following him out into the night air. Brandy hoped there was a fire escape out there to catch him, but when she poked her head out, she found no such fortune. Looking down, she saw the glittering reflection of the pane's remains in the streetlight, but no body. That was when Carver's shadow attracted her attention out of the corner of her eye. That was him, scampering like a squirrel down the drainpipe along the edge of the building. "He's here, to the right," she announced, withdrawing back into the abandoned tenement apartment to allow Helmut to assess the situation.

Helmut didn't possess Carver's animal agility, but his telekinesis was enough to lower him gently to the street. Still, it was slower going for him, which put the fugitive on the ground before he could make it. It would take Brandy longer still, backtracking through the building. And where was Sparks?

"Carver, stop!" Helmut called out, hoping the surrounding buildings were as empty as his target's hovel had been. "You can't keep this up."

With half a block between them, Carver was obviously feeling cocky enough to turn at the mouth of an alley and respond. "You wanna live in a hole, go ahead. I'm just reclaiming my life, what I'm owed."

"That will come in time. Until then we can't do anything stupid." The telekinetic was wise enough not to say "anything else stupid." Carver had done his share, and it was time it stopped.

"Forget it, Helm. We're not stupid enough to subject ourselves to civilian justice, so why should I play ball with ours?" He started off down the street.

"I'm just trying to help you, Carver. Think about how hard it is stopping the mundanes when we're all with you. Now imagine if you couldn't even count on that."

"What difference does it make to you?" Carver called over his shoulder. As he passed by a hollowed-out car, the door suddenly swung open like a sling, catching him square in his midsection. Sparks finally showed himself, stepping out from behind the rear bumper as the door silently drifted shut at his mental command.

"Because," Helmut said gently, standing over him, "you're one of us."

When someone proves psychic powers are real, the general population may well react with fear and intolerance. While their terror may not be born of reason, it's not necessarily unfounded. Here are people who can hear their innermost thoughts, warp another human's will to their own, and tamper with technology in ways the average burglar can only dream of. So who's punishing them if – or rather, *when* – some of them choose to commit these crimes? It might be the government, but it could also become a self-policing action on the part of other psis. Who better to fight that particular fire?

This article presents some suggestions about how the psychic community might be judged . . . or judge its own.

JUSTICE TAKES MANY FORMS

Psionic powers are already uncharted territory for most people, so psis judging their own kind is also new ground. There are no hard-and-fast rules about how the system is arranged, and while some "authorities" use the American system of jurisprudence as their starting point, there's no reason why the situation cannot mutate into something more dramatic.

It's All in the Game

This is an RPG and people play them to escape, not to rehash real-world issues. It's probably unwise to let the heroes get stymied by a tribunal of some sort, at least no more than is necessary to establish the dramatic tone. If it's a just system, it should be presented as such, and the PCs should understand that the people in it are trying their hardest to be fair and impartial. If the heroes are being railroaded, that's all right, too, but the GM should realize that the team might want some righteous payback at some point (especially since they're sporting wicked-cool powers they want to exercise once in a while). People on both sides of the metaphorical bench stand to learn a little something from their counterparts, whether it's the real meaning of justice or the importance of working within the system.

The GM knows best what kind of world he's running, so he should choose a system that fits that view. Are psionic powers a secret, with governments trying to round up the genetically gifted for testing or drafting? Then a panel that decides what to do about uncooperative elements probably operates quietly as well. Even if the heroes have been brought on board to do government work, willingly or un-, they might not even know there *is* a tribunal until they commit some wrongful act. Most infractions could be met with a stern warning or a zap from the control collar every mentalist is required to wear, but once some invisible line is crossed, they find themselves before an imposing bench of sober-faced inquisitors.

Are they second-class citizens? Then their "judges" are just whoever's holding the leash today. If a psi steps out of line, there's no trial, just a beating from the boss' nightstick. At worst, the warder might be put on trial for willful destruction of property.

Psis who operate in broad daylight (usually because they're supers or some other breed of public persona) can be taken either to a regular court or a psionic version (which can resemble a normal court in every way save the potentially super-powered personnel). Regular courts are the first line of defense, as they are with any other demographic: Someone does something wrong, and the judge in charge fines or imprisons him and tells him not to do it again. Psis who find themselves in court repeatedly will have harsher punishments meted, like everyone else. For those who aren't going to listen to reason or are frequent visitors to the court, the psionic version may be in order. It operates the same, but the people involved are in a position to better understand the problem and to mete out punishments that stick on an individual who can bend the bars of his cell with TK talents.

Ragtag teams of psis working outside not just the law but society itself – skirting the civilized world as homeless refugees or street kids – may have a cruder but more personalized system of justice. This is probably a group of the oldest kids, their Faginesque mentors, or leaders in the urban community, someone everyone in the neighborhood fears or respects. Their rulings may depend on whether they're just tough and crusty oldsters or members of the "powered elite" (some campaigns could mix psionics and *Oliver Twist*, and the town elders may not even know about psi powers possessed by the younger generation . . . yet). Intimidation and the craving for approval is a human social reaction, and it is often enough to stay the hand of even the greatest super-powered minds.

Instead of bringing the accused to court, some systems may bring the court to them. Like circuit judges of the Old West, psychic inquisitors could make "rounds," regular visits to several locations to sit in judgment of outstanding issues. This demands a lot more investment or trust from the affected communities since it means either someone is languishing in prison for weeks at a time (unlikely for even a low-level psi), or the person is walking around free while waiting for the judge's arrival, at which point, he's expected to show up and take his lumps.

Six Months of Psionic Intrusion

In a campaign where the psis control everything, the heroes might be the ones *without* powers – and a psionic tribunal may be assigned to assess penalties against them for crimes against the state. It doesn't matter what the charges are – anything from dissent to assault on a superior (read: psionic) individual . . . the real fun for the GM comes from deciding on a punishment in a psionic society. As before, though, don't use the poor PC as a punching bag; no one showed up to the game to play the comic relief for the upper crust.

The role of judge is dealt with more later (see *Help Wanted*, below), but the GM must also structure the court. A tribunal is a fairly traditional setup, but it could include any number he likes. One man might run a single court, although the reason why may vary – is he the wisest man around, or a high-level telepath who commands ultimate power? A panel might be anonymous, all of them wearing hoods, passing sentence from behind one-way glass, or sending in electronic votes. It could be handled by a semi-sentient computer or a Being of Pure

Thought. In baser institutions, one's innocence could be determined by a psionic trial – using telekinesis to hang over an open, flaming pit for three days, for example.

It's almost as important to know who keeps the system in check. Who does the court answer to? Are there appeals, or do people only get one bite at the apple? If it's a one-man judgment or murky forces at work, it might not be a system worth holding onto – heroes can investigate and, if need be, find a way to bring the whole thing down should it become corrupt or unpopular (see the film *Minority Report* for one such example). If there's another, higher level that keeps everyone honest, the GM has to decide what it's like as well. Is it structured the same so that justice mirrors itself and everyone is more comfortable with the means, or are there elements unique to this body that help it make decisions about the wisdom of lower courts?

HELP WANTED

The GM can involve the heroes at all levels of this process. Over time he might even find himself inclined to have the heroes play different parts in the system.

Judges

Someone must sit in judgment of the accused. As powerful psis in their own right, the party might be asked to serve as a tribunal (or quartet, or . . . well, however many members they have). Depending on how the system is set up, all psis in the underground society may be called upon periodically to hear cases (see *Juries*, below). Some or all of the judges employed may be unpowered individuals – there's respectability to be gained by having an outside party hear the arguments, unswayed by connections to the esper brotherhood. The team might be contacted and asked to serve, or they might be kidnapped out of the clear blue and taken to hear the case. It's possible they won't even be told about psionic powers, and everyone speaks in abstract terms about the specifics of the case. Instead of hearing how someone entered a woman's mind with telepathy they could hear testimony suggesting the accused "invaded her privacy" and "made himself familiar with the contents of her most personal diary." It's not likely to map exactly to what really happened, and someone is bound to let slip something he shouldn't, so this may be the PCs' first exposure to the secret world of the psi.

Juries

Egalitarian systems may offer a trial by jury, and like judgeships, the heroes could be called upon to serve their fellow psis. The selection process is simpler than that in a real courtroom – there is a smaller juror pool to draw from, and fewer reasons to claim a candidate isn't a good choice to be seated, given the insular nature of the community in most psionic settings. Playing out the full trial might be a little bit dull, but the GM can use this opportunity to show players what the actions of a psi look like from the outside looking in. If a "hero" has been abusing teleportation to break and enter homes at the drop of a hat, for instance, a court case centered on the topic is a way to show him what it looks like from an ironically less judgmental point of view. It's also a good way to funnel to the team elements of various mysteries the GM wants them to follow up on later in the campaign.

Executioners

So no one's really going to put the heroes in the position of having to dole out the death penalty to unruly psis (though the refusal to do so might be the start of a campaign spent on the run from one's former masters). Someone does have to carry out various sentences, though, and the PCs can be tasked with that if it fits their skills or powers. Anti-psi (see *Depowerment*, p. 28) can become caretakers for dangerously negligent espers, and powerful telekinetics can manage prisoners in one of the holding facilities.

Bailiffs

Someone has to keep the peace inside the courtroom; interested PCs could get a job providing security. This also means if there's some sort of breakout before the trial starts, the heroes are responsible for tracking the fugitives down and bringing them back to face justice.

Victims and Witnesses

Sooner or later the team is going to be on the receiving end of troublesome psis, at which point they're called upon to offer testimony. This can be a fun and interesting way to wrap up an adventure set in the psionic underground, a small piece of successfully solving a larger adventure, or just a means for the GM to add more enemies to the PCs' rogues' gallery. Every time they incriminate someone, that's another somebody the heroes have to remember when they hear some anonymous old foe is after them:

"Who would want me dead?"

"Well, there were those three pyrokinetics you testified against and sent away for trying to torch the capitol building. Think they still hold a grudge?"

"Aren't they in holding cells in Chicago?"

"Naw, that place burned down about two weeks . . . oh."

Criminals and Fugitives

Surely not everything the party has done with their abilities has been completely aboveboard. What seem like minor infractions or moments of weakness to them take on a graver meaning when members of the constabulary tell them they're going to appear before the panel to answer for one use of their powers or another, possibly one they cannot even recall because they attached no significance to it (now the players know what the GM was scribbling down). This doesn't have to be the first chapter in a campaign spent behind bars (although that's an option as well), but it can cast their actions in a new light. It may be more humorous than anything else, letting them hem and haw as they recount what they thought they did . . . but next time, they might consider first what their borderline-amoral actions mean to the mentalist community at large.

If they did something wrong, their incarceration may be justifiable, but it's more playable if the system has failed in some way (unless the GM wants to run a bad-guys kind of campaign). Maybe there's a newer, more stringent regime in place, and the leaders want to make an example of the group to strike fear into others. They trump up some charges or revisit events that weren't even actionable at the time to

retroactively put the heroes on either the chopping block or the run. When many members of one group can perform the same incredible feats, there might be a rush to blame the wrong person for a dramatic crime – anybody with the level of power needed to crush an armored car is suspect, for example, and the first person to fit the bill may be held responsible. Unlike gunfire, there may not be any visible indication the origin of an attack, but psis are human and can jump to conclusions like anyone else.

It's Not Just a Job; It's a Long-Term Career

Unless it's actually the party's calling or it plays the main villain of the piece, the justice system should be part of the background, not the focus. In a world that treats psis unfairly, this is one piece of an overall oppressive puzzle. Secret operations performed from within to bring down a corrupt system, or the honest pursuit of the best justice for a group of people with unusual problems are fine ways to run a game, but the conspiracy probably goes further in most campaigns and needs to be attacked from all sides.

Attorneys

No one need have an actual law degree if a crime is being adjudicated by an ad hoc committee, though if the GM thinks that's more interesting, he can base his game on repeated performances by someone with those skills. Some versions of justice employ such people, someone willing to argue the guilt or innocence of a party before a panel of judges. If the whole thing is being dealt with on the down-low, the system probably doesn't depend on actual attorneys – it just uses whoever feels inclined to stand up for the accused or the "state." Players and their heroes can have fun developing logical arguments as to why the client could not be the responsible party; investigating the crime scene with their powers for evidence to bolster their case; and working against a time limit to keep the wrong person from paying the price for a crime he didn't commit.

ORDER IN THE COURT

A psi is a redoubtable foe and a source of trouble in a normal court. If this isn't solely a civilian affair, there's even more power swirling about the room. Psionics can be a help or a hindrance to both sides, so the GM has to determine what is allowed in the campaign's venue. For example, is telepathy permitted? It's already a large part of the average psi's life, so it may be more readily accepted by the psionic community at large. Nonetheless, it's still invasive and, without corroboration, pretty useless.

The bailiffs might be anti-psi, but that would prevent all psi usage – good for general crowd control, bad for security's ability to react to specific problems if something goes wrong. If one of the PCs is on trial, are his gifted teammates even allowed into the gallery? No one wants them trying to influence judges with mind control or teleporting their cohort away, but they may be needed for testimony. In short, the GM has to strike a balance between how much power the accused has and how much the court has to bring to bear if he flips out.

If it's available, technology can level this playing field (see *Depowerment*, below). With a civilian committee responsible for psionic oversight, any psi in the room is probably heavily guarded, forced to wear gadgetry to limit their powers, or perhaps even drugged (possibly to the point of being insensate if it's a kangaroo court and no one's really going to listen to the story the accused has to tell). A self-monitoring group of psis, meanwhile, may have a gentlemen's agreement (none of them want to hurt one of their own kind), or they may depend on having overwhelming force and odds on their side (yes, everyone in the room is a psi but most of them support the court).

The GM may have to come up with escape scenarios and their counters before employing courts in his game. Teleportation, for example, is a built-in passport out of jail, but if technology (see *Depowerment*, below) or psi-tracking is available, the GM can decide bringing the psi back just means checking a scanner, finding where he is, and sending another teleporter or some anti-psis after him. He'll run out of juice eventually. By going through a list of the more common abilities (at the very least, those possessed by his own PCs), the GM can anticipate a wide variety of strategies. After one or two foiled attempts, the heroes begin *thinking* the GM has figured out all their routes.

SENTENCING

Once the court determines someone is guilty, there's a punishment to go with that finding, which also entails some creativity on the part of the ruling authority. There's little point putting a powerful psi in a cell if he can push the door off its hinges or teleport out. It's also important to know whether it's a formal or informal punishment, since a psi is in a good position to snub any sentence he doesn't care for unless something or someone compels him. The flavor of the game changes in interesting ways when it's the difference between "we strongly suggest . . ." versus "you are hereby officially enjoined from . . ."

Depowerment

In theory, the simplest way to punish a psi who has powers that circumvent that penalty is to take the powers themselves. Whether this is even possible depends on the setting. If there are anti-psi technologies or gadgets available, one such piece of kit could be attached to the convicted. Forced to wear something that mutes or eliminates the abilities, the psi must live life more-or-less normally until his sentence is up. The item in question might itself be a form of punishment whether intentionally or not. If the only known device for stopping psis is a bulky helmet, he might have one locked onto his head for six months or more, preventing him from even leaving the house properly.

If the convicted person is lucky, the technology has advanced to the point where it's a fairly nondescript collar snapped onto the neck (or some other device he can pass off as a fashion statement) . . . he may earn street cred from people who like the look of the thing. It could be an anklet like those used by modern police forces to track the position of known criminals, and as such it carries out the same function: A psi loses his powers, *and* they know where to find him if they need him. (The authorities might not mention that part, hoping he'll seek out his cohorts or someone in the

underground community who works removing these bands; then they can arrest or stop those people as well.)

Anti-psi might take the form of drugs that cripple psionic powers. In this case, criminals are injected or forced to swallow treatment that take powers away for a period of time. Some drugs require a one-time application – for example, the standard dose might have an average duration of six months, after which time it's assumed the person has learned their lesson. Otherwise the convicted may have to report for periodic booster shots to keep them in line. (Like the collars mentioned previously, the treatment may also have some form of mild isotope in it – if the convict doesn't check in as he's supposed to, scanners that pick up the radiation signature track him and he can be recaptured.)

Should none of these things be developed or practical yet, the guilty may be assigned an anti-psi "tail" – an agent he must accompany whose negating powers prevent him from using his own. Obviously, this isn't ideal for someone truly determined to flaunt his abilities or do desperate things, but for anyone who is personally invested in the psionic community and loathe to simply walk away from his kind, it's trying. If the officer is well-trained, he's in a position to take on somewhat more uncooperative subjects – he can punish or subdue his charge if he tries anything, and escape attempts have to first overcome the loss of the felon's special skill set. Even then, assigning a man-to-man defense like this isn't perfect, so some groups have a team of anti-psi agents tasked with covering the city. They cannot prevent all psi use, of course (nor would innocent espers want them to), but if a suspect or a convicted psi is reported active within a particular zone, the members of the force can zero in on him and take him back into custody for sterner punishment.

This Is Only a Test

Technology may be an on/off switch, or it may come with a "dimmer." Suppose certain devices or narcotics are strong but not absolute; they might not work on someone with a greater degree of skill or a personal measure of willpower. In these cases, their use as a punishment works well for fledgling psis. Found guilty of abuses of power, the ruling body tells the youngster his ability will be muted until such time as he can overcome the technology used to stop it. Only by working hard at his exercises and listening to his trainers can he hope to push past the blocks erected by drug doses or imposed by anti-psi collars. Once he can do that, he's allowed to resume use of his gifts – hopefully a little wiser for the wear.

Incarceration

Jailing the guilty harkens back to the previous section on technology. A cell fitted with the right anti-psi gear could keep the esper locked away properly, should such technology exist. If it doesn't, the punishment would be compounded by keeping him at least partially sedated to prevent competent use of his power (or, in the case of really powerful individuals, completely unconscious). The moral issue then is, how long does this last? If it's a life sentence, it may as well be a death penalty since he'd be drugged until the end of his natural lifespan.

Shorter impositions might prove equally pointless – how much does the criminal “learn” about his rehabilitation if he goes into the cell one day and wakes up six months later with no memory of the intervening time?

Isolation is another option. The “cell” in question could be a remote island in the Pacific somewhere. There’s a great deal more freedom of movement, but getting off the island isn’t as simple as levitating to the next landmass or teleporting blind. The GM might find it an interesting exercise to drop the PCs into such a situation and see if they can figure out an escape plan. If there are warders who remain on the island with them, flight is tougher to achieve, especially if the watchmen also possess mental abilities. Nonetheless, the guards might not be as “trapped” as their charges (supplies are delivered on a regular basis, and one crew might switch out for another “shift”), and the clever protagonist can use that. If someone is there to watch, the prisoners may have daily duties they’re expected to carry out, like maintenance of whatever facilities are there, caring for the island’s environment, and perhaps cultivating a local food supply.

Surgery

When dealing with mind crimes, there are a lot of unpleasant consequences. To wit: surgery. It may be necessary (assuming it’s possible) to hobble psis with surgical intrusions. Cutting open the brain and snipping the right wires and connections would stop the criminal from using his powers, though it’s probably permanent. If medical science has advanced to this point, the GM may decide the process is also reversible – should the patient show he’s learned his lesson. The heroes could be subjected to this and then released by a government team that feels certain they’ve dealt with the threat (but see *This Won’t Hurt a Bit*, below). The team might then have an extended campaign to find a doctor who can reverse their condition; they could spend several sessions seeing what they’re capable of without their powers in a world that favors the gifted. Note also that some psis with the ability to heal might be able to undo the damage from this procedure without all the ickiness of a surgical suite.

This Won’t Hurt a Bit

Keep in mind how not-fun it is for most players and their PCs to feel violated. In a game that focuses on mental powers, everyone already has to deal with intrusions into their minds and weirdos taking control of people’s bodies like they were marionettes. Surgical abuses take things to yet another level. Make sure the players are all right with this sort of story development before inflicting it on them in an innocent attempt to create drama. The GM could introduce other, former psis early on in the campaign (before the heroes even hear about the surgery) who have undergone the process. How they react then may signal how they would take it as a part of their ongoing personal narrative.

Parole

Periodically the psi must show up at an installation to report or explain his activities, tell the officer of any travel plans or changes in lifestyle, and receive updates to gear or treatments intended to limit his powers (e.g., booster shots of

a drug or new batteries for his anti-psi collar). This punishment is offered to those with at least some semblance of contrition for what they’ve done, or as a preventative measure in an oppressive society. In the latter case, this might be the state’s way of cowering most psis; they figure only the most degenerate ones aren’t intimidated and buck the system, and they are dealt with in a permanent way.

Exile

Somewhat like imprisonment, except the heroes are expected to go somewhere else and not come back. (In other words, they’re someone else’s problem now.) There may be little or even no attempt to track these people – they’re just marched to some border between neighborhoods or countries or psionic “fiefdoms” and told not to reenter. Tracking technology could enforce some of this but even then, the state isn’t looking to know where they are – just where they aren’t. Most folks could find a way to detach a collar when there’s no one looking over their shoulder.

Or is there? Does the state tell the entity next door they’re getting rid of a psi and dumping him in their backyard? The people there might not even know about psionics. Accords could be struck for this sort of occurrence, and psionic agents or slaves could form a (ahem) medium of trade. Different areas may be dominated by different classes of psi powers, making the anti-psi area a popular dumping ground.

Death

Not only is death a pretty extreme way to stop someone from using his abilities, in the world of psionics it’s not nearly the guarantee it is elsewhere. It’s still a game-changer, but it comes with caveats.

The death of a psi could lead to the creation of a Being of Pure Thought – if the convicted was a powerful mentalist or could project astrally, he might become even *more* formidable once released from his corporeal form. It would be nice to think this would lead to an emotionless reexamination of one’s

life, but it could also spell the creation of a new and nigh-unstoppable villain for the campaign. Other such beings could have their hands full trying to bring the thing to justice again, this time on a different plane of existence.

It may not count as death per se, but turning someone into a Head in a Jar is another way to cripple a psi. This, too, is outside the norm (and creepy even for a game steeped in psionics), and unless the criminal had a pretty relaxed attitude before, the transformation is enough to push even the most comfortable people over the edge. He’s dead as far as his previous life is concerned, possessing no real identity and having nearly insurmountable obstacles keeping him from recreating something that approaches that former existence, but at least he still may play a part in the game.

ADVENTURE SEEDS

Here are some ways to involve the PCs in intrigues at all levels of the court.

Inside Job

One of the heroes is serving on a jury, for psionic or civilian authorities. He stumbles across a problem in the trial – maybe one of the officers of the court is the perpetrator of the very crime he’s prosecuting, or someone is throwing up road-blocks to keep the court from finding out uncomfortable truths. The sequestered juror can’t do much, but his friends on the outside can. The team plays a dangerous game, trying to solve the crime without being arrested for jury tampering. Psis have to teleport in and out of secure court locations or use telepathy to keep in touch – all while trying to at least *look* interested in the proceedings.

Pick Your Poison

If the GM decides he does want to run a game in which the heroes are anything but, there’s serious fun to be had deciding what everyone did. They might all have been in on the same heist, or each one might have been accused of a separate infraction. Let the players suggest potential psionic offenses ranging from the comical (lifted – literally *lifted* – a woman’s wallet from her purse) to the deadly serious (a psionic shield causes a traffic accident). It’s important to get the players invested from the beginning since they’re going to play the bad guys.

Re-Trial

The criminal was caught, tried, and convicted, and everyone seems happy with the results . . . everyone but the party, that is. They remember the trial playing out quite differently, but everyone else involved has a completely alternate version of events. Someone has been tampering with memories from all the participants to get away with something, and if they find out the PCs know the truth, they’ll try to erase those recollections as well. If they’re lucky.

I Can See the Future . . . Of Law Enforcement

Heroes with an entrepreneurial spirit are in a position to advance how the courts do business. They may have ideas for new technology, or may work with an NPC who wants to bring his creation before the bar. There may be bugs to work out, in which case the team plays guinea pigs for the scientist. There could be issues with installation or execution (some cyber-psi is playing havoc with the devices), or everyone in the court

could find themselves at the mercy of a security system that overwhelms the psionic inhabitants of the room. Certain parties, those used to doing things a certain way (read: those who have spent a lot of time learning to manipulate the system to their own advantage), see only obstacles to their political ambitions in the new equipment.

The Ball’s in Your Court

After their private investigation into wrongdoing in the courts, the heroes find the system is irretrievably corrupt. They bring down the staid, Orwellian membership, to the cheers of oppressed psis throughout the city. A new court has to replace the old one – but who can the psionic community go to to create one . . . ?

Be All My Sins Remember’d

The heroes did something wrong at some point, or at least feel they did in the morally ambiguous context of a psionic world, and now seek to make amends (see *Criminals and Fugitives*, p. 27). Clearly they feel guilty enough to make reparations but not quite so overcome with their own moral fortitude to actually turn themselves in. The authorities pursue them for their transgressions, and when they’re not dodging the psionic police, the party works to make up for what they did. Their crime may be great enough that it takes time and a lot of setup to create the master-plan “solution,” or they may have several smaller objectives they pursue over time. Either they know they cannot fix what they did and so try to make up for it symbolically, hunting down and assisting the many victims involved one after the other; or they go after one very elusive goal and, along the way, help other folks who could use a hand.

The heroes could also be fugitives who once worked for the court and have been framed. Another possibility is that they chose to go undercover, and they and their handler in the justice organization forged documents or events to make it appear they did something wrong. They hope to hook up with the criminal underground and uncover a larger conspiracy.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andy Vetromile is a freelance writer, editor, and reviewer with an insatiable taste for games. He has worked with Steve Jackson Games, White Wolf, and Holistic Design, among others. Barbecue is his friend, and he wishes he, too, had psionic abilities.

*All one of the robbers kept babbling about was this guy.
Here one minute and gone the next. Pshoo! Flash of light.
Combine that with a reporter’s flair, and now we gotta deal
with some superhero wannabe in a leotard.*

*– Tanner, in **Lightspeed***

TOKYO PSIENCE POLICE

BY DAVID L. PULVER

Galactic Alliance Space Patrol Cruiser *Star Maker* was in hot pursuit of the interstellar criminal Kyobei the Mind Eater. A high-warp chase zigging and zagging through a dozen solar systems ended with both vessel's psi-navigators nearly burnt out, but finally Kyobei was cornered in a quarantined low-tech system. Ignoring the warning psi-beacons – another class-A violation! – his stolen ship sped toward the star's third planet.

He made a last-ditch attempt to elude the Patrol by weaving through the radio-emitting space junk the aboriginals had orbiting their homeworld.

The fugitive star-criminal hoped the patrol wouldn't break their own quarantine. No dice! Kyobei was a cop-killer and mind-wiper, and the two young agents in *Star Maker* wanted justice! Kyobei wouldn't escape this time! As Kyobei's stolen ship entered the atmosphere over the southern Pacific Ocean, their salvo of particle beams and psi-bolts struck home. The vessel shuddered, losing its psi-drive and last force screen. Falling like a blazing meteor across the Pacific, the stricken ship plunged to its doom in the islands of Japan. Kyobei teleported out just before the ship smashed into Mount Fuji, slicing the top off, bouncing once, and splashing down off Tokyo Bay.

Earth made first contact with aliens.

Galactic Alliance Space Patrol officers Mew-Jay, and Nyah-Ko had a lot of explaining to do.

THE AFTERMATH

Earth was in shock. Even before the last emergency teams had finished pulling injured from the burning rubble of central Tokyo, JSDF and USAF investigators were combing through the mysterious wreckage. The Great Mount Fuji Meteor Strike was on the verge of being confirmed as the Great Tokyo Alien Crash.

Then the great ships arrived in orbit over Earth's capitals.

Senior Ambassador Mind-Speaker Syrendee of the Galactic Alliance Council and her staff began broadcasting a psychic message in all languages of Earth. The text was simple:

Greetings from the Galactic Alliance. We come in peace, and bring a message of peace, harmony, and unity!

Very sorry about Mount Fuji.

COSMO-TOKYO

It's now a decade or so after the aforementioned unfortunate incident in which the Galactic Police executed the cosmic equivalent of a no-knock warrant and accidental first contact on Terra's front door.

However, Earth's United Nations were persuaded to join the Galactic Alliance as a Class III (Probationary) member, thus qualifying for various economic development programs.

A major part of this aid proved to be an education program, teaching humanity how to tap its own psychic potential. Every adult on major worlds of the galactic alliance has psionic powers, which, it was explained, are a necessary precondition of galactic civilization. Only through a meeting of minds can peace and harmony be achieved . . . and only when a planet's population has a majority of psis can it vote in the Galactic Council.

In reparation for the trauma of a sudden first contact, destruction of a national symbol, and in exchange for "public land" mining rights to the asteroid belt, the moon, and gas giant atmospheres, Earth was awarded the coveted status of Class A Galactic Port. The Alliance has subsidized an Interstellar Warp Gate in Earth orbit – the equivalent of building a railway line or main interstate highway through a small town. And, it would qualify for Class B educational assistance, allowing humanity to benefit from new galactic techniques for psionic uplift.

Fortunately, alien parapsychological testing revealed Earth's population had a growing number (1.2% and counting) of latent psis. By using galactic methods, it was possible for humans to be trained in all primary modes of higher function mentality (that is, telepathy, teleportation, etc.).

Unfortunately, testing also showed it was impossible for human *adults* to develop psi power via these methods, at least not without going insane or having their powers consume them. (Experiments are ongoing. Interested volunteers should apply.) However, with rigorous training under Galactic instructors, human children and teenagers under 15 could move from psionic latency, and progress to develop a wide range of useful psi powers. Moreover, their children also would be expected to inherit these abilities.

A New City of Mind Rises

Thanks to a few gigabucks of Galactic Alliance extraterrestrial development aid, the aliens helped build Tokyo Earth Space Port. Nicknamed Cosmo-Tokyo, it has become the channel for Earth's burgeoning trade with the Galactic Alliance. A dozen different alien races have flocked to Earth, hoping to acquire cultural goods, set up branch plants (Earth people seem to learn fast, and their labor costs are low by Galactic standards), get lucrative government contracts (thanks to all those Galactic development gigabucks), or just soak up the atmosphere as tourists.

Aliens are not restricted to Cosmo-Tokyo. However, they are required to have special travel permits and visas to leave the metropolitan area or travel to other nations.

Today, Cosmo-Tokyo has about 50,000 visiting aliens from the Alliances' 256 different races (some resembling Earth people except for minor differences like green hair and tiny horns – and psi power – while others are starkly nonhuman tentacled horrors). The majority of the aliens are transients visiting the port, but some aliens live here and even own businesses or rent apartments. In addition to the aliens, there is a very large foreign human population. Every major nation has a trade mission or embassy at Cosmo-Tokyo, along with tourists, spies, academics, students, and business people from around the world. About 20% of the human population is non-Japanese, and just about any language can be heard here among those who haven't mastered the art of mind-speech.

FUJI ACADEMY FOR MENTAL EVOLUTION

Just outside the city is the shining centerpiece of the Galactic Alliance's integration scheme: Fuji Academy for Mental Evolution. Built on the flattened top of Mount Fuji, this scientific and educational center has attracted earth's greatest minds, offering a chance to work hand in hand with alien researchers and educators to integrate Earth into the galactic society. Various galactic institutions (including the Galactic Alliance Space Patrol) have also sent the cream of their educators (or at least, those academics crazy or desperate enough to take a hardship post halfway across the galaxy on a Class III world) to help awaken the minds of Terra's youth. Some classes even offer off-world trips for advanced students.

A vibrant mix of Tokyo school house, Tomorrowland, and Ivy League, the academy's many halls, dormitories and laboratories are a virtual city in themselves. Its uniformed student body are drawn from all around the world (recruited from kids who demonstrated sufficient psi latency at national test centers worldwide, plus those rich or influential enough to buy their way in). Its goal is to spare no expense to aggressively train young people in psionic powers so that Earth may take its rightful place among the stars (or, more cynically, so that each rival Earth nation and sponsoring corporation that paid to send their students there can have its own psi-powered cadre).

TOKYO PSIENGE POLICE

Keeping law and order in the bustling port zone of Cosmo-Tokyo and Fuji Academy is a tough job, especially with visiting Galactics roaming the space port. The existing Tokyo Metro Police were not up to the job. The aliens offered to have their Galactic Alliance Space Patrol handle policing in the Cosmo-Tokyo Port Zone, but that was politically unacceptable to Earth. Instead, a new organization was formed, recruited from the one organization that had experience in dealing with aliens: Fuji Academy's own campus security force.

Unfortunately, many adults are prone to xenophobia when encountering aliens, and aren't that much accustomed in dealing with aliens or rowdy teens due to their lack of psi powers. After a few problems of this sort, the Tokyo municipal government decided to actively recruit promising teenage psychics from Fuji Academy as part-time cadets, waiving normal age

requirements. The so-called Psience Police auxiliary boasts a mix of teenage cadets from Fuji Academy, alien GASP liaison officers, and hard-core veteran adult cops tough enough to stand up to whatever Cosmo Tokyo can throw at them. Expanded and renamed the Tokyo Psience Police, Metro Division, it would be their sacred duty to protect the peace at Earth's front door and show how psi powers and alien technology could be a force for good and justice. Or at least, keep things from going totally to hell . . .

Fortunately, Earth's politicians did spend some of their Galactic Aid credits on building the police department an impressive new headquarters, and Galactic Alliance corporations eagerly sold the human police the latest ultra-tech law-enforcement gear, psi-boosting drugs, and training protocols. Whether it's dealing with ultra-tech weapon smugglers, stopping a gang of partying teenage telekinetic students on a bender, capturing runaway alien vermin that have escaped starport quarantine, or limiting fraternization by overly lascivious tentacled alien space crew to the approved red-light venues, it's a job for the Psience Police!

The cops need all the help they can get. Earth's new-boy status and general lack of psi ability among 99% of the population has made it a planet ripe for exploitation. Galactic carpetbaggers from a hundred races, many psi-positive, smuggle proscribed goods out of the Cosmo-Tokyo Trade Zone – weapons, animals, etc. – or buy up everything from cultural artifacts to human beings. Some seemingly innocent technologies introduced have caused unprecedented social or economic chaos, ranging from imported hyper-boots wiping out the athletic shoe industry to chemical addiction to galactic fast food. And various forms of psi-tech are also hot sellers: Every Earth businessperson wants a psi-shield to keep snoopy aliens out of his mind (not to mention those meddling kids from the Academy).

Worse, the star-criminal Kyobei continues to elude the authorities. He hasn't left Earth, but he's now forged a multi-cultural cartel in Tokyo, using galactic know-how and alien powers to obliterate his rivals and take over the illicit Earth-Galactic black market. He's absorbed one family of Japanese Yakuza, and he's trying to take over the rest, not to mention the Russian Mob, the Triads, and maybe even al-Qaeda for all the cops know.

It's not just crime: Many humans haven't forgiven the aliens for daring to overturn humanity's sole place in the cosmos, and others just don't trust alien or human psis. Active anti-alien and anti-psi prejudice (and various fringe terrorist groups) remains, and while many people like aliens, or at least their tech, others fear their mind powers and those of their human "collaborators." Innocent alien tourists or academics have been assaulted, kidnapped, or even murdered, even in Cosmo-Tokyo. Just as often, humans have encountered a trigger-happy galactic with an illegal megawatt blaster or lethal psi powers and ended up dead, brain fried, or just plain fried. Again, it's up to the Psience Police to solve the case and clean up the mess . . .

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David L. Pulver is a Canadian freelance author. He is best known for creating *Transhuman Space*, co-authoring the *Big Eyes, Small Mouth* anime RPG, and writing countless *GURPS* books, including the *GURPS Basic Set*, *Fourth Edition*, and the recent *GURPS Spaceships* series. For more details on his background, see his column in this issue (pp. 16-18).

RANDOM THOUGHT TABLE

WITH A MIGHTY MIND

BY STEVEN MARSH, *PYRAMID* EDITOR

The pounding in your head has persisted for an hour. To make your destination, you have to drive for at least another hour. "I need the pain to go away," you mutter under your breath . . . and the headache evaporates.

*You're sitting in your car waiting for the light. You're running late. **C'mon, change!** you think, squinching your eyes. The light changes.*

You're handling your car in a neighborhood only half-remembered from two decades earlier. You need to find your final destination. Looking around, your eyes catch a familiar landmark as a song from a bygone era plays on the radio. Suddenly you're 20 years younger, retracing your steps unerringly. You snap back to the present and arrive at the journey's end, turning off the car at the same time your mind stops its endless loop of the triggering tune.

Of all the unnatural abilities your average gamer is likely to claim for his heroes, psionics are arguably the ones that are most easy to connect with. The ways we use our minds are – in many instances – a mystery to us. The ability we have to harness our mental energies to move our limbs, recall the past, or connect with a loved one across a room can be amazing if we take the time to think about it.

So how can we turn our ability to think into fodder for good gaming? Well . . . let's think about it!

SUDDENLY, IT EXPLODES

For the GM, one piece of advice is simple: Focus on the effect, not the cause. Psionic powers are usually silent and invisible, so – from a dramatic point of view – it's interesting to think of the effects as happening without a reason . . . because, from a certain point of view, they are!

Compare the following:

- "This ends now!" bellowed Captain Super as he focused his vision on the water tower. Twin beams of red light streamed out from his eyes, melting the support posts, knocking the entire structure over onto the alien ship.

- The wizened man in the star-patterned cloak pointed a wand at the ancient oak. "**BOOM! Quod Erat Demonstrandum!**" he yelled as a bolt of flame shot out from the wand, exploding the tree into a shower of splinters.

- "We're not going anywhere," said the little girl coldly. "Your car is burning." Indeed, the smell of burning rubber filled the air, as did the crinkle of metal expanding in unusual ways. Soon, the automobile was ablaze.

Depending on the situation, the latter one should provide some chills as well as a sense of not knowing what's going on. (Is the little girl psychic? Is she just stating what she noticed?)

So if the GM is reporting on the results of the hero using one of his powers, try to omit the acting agent (at least at first). Let the other players know the results of the action – especially in the ways that it would differ from reality.

This doesn't prevent psychic practitioners from being showy or dramatic: "Behold! I explode the air with my mind!" However, unless there's a reason for the psi to be connected to the effect, it should be very challenging to link the two. In fact, it's quite likely the notion of cause and effect might be reversed: "You say you saw the man point at the rake, and it raised up off the ground and hit the guard? Are you sure you didn't see the man pointing at the rake *because* it was floating? I know I'd be likely to point if I saw a floating rake . . ."

Just think about it . . .

THE SHIVER AT THE BASE OF MY SKULL TELLS ME YOU'RE LYING

For players of those mastering mental might, the advice is the opposite: Focus on the cause, not the effect. Many psionic effects are fairly similar, but it's in how the mentalist manifests those abilities that can be interesting.

Let's burn a car with our minds! Consider the following:

- "I reach out with my mind, tapping the red-hot rage I felt at my childhood violation. I want the car to burn – burn like I wanted *them* to burn."

I Am in My Right Mind

Not all psionic powers need to stem from trauma, of course. In our world, many professional athletes (among others) visualize what they hope to accomplish before a given task. It's not uncommon to hear them say things like, "I just saw myself sinking the basket from midcourt, and I was able to do it."

Building off this, as another possibility that's especially suitable in a psionic campaign, one or more of the heroes might have an actual break in their mental forms. After all, it's not an incredible stretch between:

"I saw myself pick up the stick with my mind, and I could do it."

And:

"I asked Damien to pick up the stick, and he went across the room and picked it up. No one saw him."

In this case, the psi can describe the effects that his "friend" (or enemy!) is causing. (Or, as an alternative, the psi might have an invisible friend who serves as the justification for the abilities: "Damien wanted me to pick up the stick, so I thought about it.")

How much game effect this has depends on how vocal the psi is, and how psis are viewed already. If everyone with psionic abilities is already considered a bit kooky, then this is probably already covered by whatever Unusual Background allows a psi to pick up powers in the first place. However, "person with unusual powers is a few LEGO shy of a kit" might be enough to warrant a greater stigma than the same delusion or affliction by someone *without* powers. Society would look unfavorably on crazy pyrokinetics.

- "I sense the universe. The car's atoms – they dance, as do the atoms of all things. I help them on their way, to dance faster and faster."

- "Heat is a lack of cold. I take the cold from the car and claim it as my own. Let my fingers and toes freeze; I can warm them on the burning car."

In a game that really wanted to emphasize the personal aspect of mental powers, it might be good to give a bonus or boost to any players who could consistently provide new and interesting descriptions of what their powers do. Even for powers that tap the same source (or stem from the same trauma), it's possible to mix it up. Consider these alternates for the pyrokinetic psi who had suffered a childhood trauma:

- "I want to tap his shame. He must feel some; I know one of my attackers cried after he realized what he did. Let the white-hot echoes of his guilt form the embers needed to ignite him."

- "He's laughing at me?! So did *they*. Let the air in his lungs catch fire. His staccato noise will soon be replaced by the crackle of fire."

- "I'm feeling generous now. Let the flames come as quickly as possible; I wish them to feel confusion more than pain."

Sure, it could get old, but most psis have more than one trauma and more than one power to choose from, so the possible permutations of prosaic power portrayals should rise considerably in practice. (Beside, if the psis are just igniting their foes at the drop of a hat as a first resort, the game likely

has bigger problems than keeping the descriptions interesting.)

THE MIND STRETCHES

Let's continue our analysis of how psi powers might resemble our own mental abilities. When our minds try to accomplish feats, they aren't entirely sure what is or isn't possible; there's a certain "fantasy" element that comes with thinking about things you don't know are impossible.

How many of the following feel familiar?

- "Stupid guy on a cell phone. I explode him with my mind!"

- "I know it's been 20 years, but I bet I can remember the closing credits of the *Gilligan's Island* theme . . ."

- "What's 33% off \$79.95?"

- "I need to empty my mind so I can get to sleep . . ."

In general, our minds are usually game to try doing whatever we think of – even when it *can't*.

From an adventure standpoint, this might mean that the heroes don't know what their powers are – and perhaps ideally, the players don't know, either! If they have some inkling they're empowered, they might have to try to guess what powers they have by tapping the dark corners of their minds (examples of which we've already discussed).

Or, for a truly mind-warping campaign, consider giving the PCs powers and not telling the players. For example, you might have told the players to build 200-point heroes – and then assigned each one 50 points in abilities. This is especially effective in a campaign where there aren't thought to be psionic powers (and – perhaps ideally – no other special abilities, either). Then just keep an ear open for the PC making wishes or thinking about things that get close to their areas of expertise.

For example, the GM might have recruited players for a "straight" World War II setting, with perhaps a vague warning that the world might veer off into pulp territory at some point in the future. Then, during one vicious firefight, one PC wishes he was somewhere other than his foxhole – and vanishes. The campaign has just gone out for coffee, and it's not coming back . . . and it's all possible because people tend to make wishes or visualize possibilities.

Most of us don't wear capes anymore and pretend to fly. However, many of us still fantasize about having unfathomable mental powers, death vision, and "Jedi mind tricks." By tapping into that tendency, you can tie the players more closely to the game. It's mental magic!

ABOUT THE EDITOR

Steven Marsh is a freelance writer and editor. He has contributed to roleplaying game releases from Green Ronin, West End Games, White Wolf, Hogshead Publishing, and others. He has been editing *Pyramid* for over nine years; during that time he has won four Origins awards.

ODDS AND ENDS

LESSER PSI POWERS

• *Psycho Kinesis*. Do you have a lunatic you need to move with your mind? This is the power for you! (Admittedly, if you or one of your teammates has the power to *incite* madness, this ability might become much more useful . . .)

• *Anti-Anti-Psi*. Cancels out anti-psi abilities. Cancelled by both Anti-Psi and Anti-Anti-Anti-Psi. This is the psionic equivalent of "I know you are, but what am I?"

• *Aural Telesend* . . . which is just Telesend with the limitation "requires verbal component and recipient to be within earshot."

• *Walk on Solid*.

• *Common Danger Sense*. "I sense something about that crazed leopard sprinting toward me . . ."

• *Doesn't Eat or Drink Unless Hungry or Thirsty*.

• *Prognocrastination*. "Once I get a good night's sleep, I'll tell you what will happen in a few hours."

• *True-From-a-Certain-Point-of-View Sight*. "I thought you said that bus wasn't real?!" "Well, I was speaking from a Platonic ideal . . ."

ESP = STD?

Who "Patient Zero" is may never be known. Indeed, since the Touch (p. 24) doesn't seem to have any biological or organic component, these medical notions may never be understood.

What has been determined, however, is that everyone who had intimate contact with Patient Zero ended up developing psychic powers within six months. Because of the means of transmission, these powers were called "the Touch."

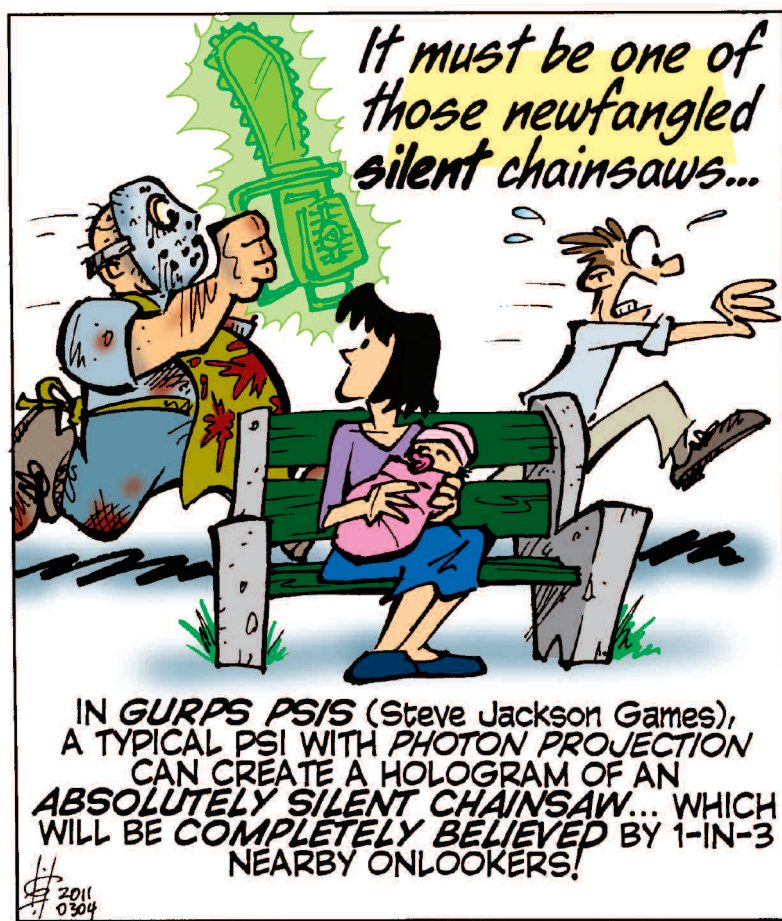
Similarly, everyone who had such contact with *those* people also developed powers. And so on. For some reason, intimacy is required; all attempts at transmitting the Touch without a carnal connection have failed.

Not that there's much interest in doing so, nowadays. Sure, there were years' worth of strong demand for uniting with a Touched partner. However, all good things must end – sometimes tragically.

Five years after becoming Touched (seemingly to the day), those so afflicted found their powers changing – along with their minds. The Touched had their powers and capabilities doubled, at the cost of their sanity. (In *GURPS* terms, additional points in psionic powers came at the cost of severe anti-social mental disadvantages.) Now the world is filled with dangerous psychopaths who wield great powers. The only ones

MURPHY'S RULES

BY GREG HYLAND



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with significant abilities to stop them are those who are Touched but not yet transformed . . . and it's only a matter of time before they themselves change.

In this campaign seed, the heroes are some of the last ones Touched before the nature of the affliction became known. They now have a time frame of less than five years to do as much good as they can, in a world going mad, before they become part of the madness.

APPENDIX Z

AVERTING PSYCHIC DISASTERS!

BY REV. JASON “PK” LEVINE

A skilled psi is a potent psi. This is true in most psionic fiction, which is why it was one of the fundamental themes of *GURPS Psionic Powers*. But what's left to learn after you've mastered the skills (and maybe a few techniques) for your psychic abilities? That's when it's good to have a reason to learn *other* skills . . .

STABILIZING SKILLS

At the GM's option, each power may have an associated *stabilizing skill*. The following list covers those from *Psionic Powers*. If the GM allows or creates additional powers for his game, he should come up with a stabilizing skill for each one – preferable a Hard or Very Hard skill, to avoid making it *too* easy to avert disaster!

In some cases, it may make sense for a single skill to stabilize multiple powers; see *Probability Alteration* and *Teleportation* (below) for an example. However, for game balance, this should only be done with a Very Hard skill. Furthermore, if the skill offers optional specializations, each power should be stabilized by a *different* specialization. (In effect, this still gives each power its own Hard stabilizing skill – which just happens to be an optional specialization of a broader, Very Hard skill.)

Animal Telepathy can be stabilized using **Mimicry (Animal Sounds)**.

Anti-Psi can be stabilized using **Expert Skill (Psionics)**.

Astral Projection can be stabilized using **Autohypnosis**.

Biokinesis can be stabilized using **Surgery**.

Dream Control can be stabilized using **Dreaming**.

Ergokinesis can be stabilized using **Engineer (Electrical)**.

ESP can be stabilized using **Meditation**.

Probability Alteration can be stabilized using **Mathematics (Pure)**.

Psychic Healing can be stabilized using **Physician**.

Psychic Vampirism can be stabilized using **Hypnotism**.

Psychokinesis can be stabilized using **Physics** or **Physics (Paraphysics)**.

Psychometabolism can be stabilized using **Physiology**.

Telepathy can be stabilized using **Psychology**.

Teleportation can be stabilized using **Physics** or **Physics (Quantum Physics)**.

If the GM breaks Ergokinesis into three separate powers, use the following options:

Cyberpsi can be stabilized using **Computer Hacking**.

Electrokinesis can be stabilized using **Engineer (Electrical)**.

Photokinesis can be stabilized using **Artist (Illusion)**.

AVERTING DISASTER

If a psi rolls a critical failure when using one of his psionic abilities, he may roll against the stabilizing skill for that ability's power. This roll is at -5, but receives a bonus equal to his Talent for that power. Success means the critical failure becomes a normal failure!

Example: Abigail has ESP Talent 3, Seekersense 3, and the skills Meditation-14 and Seekersense-15. Unfortunately, she rolls a critical failure when using Seekersense. To avert this, she rolls against Meditation, at -5 because it's a stabilizing roll, but at +3 for her Talent. If she rolls 12 or less, her Seekersense critical failure becomes a normal failure, but on a 13 or higher, the critical failure occurs.

Using this optional rule gives psis an extra edge, as it makes their powers slightly more reliable. However, this is balanced by the need to learn an extra skill for each power. It also has the side effect of encouraging the creation of broadly trained psis, which fits many views of what an effective psychic should be.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jason Levine – and his psychic avatar Reverend Pee Kitty – uses his mighty telepathic powers to assemble *GURPS* books and articles from the collective dreams of thousands of sleeping gamers each night. He is gainfully employed as the Assistant *GURPS* Line Editor, in which capacity he has written entirely too much on the topic of psi. Such relevant works include *GURPS Psionic Powers*, *GURPS Psionic Campaigns*, *GURPS Psis*, “Infinite Teleportation” (from *Pyramid* #3/20), and various psychic bits from secret future projects. He lives in northern Georgia with his wife, in-laws, and various pets – including two dogs, five cats, and a teenager.

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