

# PYRAMID



Issue 3/43 May '12

## THAUMATOLOGY III



### ADELPHOS DIONYSOS

by Sean Punch

#### CULTISTS OF THE ELDER GODS

by Antoni Ten Monrós

#### BOTTLED MAGIC

by Christopher R. Rice

#### THE MISSIONERS

by J. Edward Tremlett

#### GHOUL MAGIC

by David L. Pulver

#### MAGIC AS TECHNOLOGICAL PROGRESS

by David Lichtenstein

#### REAL WEIRD BOOKS

by Rebecca Seidel

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You've got that spell-casting feeling . . .

# IN THIS ISSUE

The giant book-reading demon on the cover can only mean one thing: It's tax-audit time! No, wait . . . it's time for a new magic-themed *Pyramid*!

Wine connoisseurs know how magical their beverage of choice can be. Sean Punch, *GURPS* Line Editor and hands-on researcher, reveals the secrets of *Adelphos Dionysos*. To promote this magical brotherhood of vino devotees, he details their ways, means, spell lists, and secret spells, building off the foundation of *GURPS Thaumatology: Magical Styles*.

In *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy*, psi-using delvers know well the risk of encounters with Things Man Was Not Meant To Know. Unlucky adventurers – or explorers looking to carve their own niche in the dungeon-crawling rat race – might leave these interactions as *Cultists of the Elder Gods*. Can your mind withstand the revelation of new *GURPS* lenses, an explanation of possible elder servitors, and a special list of psi-related spells?

Practitioners of Ritual Path magic from *GURPS Monster Hunters* might discover that what they need to beat the forces of darkness is a potent potable . . . thanks to alchemy! Magically inclined pursuers can learn how to create *Bottled Magic*, what equipment (with *GURPS* stats) is needed, and some sample rites.

At great risk to himself, David L. Pulver (author of *GURPS Banestorm: Abydos*) brings readers the secrets of *Ghoul Magic* in this issue's Eidetic Memory. Discover the enigmatic source of this information and four *GURPS* spells for those looking for the ghoul of their dreams.

In a world devoid of magic, those who seek to restore it look for like-minded companions to aid them. Your paths may cross with these mysterious magical trailblazers (suitable for any system) who call themselves *The Missioners*. Beware!

Are you looking for a way to radically alter your *GURPS* magical paradigm? Have you tried considering *Magic as Technological Progress*? This feature brings to magical spells what tech levels bring to mundane gear. Define the limits of sorcerous society – then invent, innovate, and experiment to push the envelope.

The Internet has nigh-infinite information. Who has time to read all that? Fortunately, one of our scholars has culled out some of the best *Real Weird Books* to consider (and why they're cool). Plus they're freely available!

*Random Thought Table* considers the lessons learned from a magically restricted campaign. *Odds and Ends* is downright quirky, and *Murphy's Rules* might magically make you think you know what you're doing. This month's *Pyramid* will make you curl up in an armoire with your favorite grimoire!

## 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

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# FROM THE EDITOR

## A WORLD OF POSSIBILITIES (JUST ADD MAGIC)

Let's envision a common occurrence: If ninjas were to crash in through the skylight and demand that you craft a new fantastic world (or radically revise an existing one), perhaps the most logical place to start would be how the world looks at and uses magic. Solidifying that one aspect can make the rest of the world fall into place; witness the example of the secrets of magic and its relationship with the Church in this month's *Random Thought Table* (pp. 34-35).

The world-forging spirit from *GURPS Thaumatology* is one of its (many) interesting takeaways – and it's that same spirit we tap in this month's issue. Whether you're looking to include something more "traditional" to an otherwise straightforward *GURPS Magic* campaign (such as Sean Punch's *GURPS Thaumatology: Magical Styles* contribution on pp. 4-8), a

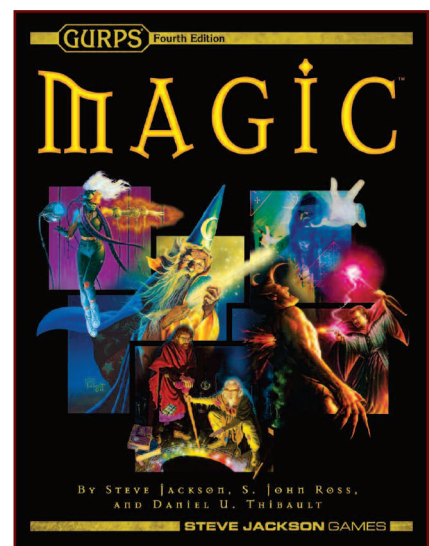
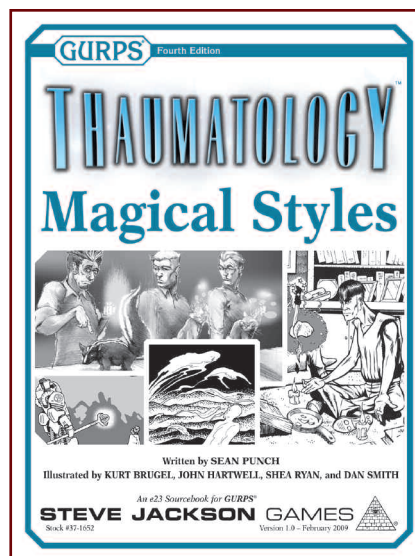
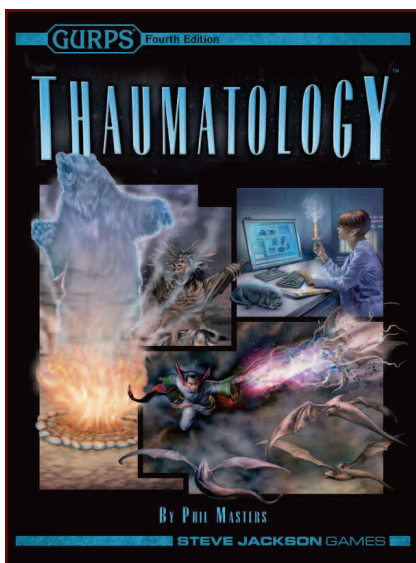
radical overhaul of the underlying *GURPS* principles (pp. 25-31), or even real-world info to add to your campaign (pp. 32-33), there's something here to form the cornerstone for a memorable encounter or even a full campaign.

Thinking about magic in a different way makes the whole thing seem more real, more crackling with possibilities . . . and more magical! Sometimes all it takes is that one creative spark to unleash your own power. Think of us as the lab of tools that provide inspiration and help make it possible.

The ninjas will be impressed.

## WRITE HERE, WRITE NOW

Did something in this issue spark your gaming to new levels of amazement? Or did one of our grand experiments blow up in the lab? You can send congratulatory or contemptuous correspondence to [pyramid@sjgames.com](mailto:pyramid@sjgames.com), or post your public points of contemplation online at [forums.sjgames.com](http://forums.sjgames.com).



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# ADELPHOS DIONYSOS

BY SEAN PUNCH

Adelphos Dionysos – also known as “the Dionysian Brotherhood” and “the Dionysians” – is a shadowy confederacy of wizards fascinated with the power of wine. Their definition of “power” includes the inexorability of vines pushing their way out of the Earth, the economic clout of wine as a commodity, and the influence of strong drink over mind and body. Their mundane and magical wisdom encompasses viticulture, wine-making, wine-selling, and of course appreciating the fruits of their labor. There’s also a sinister side to the Brotherhood: Their goods enjoy suspiciously high demand, and those who learn of the Dionysians’ existence and investigate their methods frequently end up ruined, disgraced by drunken antics.

The Dionysians could fit into any campaign that features magic and wine, but ideally one where magic is known but uncommon – a rarified learned pursuit, not a weapon for blasting monsters – and where the rich and powerful are snobby about their wine. A TL4 society with trade guilds, a merchant class, and a cash-based economy would be perfect. However, some tweaking could let the Brotherhood work in the Classical world (TL1-2) through the Industrial Revolution (TL5). And a polite background society isn’t essential; an adventurous *Dungeon Fantasy* player might find that the added oomph of magic is what’s needed for an innkeeper PC (doubtless a faun or a nymph!) to be an effective delver.

## ORGANIZATION

As suits a group obsessed with intoxicating drink, Adelphos Dionysos has no overarching structure. There are no formal ranks (not even apprentice, journeyman, and master), and while there are titles, these denote magical achievement, not authority. Most Dionysians work for winemaking chateaux, wine merchants, or taverns – and those in a given region strive to dominate the associated guilds and quietly exclude everyone but other Brotherhood members. While these businesses and guilds *do* have their customary hierarchies, relative position in them is a matter of wealth and ambition, not seniority in Adelphos Dionysos. The Brotherhood *isn't* a wizards’ guild, but a cabal that controls a trade.

That isn’t to say Adelphos Dionysos lacks unifying elements. First and foremost, it has a unique magical style, *En Oino Alétheia* (OÁ), that’s taught alongside nonmagical skills by master to apprentice in Brotherhood-dominated trade guilds, by parent to child at venerable Dionysian chateaux, and so forth. Wealthy cabal members also seek out young mages who have a nose for wine or money – preferably both – and instruct those

who exhibit a genuine love and flair for the work. Recruits who don’t play along wake up drunk in a ditch.

Beyond that, Adelphos Dionysos truly merits the name *brotherhood*. Members share a sense of kinship. They want to dominate their trades not merely to become wealthy and appreciate spectacular wine (although those things are nice), but also to ensure that noble vine stock is preserved, wine-making evolves as an art, and society’s appreciation for fine wine only grows. In game terms, this philosophy doesn’t take the form of anything so stodgy as a Code of Honor or a Vow, but is summed up by the Claim to Hospitality included in the Magical School Familiarity perk for *En Oino Alétheia*: Dionysians show their devotion through mutual social respect, and those who fail to reciprocate are dealt with swiftly and harshly.

As that implies, there’s a dark side to all this. Adelphos Dionysos *is* a conspiracy. On a mundane level, this reality shows its face in the Cultural Familiarity aspect of the Magical School Familiarity perk, which involves secret handshakes, messages hidden in bottle labels, and letters of recommendation issued on the strength of membership, not merit. Magically, this takes the form of spells for modifying cheap wine to appear good, lure customers to Brotherhood-run establishments, steal competitors’ secrets, and induce noxious effects that are easily mistaken for drunkenness. The latter magic sees much use in concerted campaigns to discredit rivals.

Finally, while the Brotherhood’s name and conduct have cultish overtones, its affairs are firmly grounded in earthly matters and the practical magic of wizards. Members do their sorcerous best to wipe out any cults of the god Dionysos they encounter, as frenzied cultists give wine a bad name. Where such sects wield supernatural power of their own, the result is often a tug of war played out in vineyards and taverns, endangering anybody caught in the middle. The Dionysians aren’t against religion per se, however – indeed, in a world where the Catholic Church exists, they’ll be ardent supporters, scheming to lock in a lucrative monopoly on communion wine!

## OÁ

8 points

*Style Prerequisites:* Magery 0 (not One College Only), plus either Business Acumen 1+ or a Taste or Smell roll of 14+ (whether through basic Perception, Acute Taste and Smell, or Discriminatory Smell or Taste).

Mages chosen by Adelpheos Dionysos are taught its magical art: *En Oino Alétheia*. In some places, this takes the form of informal guidance. In others, it's a practical financial arrangement involving substantial tuition fees. Either way, everyone accepted into the Brotherhood is expected to know how to *make* and *appreciate* wine. A gift for selling it, bottling it, or serving it – or simply for holding one's drink – is appreciated, but all of these things are secondary to knowing *what wine is*.

The reason for this requirement is that wine's very nature conceals intoxicating magical secrets. Sometime in the murky past, this school of magic splintered from more traditional ones when its earliest champions – whom many living Dionysians claim were graduate students of some wizardly academy, meeting at a tavern to vent frustrations – deduced that the structure of magic mirrored the interplay between the myriad variables that influence winemaking and give fine wine its complex bouquet. After much drinking and experimentation, these stalwarts found alternative paths to potent spells. In particular, they proved that the rigid prerequisites so dear to stodgy formal wizards weren't always necessary if one has a firm grasp on the fruits of the vine.

*Nizam: As long as you  
remember your most important  
duty, you should do well.*

*Prince Dastan: Oh, and  
what's that?*

*Nizam: Making sure his  
wine glass stays full.*

**– Prince of Persia:  
The Sands of Time**

Appropriately, the core sorcerous teachings of *En Oino Alétheia* support the making and appreciation of wine. Basic spells lend precision to quantities (Measurement) and harvest times (Tell Time), supply a creative spark during winemaking (Inspired Creation), and facilitate quality judgments (Keen Taste and Smell and Test Food). Later spells mostly build on this knowledge. Trusted Dionysians are eventually taught less-than-honest magic – although it comes later mostly because it depends on mastering simpler spells, not because elder members are genuinely reluctant to share. Still, there are secrets at the highest levels: the spells Fount of Wine (a high-powered variant of Water to Wine) and Oenomanancy (a booze-fueled, rapid-fire Divination spell, most often used to guide business decisions), and the technique of making *Eszencia* (magic in a bottle).

Along the way, Dionysian wizards pick up many handy tricks. Some of these extend the Brotherhood's insight into magic to the field of alchemy (Elixir Resistance and Rote Alchemy), others help the Dionysian handle and benefit from

strong drink (e.g., Alcohol Tolerance, Gut of the Dragon, Mystic's Stupor, and No Hangover), and yet others have workaday applications (like Convenience Casting and Mundane Magic). The list is long and varied; every tavern-owner and master vintner has a personal theory about what's useful. Closest to universal is the ability not to appear as a mage (Secret Mage), which is valuable for wizardly conspirators – particularly in areas where magic-using tradesmen risk persecution or running afoul of laws that shelter guild monopolies.

While there's no rank structure to Adelpheos Dionysos, members recognize two sets of distinctions. First, there are six levels of magical achievement, whimsically termed "Vintages": *Néo, Próto, Deútero, Tríto, Té tarto, and Pémpto*. Those of lower Vintages are expected to defer to their betters on magical matters (only). Second, there are several distinct "Arts," although these aren't considered exclusive – interested Dionysians will have no difficulty finding instruction in skills and spells outside their current specialty. These are:

- *Barrel-Making*: Coopers require the Carpentry skill. Spells include Cadence (to aid mundane work), Shape Plant (for magical woodworking), Inscribe (for adding labels and trademarks), Clean and Remove Contagion (for tidying up the final product), and various Plant spells, used not for vines but to grow lumber.

- *Blessing*: This is the art of promoting the merits of wine by curing its worst effects and emphasizing its real and supposed benefits (e.g., as a truth elixir). Common skills are Carousing, Dancing, and Professional Skill (Bartender). Representative spells are Balance, Bravery, Compel Truth, Neutralize Poison, Relieve Addiction, Relieve Sickness, Resist Pain, Restore Memory, and Truthsayer.

- *Bottle-Making*: The main skill is Professional Skill (Glassblower), but Alchemy is common among those who possess it. Spells are much as for barrel-making, but replace Plant magic with Create Fire and Reshape, and add Copy and Scribe for labels.

- *Cursing*: The sinister world of dishonest business practices and discrediting the Brotherhood's enemies involves the usual gamut of sneaking and combat skills, but Carousing is the prescribed method of getting close to people, and Alchemy and Herb Lore are preferred to Poisons where the solution is in the glass. Spell choices are nasty, things like Drunkenness, Forgetfulness, Hallucination, Madness, Nauseate, and Retch.

- *Research*: Some Dionysians are always seeking ways to produce new beverages for sale, through such skills as Alchemy, Herb Lore, and Professional Skill (Distiller). Then they adjust and tweak their results with magic like Cool, Create Acid, Destroy Water, Distill, and Essential Water.

- *Viniculture*: Growers of vines need Farming and often Naturalist, and might find Herb Lore handy. After that, the Plant spells on the list are obvious choices, along with the likes of Create Water, Essential Earth, Predict Weather, Purify Earth, Rain, Repel Vermin, and Weather Dome.

- *Winemaking*: Vintners have superior Professional Skill (Brewer) levels. Some use mundane tools covered by Alchemy. Associated spells are many, and sometimes reflect a specialty. Most winemakers find Create Servant, Dancing Object, and/or Manipulate useful for the physical labor – but things like Cold, Freeze, and Frost have their uses (ice wine), and of course cheating with Dye, Mature, Season, and Water to Wine is tolerated when a Brotherhood member does it.

- *Wine-Selling*: Selling by the keg demands Current Affairs (Business), Merchant, and Smuggling; selling by the glass involves Connoisseur (Food), Cooking, Merchant, and Professional Skill (Bartender). Either can benefit from magic to enhance sales, with valuable spells including Cook, Essential Food, Font of Wine, Fool's Banquet, Glib Tongue, Lure, and Thirst – and perhaps Detect Magic and Dispel Magic to show up rival magical merchants.

- *Wine-Tasting*: Professional tasters trade on their Connoisseur (Wine) skill, but also have Connoisseur (Food). They exploit spells such as Ancient History, Detect Poison, Far-Tasting, Know Recipe, Scents of the Past, Test Food, Wizard Mouth, and Wizard Nose.

*Required Skills*: Connoisseur (Wine); Professional Skill (Brewer).

*Required Spells*: Inspired Creation; Keen Taste and Smell; Measurement; Tell Time; Test Food.

*Perks*: Alcohol Tolerance\*; Attribute Substitution (Detect Magic or any Information spell on the list can be based on Per); Convenience Casting (Cook or Water to Wine); Elixir Resistance (Drunkenness, Foolishness, Forgetfulness, Madness, or Sleep); Intuitive Cantrip (Gut of the Dragon); Mundane Magic (Inscribe as Artist or Shape Plant as Carpentry); Mystic's Stupor; No Hangover\*; Permit (Any local certification required to create or sell intoxicants); Rote Alchemy (Drunkenness, Foolishness, Forgetfulness, Lecherousness, Sleep, or Truth); Rule of 17 (Drunkenness); Sanctum 1-3 (for a tavern or a wine cellar); Secret Mage; Secret Material (*Eszencia*); Secret Spell (Fount of Wine or Oenomancy); Special Exercises (Discriminatory Smell, Discriminatory Taste, or Immunity to Poison); Spell Resistance (any Resisted spell on list).

*Secret Spells*: Fount of Wine; Oenomancy.

\* Starting characters can take these as completely mundane perks without counting them as Magic Perks. In play, however, they're available as Magic Perks.

*Then trust me, there's  
nothing like drinking  
So pleasant on this side  
the grave;  
It keeps the unhappy  
from thinking,  
And make e'en the  
valiant more brave.  
– Charles Dibbin,  
“Nothing Like Grog”*

## Optional Traits

*Attributes and Secondary Characteristics*: Improved HT and Per.

*Advantages*: Acute Taste and Smell; Business Acumen; Green Thumb; Merchant Rank; Resistant to Poison (+3); Smooth Operator; Status; Wealth.

*Disadvantages*: Alcoholism; Compulsive Carousing; Greed; Reputation (Sinister, immoderate, etc.).

*Skills*: Alchemy; Carousing; Carpentry; Connoisseur (Food); Cooking; Current Affairs (Business); Dancing; Farming; Herb Lore; Merchant; Naturalist; Professional Skill (Bartender, Distiller, or Glassblower); Smuggling; Teaching.

## Spell List

Those who wish to learn spells of a Vintage must learn at least *five* spells from the immediately previous Vintage.

### Néo

Budding Dionysians are taught simple spells for discerning the quantity and quality of food and drink – from Light and Keen Vision to ascertain color and clarity, to Detect Magic for spotting sorcerous imitations. They also learn magic for figuring harvest times (Tell Time), seeking wild vines (Seek Plant), and performing practical tasks around the tavern, like lighting candles and levitating wine jugs.

Of these, only Inspired Creation, Keen Taste and Smell, Measurement, Tell Time, and Test Food are mandatory. Inspired Creation is the most important, as it's used to manufacture small quantities of very fine wine indeed. It's also put to such diverse uses as designing ornate bottles and building innovative wine cellars. Most wizards at the *Néo* stage spend their time using this spell alongside a craft skill to do the hands-on labor of Adelpheos Dionysos.

Apportation	Light
Detect Magic	Measurement
Detect Poison	Recover Energy
Ignite Fire	Seek Plant
Inspired Creation	Seek Water
Keen Taste and Smell	Tell Time
Keen Vision	Test Food

### Próto

Experienced wizards learn refined versions of *Néo* spells. They don't just test purity; they *ensure* it through magic like Clean, Purify Food, Purify Water, Remove Contagion, and Repel Vermin. This includes “cheats” such as Dye and Season, to get the color and taste *just so*. They don't merely levitate wine jugs, either – they operate wine presses with Dancing Object and carry entire kegs with Lighten Burden. And when they locate a vine, they determine what variety it is using Identify Plant.

This is also the stage where Dionysians learn spells to negate the detrimental effects of drink – from Balance for walking straight lines, through Relieve Sickness and Restore Memory for the morning after, to Awaken and Neutralize Poison for the severely blotto. At the same time, they acquire the first spells that emulate wine's customary *beneficial* effects: Bravery and Resist Pain. Aside from devious castings of Bravery and cheats for disguising crummy wine, though, a *Próto* lacks spells that could be construed as curses.

*The vine bears three kinds of grapes: the first of pleasure, the next of intoxication, and the third of disgust.*

– Anacharsis

Awaken	No-Smell
Balance	Purify Food
Bravery	Purify Water
Clean	Relieve Addiction
Create Fire	Relieve Madness
Dancing Object	Relieve Sickness
Dye	Remove Contagion
Far-Tasting	Repel Vermin
Heal Plant	Resist Pain
Identify Plant	Resist Poison
Lighten Burden	Restore Memory
Neutralize Poison	Season

### Deútero

At this level, many spells are still “practical” but either more powerful or highly specialized. Bless Plants, Create Water, and Plant Growth help to ensure bumper yields in the vineyard. Cadence and Manipulate play roles in tasks from winemaking to cooperage (which also benefits from Shape Plant!). Around the cellar, Cool, Mature, and Preserve Food have their place. And magic like Destroy Water and Frost aid in the manufacture of such specialties as ice wine.

But this is also where Adelphos Dionysos begins to merit its sinister reputation. A *Deútero* is a master of emulating the unpleasant effects of drink with a deftly cast spell, learning up to 10 spells that have little legitimate use. He also acquires potent magic for producing wine’s benefits, but some of these (e.g., Hide Thoughts and Persuasion) have creepy uses – and *like* being subjected to Compel Truth or Truthsayer, *en oino álêtheia*.

Bless Plants	Madness
Cadence	Manipulate
Clumsiness	Mature
Compel Truth	Nauseate
Cook	Persuasion
Cool	Plant Growth
Create Water	Preserve Food
Daze	Retch
Destroy Water	Shape Plant
Foolishness	Sickness
Forgetfulness	Truthsayer
Frost	Weaken Will
Garble	Wizard Mouth
Hide Thoughts	Wizard Nose
Instant Neutralize Poison	

### Trító

A *Trító* mostly builds on the art of the *Deútero*. In the vineyard, he’s likely a supervisor, using the brute-force magic of Blossom, Create Plant, and Rejuvenate Plant to work around

problem stock – or large-scale methods such as Predict Weather, Purify Earth, and Rain to maximize yields for the entire chateau. When it comes to production, Create Acid, Distill, and Freeze help adjust acidity, potency, and sweetness. History, Know Recipe, and Transparency can quickly work out what’s in unlabeled bottles and vats (or those of the competition). And the practical task of labeling is *much* easier with the likes of Copy, Inscribe, and Scribe.

The *Trító* moves beyond the art of the *Deútero* in the realm of the sinister, too, using spells like Fool’s Banquet, Glib Tongue, Lure, and Thirst to fill seats in the tavern. His curses stretch to morally dubious purposes indeed, from Sleep to ensure the peaceful robbery of a lone drunk, through Mass Daze to rob everyone at a party, to Hallucination to ruin someone’s night or Sensitize to make the morning after a living hell.

Finally, this is where the wizard learns two “signature” (thought not secret) spells of Adelphos Dionysos: Water to Wine and Drunkenness. It could be argued that these render the production and consumption of wine somewhat pointless. However, Water to Wine can’t produce quality, while few boozers will pay good money for a Drunkenness spell. Mostly, learning these spells is a badge of honor.

Blossom	Know Recipe
Cold	Lure
Copy	Mass Daze
Create Acid	Predict Weather
Create Food	Purify Earth
Create Ice	Rain
Create Plant	Rejuvenate Plant
Distill	Reshape
Drunkenness	Scribe
Fool’s Banquet	Sensitize
Freeze	Sleep
Glib Tongue	Thirst
Hallucination	Transparency
History	Walk Through Plants
Inscribe	Water to Wine

### Tétarto

Things get highly specialized at this level. A *Tétarto* learns better versions of Sleep and History (*Mass Sleep* and *Ancient History*). He has access to spells for adjusting the precise pressure down in the cellar or weather out over the vineyard (Atmosphere Dome and Weather Dome) – but these are too costly to use practically, so they’re the stuff of strange experiments. Still, Create Spring and Essential Earth allow even hellish landscapes to be turned into lush vineyards.

However, some of his magic is powerful, economically at least. Spells that create the magical essence of fine food or thirst-quenching drink are found even at kings’ banquets.

Create Servant also shows up at such feasts – less often in the guise of a wine steward than as a nymph or a satyr with Sex Appeal-16. Most impressive is access to the Fount of Wine spell (below). The services of a *Tétarto* are decidedly in demand among the rich and besotted.

Ancient History	Essential Water
Atmosphere Dome	Fount of Wine
Create Servant	Mass Sleep
Create Spring	Scents of the Past
Essential Earth	Weather Dome
Essential Food	

### Pémpto

The *Pémpto* differs little from the *Tétarto*. He’s just someone with enough experience to learn two final spells: Dispel Magic, for dismissing others’ false wine and evil curses, and Oenomancy (below). Of course, many mages see the power of Oenomancy as reason enough to join Adelpheos Dionysos.

Dispel Magic	Oenomancy
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### Secret Material: Eszencia

This is the magical essence of wine. It is not – and cannot – be created with any of the “Essential” spells. Rather, it’s the sweetest of wines made from the most noble of grapes, typically in the best of years.

To create *Eszencia*, all laborers involved must have at least Magery 0, yet *no* step of the production process can benefit from magic – not the viniculture, the pressing, or even the barrels, bottles, or labels. This is in part *why* Dionysians grow skilled at the mundane arts! Manufacture takes a year, and each acre of vines calls for a Farming roll, a Professional Skill (Brewer) roll to make the wine, and a Connoisseur (Wine) roll to pick the right stuff from among the results. All three are at -5 and must be made by people with the Secret Material (*Eszencia*) perk, although the penalty can be offset by up to +5 for a legendary year. If all three rolls succeed (failures simply produce wine, which may be good to drink but not magical), the result is just 50 bottles per acre of very sweet, extremely magical wine.

When consumed, the drinker acquires a temporary Energy Reserve that he can use to work magic. Energy points equal the sum of the three effective skill levels used to make the stuff, e.g., if the Dionysians had Farming-14, Professional Skill (Brewer)-16, and Connoisseur (Wine)-15, and made the *Eszencia* on an ordinary year that gave -5 to skill, a bottle would hold 30 energy points! Energy endures until used, and can be split by sharing the bottle (three wizards could get 10 energy points apiece from that bottle). Legendary vintages have been known to offer 40, 50, or more energy points per bottle.

Price is usually in the “If you have to ask . . .” range, but at least \$35 per energy point. The fact that this is *celebrated* wine, sought by collectors who aren’t even wizards, drives the price into the stratosphere! A typical bottle is small (around a pint) and weighs 1 lb.

### Secret Spell: Fount of Wine (VH)

Regular

Produces a cornucopia of wine for the duration – a hit at high-class parties! Quality is commensurate with the caster’s

Connoisseur (Wine) or Professional Skill (Brewer), whichever is higher; a true master can conjure a flood of fizz or inundation of ice wine. Can be cast on a water source such as a stream or a fountain fed by a stream, or on an empty amphora, urn, etc.

*Duration:* The spell lasts 1 minute, but the wine it creates is permanent.

*Cost:* 3 per gallon per minute of flow, *halved* (round up) if the subject is a constantly replenished water source rather than a vessel of fixed size. Same cost to maintain.

*Time to cast:* 10 seconds.

*Prerequisites:* Magery 3, Secret Spell (Fount of Wine), and five *Trto* spells.

### Secret Spell: Oenomancy

#### Information

This spell follows the usual rules for Divination (*GURPS Magic*, pp. 108-109), and in most respects works like Oneiro-mancy, with a couple of exceptions. First, the chance of suitable hallucinations is 100%. Second, instead of giving the answer to one question, it lets the caster ask one question per intoxication level (pp. B439-440) achieved during the casting: one if tipsy, two if drunk, three if unconscious, or four if comatose. The catch for getting up to four answers for the price of one – beyond the expense and physical ravages of drink – is that an IQ roll is needed to recall the details after the binge, at -1 if tipsy, -2 if drunk, -4 if unconscious, or -8 if comatose. Neither magic nor Eidetic Memory can assist this roll!

*Cost:* 10.

*Time to Cast:* As long as it takes to achieve the desired level of drunkenness.

*Prerequisites:* Secret Spell (Oenomancy) and five *Tétarto* spells.

*Praise the God of all, drink the wine, and let the world be the world.*

– French proverb

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sean “Dr. Kromm” Punch set out to become a particle physicist in 1985, ended up the *GURPS* Line Editor in 1995, and has engineered rules for almost every *GURPS* product since. He developed, edited, or wrote dozens of *GURPS Third Edition* projects between 1995 and 2002. In 2004, he produced the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition* with David Pulver. Since then, he has created *GURPS Powers* (with Phil Masters), *GURPS Martial Arts* (with Peter Dell’Orto), and the *GURPS Action, GURPS Dungeon Fantasy, and GURPS Power-Ups* series . . . and the list keeps growing. Sean has been a gamer since 1979. His non-gaming interests include cinema, cooking, and wine. He lives in Montréal, Québec with his wife, Bonnie. They have two cats, Banshee and Zephyra, and a noisy parrot, Circe.

# CULTISTS OF THE ELDER GODS

BY ANTONI TEN MONRÓS

*Dungeon Fantasy 14: Psi* proposes that psionics are what happens when Elder Things grant Power Investiture (see *The Horrible Truth*, *Dungeon Fantasy 14*, p. 38). However, it's traditional that cultists of the Elder Things come with the trappings of spellcasters – grimoires, rituals, etc. This article aims to create a variant cleric, following the pattern set by *Dungeon Fantasy 7: Clerics*. It employs, however, a lot of information from *Dungeon Fantasy 14* on the actual workings of psi, as that's the form elder gifts take.

Worshippers of the Elder Gods are always shunned by all civilized societies. It doesn't help that their exposure to Things Man Was Not Meant To Know gives them mental scars that make them unfit for even the most menial job. Witch hunts are often organized to flush out idolaters, destroy their places of worship, and try to erase even the memory of their existence. Still, new cults always rise in the fringes of society, often when an individual with psionic potential has it spontaneously manifest, giving him a look at Beyond. This severely scars his mind, and, in an effort to rationalize it, he will often think of it as a divine revelation. Thus, a new cult is born. The cults that last the longest are the ones that learn to keep their activities secret.

If temples to the Elder Gods exist, they are carefully hidden. Often in dark underground chambers, they are accessible only through a complicated route through sewers or ruins beneath a city. That is, your typical dungeon.

It is interesting to note that Elder Gods don't need, want, or value worship. The powers they grant are often incidental to their nature, or simply a way to weaken the barriers between this world and Outside Time and Space, and gain a foothold in this reality. This means that they don't impose any kind of behavior on their followers. Anyone who elects to leave the cult can do so, with no further consequences than being hunted by Things that make your worst nightmares look tame (but having psionic powers already meant that), and by crazed cultists that seek the end of the world (but being an adventurer, you should already be used to that).

## ELDER GODS AND MORALITY

While technically evil, in the sense that they want the destruction of this world, Elder Things powerful enough to be considered gods are mainly *alien*, other, insane, and amoral. Their designs are inscrutable, and those who try to understand them have their minds shattered by the experience. In fact,

they aren't part of the good/evil dichotomy. Instead, they are opposed to life, making them opposite to Nature. They are also often opposed to one another.

*There was a darkness  
outside reality, they say –  
a darkness full of things.  
Hungry, nasty things with  
no shape or form, not as  
long as they were out there.*

– Kurt Busiek,  
“Storms of the  
Heart,” *Astro City*

## ELEMENTS

Elder Gods should always have the new element Elder as their main element. Chaos, Deception, Darkness, Death, Disease, and Fear are suitable secondary options.

## SPECIAL POWERS

The powers of the Elder Gods are psionic in nature, and so take the Psi power modifier. They are not affected by sanctity or mana. They don't require a specific disadvantage to act as a Pact. Spells granted by them cost an extra FP to cast (and this increase in cost should be factored into maintenance costs, where applicable). The spells also have a chance to attract psionic dangers.

The gods don't grant Holy or Unholy abilities. Instead, they offer Psionic abilities and psi perks, as per *Dungeon Fantasy 14*. When a Psionic Ability has Psionic Talent as a prerequisite, add Power Investiture (Elder) at the same level as an alternate prerequisite.

## Servitors of Elder Things?

If Elder Things have creatures similar to the Divine Servitors presented in *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 5: Allies*, they either “serve” due to being offered suitable sacrifices, or are simply bound by the summoner’s psionic abilities.

Add Ally (Elder Servitor; Built on 100%; 12 or less; Conjured\*, +100%; Immediate Preparation Required, 10 minutes, -45%; Minion, Requires Quick Contest of the summoner’s Will vs. the Will of the summoned creature, +45%; Psionic, -10%) [19] or (15 or less) [29] to the available advantages for both clerics of the Elder Gods and unholy warriors of the Elder Gods. Summoning the creature requires a 10-minute ritual, which creates a starfish-shaped construct body out of ectoplasm for a greater power from Beyond to inhabit.

Once – and if – it appears, it must be either bound to serve, via a Quick Contest of the summoner’s Will plus Psionic Talent or Power Investiture (Elder), or negotiated with. Make a reaction roll for the creature, ignoring all normal bonuses and penalties. Influence skills cannot be used. The only ways to obtain bonuses is to forgo the chance to bind the creature with a Quick Contest, for +3, and to offer sacrifices: a healthy animal grants +1, while a living, sentient being grants +4. On a “Good” or better reaction, the creature will serve the summoner; otherwise, it will attack instantly!

Each summoning brings a new creature. Should it die, the summoner can try again after one day. If the creature does not rebel, the construct body is maintained by the summoner’s psi and requires that it spend 1 FP per minute to maintain it. This can draw the attention from other Things From Beyond, in the same manner as a maintained elder cultist spells (pp. 11-12).

There are rumors of blasphemous tomes whose mind-shattering incantations provide bonuses to either the Will contest, or to the reaction roll, but no sane person believes them . . .

\* A variant Summonable, found in *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 9: Summoners* (p. 4).

*Servitors provide assistance because of suitable sacrifices or the summoner’s psionic abilities.*

### *Thing From Beyond (+0 points)*

Remove Blessed [-10], the Holy Might moral code [10], Dependency [25] and the five quirks [5]. Add +2 HT [20], +2 Will [10], Double Jointed [15], Extra Arm (Foot Manipulator, -30%) [7], Extra Legs (Three Legs) [5], Psionic Talent 6 [30], Unusual Background (Psionic) [10], Fragile (Unnatural) [-50], Invertebrate [-20], No Fine Manipulators [-30], Semi-Upright [-5], and Climbing (A) DX+5 [2]-17\*.

Modify the ST and DX bonus with No Fine Manipulators, -40% [-24]. Change Hidden Lore to (Elder Things). Change class to Elder Thing. You must also add Horrific, but inflicting Confusion†, instead of Terror. Telepathic is very common. Thing From Beyond cannot be combined with Unholy or Natural.

\* Includes +5 from Double Jointed.

† A variant on Terror from *GURPS Powers* (p. 84). Those without *Powers* can treat this as Terror, with the reactions coming from seeing Things Man Was Not Meant To Know instead of fear.

Divine servitors are also balanced under the assumption that they would take either the Good, Evil, or Nature divine elements. Divine Servitors of the Elder Gods should take the Elder divine element.

### *Elder Servitor*

The servitor draws power from Beyond Space and Time. Such connection is inimical to life; plants and small animals wither and die with its touch. This power can be used to levitate, manipulate small objects at a range, deliver powerful bolts of concussive force, and detect other users of psi. (See the write-ups in *Dungeon Fantasy 14*, pp. 5-14, for more ideas.)

A doubly elder servitor can take one “free” maneuver to use any of its psi abilities. This allows it to perform any maneuver and still fire Psychokinetic Lashes, levitate, or hold items with Telekinesis. It can even fire Psychokinetic Lashes while holding items with Telekinesis or levitating! However, its presence creates a significant ripple in the barriers between this world and Elsewhere. This attracts Things, and increases the chances that psionic dangers manifest to 9 or less, as if such dangers were already present in the environment.

Elder requires that the servitor is a Thing From Beyond.

### *Elder*

**Advantages:** Gazer [1]; Psychic Sensitivity 2 [18]; Psychic Terror [1]; and Psychokinetic Lash 6 [29], with Telekinesis 8 [6] and Levitation 3 [6] as Alternate Abilities.

**Disadvantages:** Callous [-5]; Lifebane [-10]

**Skills:** Hidden Lore (Psionics) (A) IQ [2]-12; Innate Attack (Gaze) (E) Per+7 [2]-19\*.

\* Includes +6 from Psionic Talent.

### *Elder (Doubled)*

As above, plus:

**Secondary Characteristics:** HP+5 (No Fine Manipulators, -40%) [6].

**Advantages:** Energy Reserve (Psionic) 3 [9]; Second Nature [45].

**Disadvantages:** Weirdness Magnet (Increased chances of psychic phenomena) [-15].

*We shall see that at which  
dogs howl in the dark, and  
that at which cats prick up  
their ears after midnight.*

– H.P. Lovecraft

## PRIESTS OF THE ELDER GODS

For priests of these deities, use the standard cleric template (*Dungeon Fantasy 1*, p. 6) with the following lens applied.

### Elder Cleric

+0 points

**Advantages:** All Power Investiture, basic or added, becomes Power Investiture (Elder). • Replace Clerical Investment with Unusual Background (Psionic). • Instead of 25 points in Holy abilities, take 20 points in Psionic Talent, Psionic abilities, and psi perks [-5]. • In the advantage options, replace Fearlessness [2/level] or Unfazeable [15] and Resistant to Disease (+3) or (+8) [3 or 5], with Animal Empathy [5], Danger Sense [15], Eidetic Memory [5] or Photographic Memory [10], Magic Resistance [2/level], Resistant to Psionics [2/level], and Spirit Empathy [10].

**Disadvantages:** Replace this entire section with: Social Stigma (Excommunicated) [-10]. • Replace the disadvantages options with the disadvantages list of the mentalist (see *Dungeon Fantasy 14*, p. 16).

**Skills:** Replace Esoteric Medicine (Holy) (H) Per [4]-14 with Hidden Lore (Elder Things) (A) IQ+1 [4]-15. • Replace Hidden Lore (Demons, Spirits or Undead) (A) IQ-1 [1]-13 and Theology (H) IQ-2 [1]-12 with Hidden Lore (Psi) (A) IQ [2]-14. • Replace Public Speaking and Teaching, both (A) IQ-1 [1]-13, and Religious Ritual (H) IQ-2 [1]-12 with three of Detect Lies (H) Per-2 [1]-12; Hypnotism or Psychology, both (H) IQ-2 [1]-12; Mental Strength (E) Will [1]-14, and Mind Block (A) Will-1 [1]-13. • Replace First Aid (E) IQ [1]-14, Diagnosis (H) IQ-2 [1]-12, and Surgery (VH) IQ-2 [2]-12 with Interrogation (A) IQ [2]-14 and Intimidation (A) Will [2]-14.

**Spells:** All spells must come from *Elder Cultist Spells* (below).

## ELDER CULTIST SPELLS

Followers of the Elder Gods have the following spells available. The spells use the same disciplines as the Psi abilities, and as with the Psi abilities, the divisions are only for convenience. Some new spells

work like existing spells, only affecting psi instead of magic. (See the note in *Opposing Forces*, *Dungeon Fantasy 14*, p. 29.)

Being psionic in nature, elder cultist spells work by siphoning power from beyond time and space, in a manner similar to how clerics of more normal gods manifest the power of their deities as their spells. Like normal clerics, they are unaffected by mana levels.

Some very important differences exist. Foremost, sanctity has no meaning for Elder Things. Worse, opening a channel to Elsewhere by psionic means requires more energy. (Increase the cost of all spells by 1, and factor that into maintenance cost. This is a flat increase, and so is not multiplied for area, and similar, spells.) Finally, normal countermeasures that protect against spells have no effect against elder magics, as only elder magic can counter elder magic. (If the GM decides to allow the “College of Psionics,” found in *Opposing Forces*, *Dungeon Fantasy 14*, p. 29, then those spells can counter these spells.) Magic Resistance is of no use; only Resistance to Psionics will protect someone against them.

Unfortunately, this also means that psionic dangers are drawn to elder spells as they are drawn to other psionic abilities. (See the *Psionic Power Modifier* in *Dungeon Fantasy 14*, p. 5.) In fact, each time an elder cultist spell is maintained, a psionic danger might manifest. Since the channel has been open for some time already, the odds rise to 9 or less, instead of 6 or less. In a locale where psionic dangers are already present, this becomes a 12 or less!

**PI 1: Anti-Psi:** Conceal Psi (works as Conceal Magic), Counterpsi (works as Counterspell), Scryguard, and Ward. **ESP:** Aura, Detect Psi (works as Detect Magic), Psi Sense (works as Mage Sense), Seek Psi (works as Seek Magic), and Sense Danger. **Psychokinesis:** Apportation, Armor, Deflect Missile, Extinguish Fire, Ignite Fire, Poltergeist, Shield, and Warmth. **Telepathy:** Daze, Fear, Panic, Sense Foes, and Sense Life.

**PI 2: Anti-Psi:** Great Ward and Scrywall. **ESP:** Analyze Psi (works as Analyze Magic), Identify Psi Ability (works as Identify Spell), Pathfinder, Seeker, Sense Observation, and Watchdog. **Psychokinesis:** Catch Missile, Create Fire, Deflect Energy, Fireproof, Flight, Gloom, Hold Fast, Levitation, Locksmith, Manipulate, Restore, Shade, Shape Fire, Slow Fall, and Winged Knife. **Telepathy:** Command, Fascinate, Hide Emotion, Hide Thoughts, Lend Language, Madness, Mass Daze, Mental Stun, Mindlessness, Persuasion, Sense Emotion, Sleep, Soul Rider, Truthsayer, and Vexation.

### Elder Saints?

Evil clerics have the evil saint lens available (*Dungeon Saints*, Pyramid #3/36: *Dungeon Fantasy*, p. 9), which represents a closer relationship with their deities. Clerics of the Elder Gods can also “benefit” from a more direct contact with their deities. Apply the same lens to turn a cleric of the Elder Gods into an Elder Saint, with the following changes: Divine Favor becomes a Psionic ability instead of a Divine Ability, and you must come up with appropriate Learned Prayers for it. Psionic abilities are a given, but you will need many more. On the *Psionic Abilities* table (*Dungeon Fantasy 14*, p. 12), read Cost (Alt.) as Learned Prayer Cost.

**PI 3:** *Anti-Psi:* Catch Psi Abilities (works as Catch Spell) and False Aura. *ESP:* Ancient History, History, Prehistory, Projection, and Trace. *Psychokinesis:* Fast Fire, Fireball, Flame Jet, Hawk Flight, Invisibility, Lightning, and Resist Lightning. *Telepathy:* Borrow Language, Borrow Skill, Compel Lie, Compel Truth, Control Person, Dispel Possession, Ecstasy, Emotion Control, Hallucination, Lend Skill, Mind-Search, Nightmare, Possession, Suggestion, and Telepathy.

**PI 4:** *Anti-Psi:* Psi Resistance (works as Magic Resistance), Psi Shield (works as Spell Shield), Psi Wall (works as Spell Wall), Reflect, and Suspend Psi (works as Suspend Magic). *Psychokinesis:* Ball of Lightning, Explosive Fireball, and Shocking Touch. *Telepathy:* Charm, Communication, False Memory, Great Hallucination, Insignificance, Lesser Geas, Mass Sleep, Mass Suggestion, Mind-Reading, Mind-Sending, and Presence.

**PI 5:** *Anti-Psi:* Dispel Psi (works as Dispel Magic), Psiguard (works as Spellguard), Remove Aura, Remove Curse, and Steal Psi (works as Steal Spell). *Psychokinesis:* Evisceration. *Telepathy:* Enslave and Greater Geas.

**PI 6:** *Anti-Psi:* Drain Psi Talent (works as Drain Magery), Suspend Psi Ability (works as Suspend Magery), and Suspend Psi Talent (works as Suspend Magery). *Telepathy:* Exchange Bodies.

*Men have called me mad;  
but the question is not yet  
settled, whether madness is or  
is not the loftiest intelligence –  
whether much that is glorious  
– whether all that is profound –  
does not spring from disease of  
thought – from moods of mind  
exalted at the expense of  
the general intellect.*

– Edgar Allen Poe,  
“Eleonora”

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Antoni Ten is a IT specialist, database administrator and Java and web developer from Alboraya, Valencia, Spain. He’s seriously thinking about jumping into Android development, and dreams of writing a full-length book for Steve Jackson Games in the future. He has gamed for over 15 years, and now has two regular gaming groups.

He wishes to thank Christopher R. “Ghostdancer” Rice, José Antonio “demonsbane” Estarellas, and Emily “Bruno” Smirle for acting as his sounding boards, and proofreading this and many other articles.

The spell list under *Elder Cultist Spells* took heavy inspiration from *Eidetic Memory: Magic as Psi*, by David L. Pulver, found in *Pyramid* #3/29: *Psionics*.

## Unholy Warriors of the Elder Gods

Elder cults always need enforcers. Where clerics of the Elder Gods serve as the spiritual arm of the cult, warriors of the Elder Gods serve as its armed fist. However, the prolonged exposure to Things Man Was Not Meant To Know often twists them, making them resemble the things they draw power from. Some are sent away from the congregations, often for inscrutable purposes, and sometimes they join adventuring parties, while they wait for further orders. Some even leave the cult (or so they believe), and try to fight the Things they once served.

To create a warrior of the Elder Gods, start with the standard holy warrior template, and apply the following lens.

### *Elder Warrior*

+0 points

**Advantages:** Replace Higher Purpose (Slay Demons or Slay Undead) and Born War Leader with Unusual Background (Psionics). • Replace Holiness, basic or added, with Psionic Talent. • Replace the Shtick (Foes slain personally can’t rise as undead) perk with any psi perk from *Psionic Perks*, **Dungeon Fantasy 14** (p. 14).  
• Replace all points in Holy abilities with an equal

amount of points in Psionic Abilities and psi perks. • In advantage options, replace Born War Leader [5/level], Resistant to Disease (+3) or (+8) [3 or 5], and Resistant to Poison (+3) [5] with Animal Empathy [5], Charisma 1-5 [5/level], Danger Sense [15], Empathy, Intuition [5], Resistant to Psionics [2/level], Serendipity [15] and Spirit Empathy [10]. • Optional Higher Purpose has to be “Slay Elder Things.”

**Disadvantages:** Add Appearance (Unattractive, Ugly, or Hideoust) [-4, -8, or -16], Delusion (“Elder Things are my friends”) [-10], Frightens Animals [-10], No Sense of Humor [-10], Paranoia [-10], Unnatural Features 1-5 [1/level], Weirdness Magnet [-15], and Xenophilia [-10\*] to the second list of disadvantage options.

**Skills:** Replace Exorcism with Hidden Lore (Psionics) (A) IQ [2]-12. • Replace Hidden Lore (Demons or Undead) with Hidden Lore (Elder Things). • Replace Religious Ritual and Theology with two more points in background skills. • Add Detect Lies (H) Per-2 [1]-10; Hypnotism (H) IQ-2 [1]-10; Mental Strength (E) Will [1]-14; and Mind Block (A) Will-1 [1]-13 to the list of background skills.

† Take one less quirk if you take this disadvantage.

# BOTTLED MAGIC

BY CHRISTOPHER R. RICE

Ritual Path magic is an amazingly flexible system, capable of nearly any feat that anyone could possibly imagine. One of the more interesting aspects of the *Monster Hunters* magic system (see *GURPS Monster Hunters 1: Champions*, pp. 32-39) is that of *charms*, breakable one-use objects that hold just enough magic to perform a single spell. These optional rules expand charms into a further category, that of *potions* – magic in a (mostly) drinkable form that allows champions another means of fighting The Enemy.

## INTRODUCTION TO POTIONS

Potions are a form of conditional spell that affect the subject by drinking, applying, or throwing them. They are similar to but different from charms. Potion effects tend to revolve around altered traits, healing, or bestowing bonuses, but all effects are available. Additionally, potions have their own unique properties.

When making potions, substitute Alchemy skill for Thaumatology skill when determining the maximum Path skill level. Additionally, instead of rolling a Path skill to gather energy for the potion, you may roll your Alchemy skill instead if better, though this cannot exceed (12 + Magery level).

Like charms, the subject of the potion's effects doesn't have to be determined when the spell is cast. Rather, it effects whomever drinks it, rubs it on, etc. The potion contains the effects of a ritual that can then be triggered by simply using it.

Like charms, potions require a Lesser Magic effect – in this case, a Lesser Create Magic effect.

Because potions are already using “traditional trappings,” the final energy cost of any ritual is reduced by the quality of the ingredients, typically -10%, though this may be increased further if in the GM's opinion, the caster uses more ingredients than is necessary (see *Multiple Ingredients*, p. 14)

Potions come in multiple forms: *elixir* (a drinkable liquid form), *grenade* (which is thrown at a target), *ointment* (which must be rubbed onto the skin to take effect), *pastille* (a small thumb-sized pill that when lit affects all those who inhale the smoke from it), or *powder* (which must be blown at the target, or put in food or drink and consumed). See *Using Potions* (p. 15) for details on each form. Note that only grenades and pastilles can have an area of effect or damage that is visible, blatant, or considered an external attack.

For potions that cause the user damage from consuming them, use the cost for malediction-type damage. For “alchemical amulets,” make a standard charm instead! Finally, make sure the potion has a subject weight modifier large enough to affect its intended target; all the example potions (pp. 14-16) assume a “man-sized” imbiber (i.e., SM 0).

## Potion Creation

Brewing a potion requires an alchemy lab (p. 14) – typically a converted chemistry set, with special glass beakers, eldritch measuring devices, etc. – and uses the normal equipment modifiers for nontechnological skills (p. B345). Thus, working in the field with nothing gives -5 to all skill rolls to make a potion, borrowing a friend's kitchen gives -2, a normal alchemy lab gives no modifier, a good quality one gives +1, and a fine-quality kit gives +2.

The actual creation requires one hour to brew the potion, using specific ingredients that are combined in a complex precise process. Each inherent modifier in the ritual needs a specific ingredient that represents it metaphorically. These ingredients need not be *actually* edible; the magic that creates the potion also makes it consumable (and destroys it in the process).

After the potion is brewed, the conditional ritual must *immediately* be cast onto it, making it a potion. Finally, traditional trappings can *never* be used for potions, the caster is already getting a large discount for brewing the potion to begin with. Particularly devoted alchemist-mages thus have large workspaces full of odd or rare ingredients.

## Multiple Types of Alchemy

Campaigns that feature multiple forms of magic probably have multiple forms of Alchemy. If so, using these rules requires each caster to specialize by magic system. For instance, if the standard magic system and Ritual Path magic coexist in a setting, then Alchemy and Alchemy (Ritual Path Magic) are two different skills that allow the user to do two different things! Likewise, if the GM allows, Herb Lore may have its own version for Ritual Path magic. Use these alchemy rules but replace metaphorical ingredients with specific plants that are reputed to give or are linked to the effects desired in the potion. See *GURPS Thaumatology* (p. 105) and *GURPS Magic* (p. 222) for more details on herbs and their uses.

*Example:* Annie is a top-notch alchemist, having Alchemy-16. She has also spent a boat-load on a fine-quality alchemy lab (+2 to rolls to make potions), which she has set up in her home. When brewing potions, she's at +2 to all rolls to gather energy, but she can use the higher of her Path skill or Alchemy skill when making rolls to gather energy, as long as the latter does not exceed (12 + her Magery level).

Annie wants to create a potion that will make her reaction speeds faster. First, she defines the effects of the ritual as Lesser Strengthen Body (Altered Traits, Basic Speed +1.00; Duration, 10 minutes; Subject Weight, 300 lbs.) and Lesser Create Magic; this comes out to 33 energy. Since she has a fine-quality alchemy lab, she gets a +2 to rolls to make potions. Because she is using fine-quality alchemical ingredients, she gets her -20% discount. She decides to throw in an autographed sketch of the Road Runner from Looney Tunes as her metaphorical ingredient to represent the one inherent modifier of the ritual. She also adds eight more good-quality ingredients – a hummingbird feather, a rabbit's foot, some cheetah fur, four drops of mercury, and a Mercedes hood ornament to the boiling mixture of water and bits of paper. The GM decides to give her an additional -5% on her final energy roll because she used eight times as many ingredients than she needed. Because this is a potion, it also gets a -20% reduction to its final energy cost for fine ingredients (see the *Alchemical Ingredients Table*, below), for a total requirement of 25 energy for the spell. Now Annie rolls the higher of her Alchemy or Path of Body skill until she accumulates a margin of success that totals 25. Once that is accomplished, the potion is completed and ready to be used.

## ALCHEMICAL EQUIPMENT

Certain tools make creating potions much easier – or even possible!

### Multiple Ingredients

*or, You had what in your pocketsies?!*

By using multiple forms of ingredients for the same modifier, the caster can reduce the energy cost of the potion even further. The discount received from using multiple ingredients cannot exceed *half* the discount gained through better grade alchemical ingredients. Extra ingredients' quality must be within *one step* on the *Alchemical Ingredients Table* (below) of the main ingredients to gain the discount bonus. While this may seem like a good deal at first, each of those extra ingredients could make their own potion!

#### Multiple Ingredients

Extra Ingredients Used	Additional Energy Cost Reduction
8 times as much	-5%
30 times as much	-10%

For the GM who prefers to not track the cost and types of ingredients owned by each alchemist, simply charge for "generic" ingredients. (These can be replenished automatically during downtime.) Note how many \$ worth of ingredients are used in each potion. Generic ingredients are always considered to be "basic" and weigh 1 lb. per \$100 worth.

## Alchemical Formulary

Use the rules for *Grimoires* (*Monster Hunters 1*, pp. 56-57) to find cost, weight, and bonus but *halve* the final cost. Formularies *only* give their bonus when using the ritual described within to create a potion.

## Alchemical Ingredients

The metaphorical components of a potion are what makes a potion a potion. The better the ingredients, the better the potion. For example, a Flying potion (p. 14) might use a picture of an airplane as its main ingredient. An improvised ingredient might then be a picture ripped from a magazine, a basic one might be a picture the caster took of one, a good one might be a professional picture, and a fine one would be a hand-drawn one-of-a-kind picture.

Use the chart below to determine the cost of ingredients required for each discount level. Remember that alchemical ingredients can be found just about *anywhere*, but they count as improvised. Furthermore, legendary-grade ingredients are not usually for sale and must be found (or taken!).

## Alchemical Ingredients Table

Type	Energy Cost Reduction	Cost	Weight
No Ingredients	-0%	N/A	N/A
Improvised	-5%	\$30	0.5 lb.
Basic	-10%	\$100	1 lb.
Good	-15%	\$300	2 lbs.
Fine	-20%	\$1,000	4 lbs.
Legendary	-25% or more	*	*

\* GM's decision.

## Alchemy Labs

A collection of special glass beakers, eldritch measuring devices, burners, etc. is necessary for casters trying to make potions without a penalty.

*Alchemy Lab, Basic.* This small assortment of equipment takes an hour to safely set up or pack. This also counts as improvised gear when making charms (*Monster Hunters 1*, p. 39). Conversely, basic workspace kits count as improvised gear when making potions. \$3,000, 20 lbs.

*Alchemy Lab, Good.* Several boxes full of high-end gear, with shatter-proof beakers, mystically neutral copper utensils, etc. Gives +1 on *all* rolls to make a potion. Takes five hours to set up or pack. \$15,000, 200 lbs.

*Alchemy Lab, Fine.* Enough gear to *fill* a huge room! Specially made ironwood tables, special blue-flame burners, etc. Gives +2 on *all* rolls to make a potion. Takes 20 hours to set up or pack. \$60,000, 2,000 lbs.

## EXAMPLE POTIONS

The following are example potions using the above rules. They do *not* include the energy discount; this must still be calculated by the caster in accordance with what ingredients he is using.

## Using Potions

Each potion form has its own requirements for use.

**Elixirs:** Must be drunk. This requires that the subject is conscious enough to consume it. Takes three Ready maneuvers to use (draw, uncork/unscrew the lid, then drink).

**Grenades:** A bottle (or a balloon . . .) that must shatter on impact to take effect. All grenade potions require an area of effect of at least one yard. Takes two actions to use (draw and throw!); use Throwing skill to hit. See *Monster Hunters 1* (p. 54) for further details on bottles and balloons.

**Ointment:** Must be rubbed on the skin, typically the face, arms, and legs. Done quickly, this takes one Ready maneuver (to open), then an additional two Ready maneuvers per limb (or face). Ointments can be used on unconscious subjects, unlike elixirs.

**Pastilles:** Usually in the form of a small pill of compressed powder, like incense. It must be drawn, lit (1 point of fire damage is enough), and thrown. All pastilles require the area of effect modifier. Anyone who inhales the smoke will be affected. Takes three actions to use (draw, light, then throw).

**Powder:** Can be blown at the eyes or mouth of the target with a blowpipe, or mixed with food or drink. If thrown, this is only one action if the powder is readied; otherwise, it needs two. Preparing the powder to be used in a blowpipe, or mixing in with food or drink, is a long action that can't be taken in combat.

The GM might allow a special skill to ready potions more quickly. If permitted, Fast-Draw (Potion) removes one second from all of the above times.

As an optional rule, the GM might allow rituals with the area of effect modifier but *not* the damage modifier to receive the benefits listed under the Persistent enhancements (p. B107) for +8 extra energy or Persistent and Drifting (p. B105) for +12 extra energy.

Other forms of potions may be available for use with this system if the GM allows. Players looking for inspiration might want to look at *Elixir Delivery Methods*, **GURPS Thaumatology**, p. 107, or *Concoctions*, **GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 1: Adventurers**, pp. 28-29.

### Alchemical Firebomb

**Spell Effects:** Greater Create Energy + Lesser Create Magic.  
**Inherent Modifiers:** Area of Effect + Damage (Burning).  
**Greater Effects:** 1 (× 3).

This thrown potion causes 2d+2 burning damage with the explosive modifier to all those within a three-yard radius of where it hits. Treat the flammability of anything it affects as one less than it actually is making it easier to start fires.

**Typical Form:** Grenade.

**Typical Ingredients:** Chili peppers, gasoline, gunpowder, sulfur, Tabasco sauce.

**Typical Brewing:** Lesser Create Energy (6) + Lesser Create Magic (6) + Area of Effect, 3 yards (2) + Damage (Burning Explosive 2d+2; Incendiary, +10%) (3). *51 energy (17 × 3).*

### Alacrity

**Spell Effects:** Greater Strengthen Body + Lesser Create Magic.  
**Inherent Modifiers:** Altered Traits, Extra Attack.  
**Greater Effects:** 1 (× 3).

For 10 minutes after drinking this potion, the imbiber moves so quickly he effectively has Extra Attack 1, but without the limitation of having to use different limbs for the additional strikes.

**Typical Form:** Elixir.

**Typical Ingredients:** Rabbit's foot, cheetah fur, drop of mercury, picture of a fast-moving animal or vehicle.

**Typical Brewing:** Greater Strengthen Body (3) + Lesser Create Magic (6) + Altered Traits (Extra Attack 1 with Multi-Strike) (30) + Duration, 10 minutes (1) + Subject Weight, 300 lbs. (3). *129 energy (43 × 3).*

### Flying

**Spell Effects:** Greater Control Body + Lesser Create Magic.  
**Inherent Modifiers:** Speed.  
**Greater Effects:** 1 (× 3).

When consumed, this potion allows the imbiber to fly at a Move of 30 for the next hour.

**Typical Form:** Elixir or ointment.

**Typical Ingredients:** Dandelion, feather, paper airplane, pocket watch, jet fuel, pictures of an airplane.

**Typical Brewing:** Greater Control Body (5) + Lesser Create Magic (6) + Speed, Move of 30 (7) + Duration, 1 hour (3) + Subject Weight, 300 lbs. (3). *72 energy (24 × 3).*

### Immobilization

**Spell Effects:** Lesser Create Magic + Lesser Weaken Body.  
**Inherent Modifiers:** Affliction, Paralysis.  
**Greater Effects:** 0 (× 1).

Blown in the face of the target, this potion forces him to make a resistance roll or be paralyzed (see p. B428 for further details) for the next 30 minutes.

**Typical Form:** Powder.

**Typical Ingredients:** Broken watch, ice cube, insect frozen in amber, anesthetic, quicksand, still-frame photograph.

**Typical Brewing:** Lesser Create Magic (6) + Lesser Weaken Body (5) + Afflictions, Paralysis (30) + Duration, 30 minutes (2) + Subject Weight, 300 lbs. (3). *46 energy (46 × 1).*

### Invulnerability

**Spell Effects:** Greater Strengthen Body + Lesser Create Magic.  
**Inherent Modifiers:** Altered Traits, Damage Resistance.  
**Greater Effects:** 1 (× 3).

Once drunk the imbiber gains DR 6 with the Hardened 1 enhancement for the next 10 minutes.

*Typical Form:* Elixir.

*Typical Ingredients:* Diamonds, Kevlar fiber, miniature replica of a shield or armor.

*Typical Brewing:* Greater Strengthen Body (3) + Lesser Create Magic (6) + Altered Traits (Damage Resistance 6 with Hardened 1) (36) + Duration, 10 minutes (1) + Subject Weight, 300 lbs. (3). 147 energy (49 × 3).

## Fortune

*Spell Effects:* Greater Strengthen Chance + Lesser Create Magic.

*Inherent Modifiers:* Altered Traits, Destiny Points.

*Greater Effects:* 1 (× 3).

This *powerful* potion gives the drinker a temporary pool of 5 character points that can only be spent on *Other Uses for Points* (**Monster Hunters 1** p. 31). These “phantom” character points only last for an hour, after which, they disappear if they have not been spent.

*Typical Form:* Elixir.

*Typical Ingredients:* Four-leafed clover, horseshoe, rabbit’s foot, wishbone, hair from a male tortoiseshell cat, the number seven, three cherries.

*Typical Brewing:* Greater Strengthen Chance (3) + Lesser Create Magic (6) + Altered Traits, 5 destiny points\* (25) + Duration, 1 hour (3) + Subject Weight, 300 lbs. (3). 120 energy (40 × 3).

\* The cost of this was estimated to be 5 points *per* destiny point since the Destiny advantage is 5 points per level and gives 1 destiny point per level.

## Quickness

*Spell Effects:* Lesser Create Magic + Lesser Strengthen Body.

*Inherent Modifiers:* Altered Traits, Basic Speed.

*Greater Effects:* 0 (× 1).

Once this potion is drunk, the imbiber’s reaction times immediately increase, giving him a +1.00 to his Basic Speed for the next 10 minutes.

*Typical Form:* Elixir.

*Typical Ingredients:* Rabbit’s foot, cheetah fur, drop of mercury, picture of a fast-moving animal or vehicle.

*Typical Brewing:* Lesser Create Magic (6) + Lesser Strengthen Body (3) + Altered Traits, Basic Speed +1.00 (20) + Duration, 10 minutes (1) + Subject Weight, 300 lbs. (3). 34 energy (34 × 1).

## Strength

*Spell Effects:* Lesser Create Magic + Lesser Strengthen Body.

*Inherent Modifiers:* Altered Traits, Extra ST without HP.

*Greater Effects:* 0 (×1).

Once this potion is consumed, the imbiber’s Strength increases by 5 for all purposes except that he does *not* gain additional Hit Points. This lasts for one hour, after which, the effects wear off.

*Typical Form:* Elixir.

*Typical Ingredients:* Bodybuilder’s weights, hammer, lion’s fur, stone, sweat from a bull.

*Typical Brewing:* Lesser Create Magic (6) + Lesser Strengthen Body (3) + Altered Traits, Extra ST without HP +5 (40) + Duration, 1 hour (3) + Subject Weight, 300 lbs. (3). 55 energy (55 × 1).

## Undead Bane

*Spell Effects:* Greater Weaken Undead + Lesser Create Magic.

*Inherent Modifiers:* Area of Effect + Damage (Burning).

*Greater Effects:* 1 (× 3).

This incense-like compressed powder can be lit (taking one second) or thrown in a fire source. The turn after it ignites, it spreads to encompass a 10-yard-radius area. All undead must make a resistance roll every *second* they spend in the smoke or take 1d burning damage. This effect lasts for 30 seconds, after which, the smoke the pastille created loses its potency.

*Typical Form:* Pastille.

*Typical Ingredients:* Blessed salt, happy thoughts, holy water, motivational posters, sandalwood, silver shavings, sunlight.

*Typical Brewing:* Greater Weaken Undead (5) + Lesser Create Magic (6) + Area of Effect, 10 yards (8) + Damage (1d burning; Drifting; Extended Duration, 3×; Persistent) (16) + Subject Weight, 300 lbs. (3). 114 energy (38 × 3).

*Hermione: All right, what are the three most crucial ingredients in a Forgetfulness Potion?*

*Ron: I forgot.*

*– Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Christopher R. Rice is currently working part-time as a computer repairman who moonlights as a Potions Master. From Portsmouth, Virginia, on the East Coast of the USA, he consorts with bogeymen, vampires, and lycanthropes in a vain attempt to challenge his monster-hunting gaming group. He dreams of being able to write full time one day, or at least eke out a living doing it. Having gamed for over 18 years, he likes to think he knows a thing or two about the subject, though is often reminded about how much he *doesn’t* know by his players. He wishes to thank L.A., his own personal muse, as well as the rest of his gaming group, and his good friend Antoni Ten Monrós for his various mathamagic skills.

# EIDETIC MEMORY

## GHOUL MAGIC

BY DAVID L. PULVER

Ghouls are a subterranean race of corpse-eating humanoids, often served and emulated by degenerate humans. Some ghouls even possess their own magical lore; these dark rituals have occasionally been recorded in magical books.

The following book about ghouls is ideal for modern-day or historical-magical campaigns.

*It has been established that persons who have recently died have been returning to life and committing acts of murder. A widespread investigation of funeral homes, morgues, and hospitals has concluded that the unburied dead have been returning to life and seeking human victims. It's hard for us here to be reporting this to you, but it does seem to be a fact.*

– Newscaster, in *Night of the Living Dead*

### DARK RITUALS OF THE URBAN CANNIBAL

Originally titled *Dégénéré Tribus Urbaines Dans le Métro de Londres et Paris*, this was a work of crypto-ethnography by

French folklorist Odette Charbonneau (1952-1975). It recorded her explorations of secret ghoulish warrens beneath the Paris and London subway systems in 1972-1975, and the blasphemous and lurid rites she uncovered.

The reaction of academic reviewers to prepress copies was so censorious that the publisher, Tourjors Press, feared for its reputation; it decided to pulp the initial printing. Charbonneau attempted to find another publisher, but she had been black-listed. She committed suicide in front of a speeding late-night subway train on April 30, 1976. The impact was so severe that most of her body, save her head and one leg, were never found.

Yet her book did not die. The few surviving manuscripts or copies from the original run slowly circulated among occultists, where they garnered a warmer reception than among mainstream academia. Nevertheless the book might have faded into obscurity had it not been for its eruption into popular culture in different form.

In 1977, the underground Italian publisher Sergio Melancholia released a pirated edition in the form of a black-and-white *fumetto* comic book, illustrated by Alessandro Ulume. Odette Charboneau was its main character; her chief source was Parisian occultist and black magician Pierre Valdek (who disappeared some months before her death). Portrayed as lovers and covert investigators into the black arts, the serialized comic, titled *Rituali Obscuri dei Cannibal Urbano*, advanced the theory that Charbonneau was killed and partially eaten by Valdek, who used a magical rite to become a ghoulish himself. On orders from Peter Ghoulash, the ghoulish-king of London and Paris, her hollow, gutted corpse was flung onto the Metro on Walpurgisnacht as a warning to others.

Copies of *Rituali Obscuri dei Cannibal Urbano* are now quite rare (\$500+), as most purchasers treated issues as disposable. Sergio Melancholia went out of business in the early 1980s after an unfortunate studio fire. No collected editions were produced, save for a rumored privately published French hardback. However, an unlicensed English “scanalation” was published on the web in 2011 by a small horror blog as *Dark Rituals of the Urban Cannibal by Ulume and Charbonneau*. For a period of five days, it was available on various file-sharing sites before the sites vanished from the Internet . . .

## THE CONTENTS AND THE RITUALS

The various editions detail Charbonneau's unsettling descriptions of the society, organization, customs, diet, and mating habits of urban ghoulish packs in London and Paris, including their habit of ruthlessly exterminating those who learn their secrets. This is useful for anyone wishing to learn Hidden Lore (Ghouls), although specifics are 37 years out of date. Of more interest are recountings by Charbonneau of the "ghoul chants and rites" she witnessed or had described to her (she is somewhat circumspect on this point, though the *fumetto* depicts her and Valdek as disguised participants).

These rites include fully annotated descriptions of four Book-magic spells. A HT roll may be required to avoid disease after engaging in the activities demanded by the rituals.

### *Become Corpse*

*Effect Shaping:* Book Skill-2; 20 minutes.  
*Energy Accumulating:* 4 points.

The caster must devour at least 5% of the flesh from a corpse; it must have been a sapient being with the same Size Modifier as the subject. If the ritual succeeds, the subject looks, smells, feels, and sounds like the person he devoured for the duration of the ritual effect, gaining the appearance the corpse possessed in life.

### *Devour Memories*

*Effect Shaping:* Book Skill-4; 1 hour.  
*Energy Accumulating:* 10 points.

This lets the caster either eat the brain or drink the spinal fluid of a reasonably recent and intact (not embalmed, for example) corpse to retrieve its memories. This can be either a quick (one-paragraph) summary of everything the target knows or believes about one person, place, or thing relevant to a particular issue, or the answer to a specific question (provided that the individual knows, or *thinks* he knows, the answer).

### *Unnatural Appetites*

*Effect Shaping:* Book Skill-4; 30 minutes.  
*Energy Accumulating:* 5 points.

This ritual inspires a hunger in the subject for the meat of his own kind. The magician creates a charm and gives it to the client. When the client next comes into contact with the ritual's target, that person can attempt to resist the ritual. Failure to resist means the victim finds that ordinary food tastes as foul as excrement (roll vs. HT-3 to avoid vomiting up a meal), while dead human flesh smells and taste delicious. The subject will react in accordance with his personality traits, including mental disadvantages.

### *Dark Rebirth*

*Effect Shaping:* Book Skill-5; 1 hour.  
*Energy Accumulating:* 15 points.

As part of this ritual, the subject must devour his closest living relative and sip a potion made from the powdered bones of

a corpse of his parent and grandparent. Once complete, the subject undergoes gradual mental and physiological changes over a period of a week. His body can only subsist on the flesh of his own kind (e.g., human if human; by performing the ritual on a dog, for example, as Valdek first did, the subject could only eat other dogs). This is Restricted Diet (Own Race's Flesh; Substitution, Animal Flesh, Retching, -50%) [-10]. After a lengthy period (usually 2d months), the target's body degenerates into the form of a full ghoulish (see *GURPS Horror*, p. 60).

*She nodded. "People tend to go milk carton all the time in Sunnydale."*

*"For all sorts of Hellmouthian reasons," Xander added.*

*Giles frowned. "I see your point. Willow, perhaps you should narrow your search to discoveries of human remains, bones. Bare bones specifically." He turned back to Buffy. "Zombies and ghouls have been know to travel in packs. I want you to be on your guard at all times."*

*– John Passarella, **Buffy the Vampire Slayer: Ghoul Trouble***

## 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*, *GURPS Ultra-Tech*, and the *GURPS Spaceships* series.

# THE MISSIONERS

## MYSTERIOUS MAGICAL TRAILBLAZERS

BY J. EDWARD TREMLETT

*"I still don't understand, Bexhet," Simon said, looking around Kings Cross and feeling more than a little self-conscious in his work uniform. A group of young footballers were watching them from across the way, and seemed to be saying unkind things.*

*"What's not to understand?" the taller, dark-skinned man replied, apparently not concerned about their appearance.*

*"If magic's just under our feet, like you say, then why can't we see it? You'd think we'd have noticed **something** by now."*

*"You have," he said, pulling his small, dexterous hands from his long, green coat, the better to animate his words. "But you haven't been able to interpret it before now. It's like you were in a cave full of treasure, but then your match went out. But here we are, with the light."*

*He stooped to pull a five-pound note from a crack in the pavement as he talked, and, when his companion looked less than impressed, smiled and turned it into a pigeon with a flourish of his long fingers.*

*There is no reality except  
the one contained within  
us. That is why so many  
people live such an unreal  
life. They take the images  
outside them for reality  
and never allow the world  
within to assert itself.*

*– Hermann Hess*

*"That's . . . wow," Simon said, holding his head in his hands. "Magic's real, you're a magician, and I'm . . . a fry cook."*

*"Who's going to find the True Sword and bring back the Fae Folk," Bexhet told him, letting the bird fly. It started dropping 50-pence coins behind it, and then vanished with a poof of smoke when it got to 10.*

*"Really?"*

*"Yes, Simon. **Really.** That's provided we survive the next five minutes, anyway."*

*"What?"*

*"You noticed them?" Bexhet said, indicating the footballers, who were now running towards them. Their eyes had gone red and glowing, and their teeth were extending out of their mouths, giving them a look like demon dogs.*

*"What?" Simon repeated, almost too scared to assume a defensive stance.*

*"It's time to put that Muay Thai of yours to the test, my friend," the Rom said, waving his hands in front of Simon's. As he did, a subtle, golden glow suffused Simon's fingers, and he felt a strange sort of confidence, as though he could suddenly remember so many things he'd forgotten.*

*Maybe this magic thing wasn't a bunch of crazy tricks after all . . .*

On worlds where magic is all but unknown – a thing of wishes, flummery, and fiction – there are often legends of a time when it still permeated the world. Pagan myths, fairy tales, or major religions speak of an age gone past where magic and miracles were commonplace. Giants walked among men in those days, fantastic creatures stalked the land, and divine power could shake the earth and stop the sun.

At some point (the subtext goes), the age ended. These miracles and magics went away – perhaps gradually, and perhaps as quickly as one might snuff a candle. Magicians were hindered in their spellcraft, ladies in lakes no longer offered swords to the worthy, and the gold of the alchemists was revealed to have been fakery all along.

But still we believe in a power beyond ours. We thrill to the notion of miracles and magic, and some hope that it might somehow come back. In a world where the promise of resurrection motivates billions, could not other things be resurrected as well? Might it but take just a single spark to light the world on fire again?

Perhaps – but some would caution that fire both creates and destroys. No few will tell you to be wary of anyone who just hands you a pack of matches.

Instigators of magic, known as Missioners, sometimes come into magically barren worlds that once teemed with thaumaturgy, with the goal of bringing it all back. Their methods are as varied as their appearances, and their rationale is often mysterious, and may not always be for the benefit of that world. While their ambitions may differ, and could even bring Missioners into conflict with each other, they are usually united in one goal – to turn the age, once more, and bring back what was lost.

This article explains what these strange beings do and what they may actually be. It also gives ideas as to what they really want, along with some sample Missioners for use in any game where magic will play a part.

## Mana From Heaven

One way to handle the Missioners within a *GURPS* context is to consider them to be Mana Enhancers (p. B68). They have enough levels in this advantage to bring the ambient mana around them to a point where the Charges can learn and use magic. Whether this takes it up to normal, high, or very high depends on whether the GM wants the PCs to have the Magery advantage, or simply learn and use spells without it.

They should ideally also have the advantage modified with Area Effect, to the extent that a fairly wide area – perhaps the size of a small town – is uplifted along with the adventurers, so as to play up the feel of a magical world awakening around them. Whether the Charges retain the magic in the Missioner's absence, or have to remain close to the fellow to use it, depends on how dependent the GM wants the Charges to be.

## CAN'T YOU BE BELIEVING NOW?

Missioners come in as many different forms as there are people to be uplifted, often tooling their appearance and mannerisms to befit the expectations or needs of their intended audience. They might be sagacious elders, cunning rogues, or gentle-seeming monks. They could appear as gods or superheroes, devils or angels. Sometimes they even take the form of animated toys, imaginary friends come to life, or animals – mundane or fantastic. They may also appear as different things to different people within a group, adding to their otherworldly nature.

When they appear on a world in need of their presence, they usually seek out one individual in particular to focus upon – a Charge. Such a person is considered odd by or out of step with his fellows: too flighty, too consumed by imagination, or suffering from a social limitation that makes him less desirable company. The person may seem perfectly “normal,” yet deeply unhappy with his lot because he just *knows* something more is out there, and can't make any of his peers understand.

Having an instant friend – who gets him *completely* – come out of nowhere is usually welcomed by the Charge, rather than questioned. This is good, seeing as how the Missioner's goal involves telling the Charge that he has a special destiny. A few

well-timed feats of magic go a long way in the convincing, though nothing's as convincing as showing the Charge that he can do those same things himself.

Once the rapport is established, and the destiny accepted, the Missioner and his Charge go on a journey of self-discovery and adventure. They might get more people along for the trip, or maybe it'll just be the two of them. Sometimes the people who join them are friends or acquaintances of the Charge, sometimes not, but usually there is a sense that they all know each other from somewhere, even if they've never met.

As they journey, the hidden world comes out to play, at least for a time. Things that thought they were people and animals wake up and take their rightful place in the world. Shop clerks become dragons, and hooligans become trolls. Police officers turn out to be animated servitors, set in place to aid or stop the party, and the neighbor's cat is revealed as a mystic guardian or evil demon – maybe both at once.

Likewise, seemingly mundane items are shown to be magical, and special objects are revealed to be powerful talismans. Generally, the more important and guarded the object is, the more likely it is to be an item of great import, and therefore essential to possess. This may lead to such escapades as ransacking the Crown Jewels or trying to ring the Liberty Bell. Or it could result in stealing a suddenly super-powered homeless man's cart to find the seemingly worthless – but actually priceless – trinket within.

Such a journey will not be without peril, obviously; the creatures and situations they awaken can be extremely dangerous. A Missioner may have to go through many groups of Charges. Their abilities might also suffer from the trappings of religions more suited to the current age. They may find that their ability to awaken magic is dimmed somewhat in their presence. They may be directly opposed, even actively hunted, by agents of those religions, as well as dangerous magical entities, insane gods, hyper-technological zealots, ancient rivals, and – in many cases – other Missioners with contrary goals.

In most cases, an adventure ends with the Missioner and his Charges moving on, leaving the world to wind back down to mundane levels with their passing. Magical people and things turn back to what they were, and few can remember what actually took place in front of them. It's as if the world has been ordered to put its toys away and prepare for bed.

*Pure logic is the ruin  
of the spirit.*

*– Saint-Exupéry*

Implicit in the winding down is a promise, made by the presence of the Missioners themselves: Magic came back into the world for a brief moment, and, once the Charge completes his mission, it will come back for all time.

Or so they say.

## THE PEOPLE WHO RULE THE WORLD

What *are* the Missioners? One might as well ask, “What is magic?” Each answer just generates more questions, and leaves you where you started from – baffled but amazed, and maybe just a little scared. As there are many potential roads to power, there are also many potential guides, and many reasons for them to have an interest in returning magic to the world.

### *Ancient Wizards*

Not every willworker took the dying of the light gracefully. Some raged, and some did what they could to reverse the process. Many of these burned out, but some actually managed to latch onto the last, decaying vestiges of magic, and wrap themselves in a cocoon of it. There they slept, seeking a chance to turn their spellcrafted coffins into mansions once more.

Others went to sleep on their own terms, knowing – or at least *hoping* – that the age would turn once again. They willed themselves into ethereal slumber, became indestructible statues, put their souls into their most prized talismans or tomes, or underwent the living death of lichdom. Still others, having poured themselves into arcane researches, found a way to absorb as much magical energy into themselves as they could, thus becoming one with the Art.

### *Powerful Creatures*

Humans were not the only ones adversely affected by the loss of the world’s magic. The fantastic beasts of legend could not withstand its loss, and many were lost as its puissant tides receded for the last time in the age. Some died outright, some were folded down into lesser beings, and some merely disappeared.

However, as with the most powerful of wizards, some knew it was coming and did what they could to either prepare or surrender on their terms. Some of those who were ready – most notably dragons – may have used similar techniques as ancient wizards, producing the same results. As for those who surrendered, their essence may have traveled down the genetic paths of their descendants, requiring only a spark of power to bring their lineage back into the world.

Of course, not every person in the modern world is likely to accept the word of a selkie, and unicorns are hard to take on the subway. It goes without saying that some of these returned creatures will need to either change their shape or disguise their appearance, somehow – even to their Charges, sometimes. However, if magic automatically blossoms anew in their presence, a talking beast of myth is going to be just another strange and wondrous sight among many.

### *The Gods*

The pagan gods of old most likely survived the change of the ages, given their divine power. They also have the possible

advantages of being able to draw power from being remembered. They may take advantage of Neo-Pagans who actively worship them, or at least use their names in ritual and invocation.

However, they may have decided to quit the world for other planes of existence when the change occurred. Perhaps the loss of ambient magic made their miracles less stupendous, and the world less inviting. Or perhaps it was simply time to go.

It’s even possible that their leaving is what *caused* the age to turn in the first place. Why did they leave? Do they have to spend every other Age away from this world, in keeping with a change of magical seasons? Did encroaching monotheistic religions steal the belief that fueled their power, and thereby magic? Was something threatening them, somehow?

If so, why are they coming back now?

*We take our shape,  
it is true, within and  
against that cage of  
reality bequeathed  
us at our birth; yet it  
is precisely through  
our dependence  
on this reality that  
we’re most endlessly  
betrayed.*

*– James Baldwin*

### *Temporal Emissaries*

Another option is that the Missioners went forwards in time, off to the next age. It would seem to make sense: Why *would* you stay in a magic-deprived reality at all if a single temporal working – however insanely powerful – could propel you into a better, more accommodating time? However, it carries the risk of only getting partway to the destination, and being temporally stranded in an inert age – possibly explaining their presence here.

It's also possible that the Missioners have come *backward* in time. Maybe this is research of a sort, or perhaps they'd like to attempt to play the dangerous game of trying to *change* their future, with all the paradoxes and pitfalls that may bring. It's also possible they could be the ones entrusted to bring their age about, through skillful manipulation of mana levels, magic, certain powerful items, and their Charges.

### *Self-Aware Zeitgeists*

A more "out there" possibility is that the Missioners are actually magic, itself. They are self-aware spirits of an age – then, now, or to come – working to awaken the age's inhabitants to the possibilities of belief and magic. Such beings would be insanely powerful, and may regard their Charges as little more than ants in a farm, if that. Alternatively, they may be caring and gentle, though their way of showing it might be more than a little stilted.

One question is how many Zeitgeists are in operation at any given time. Are all Missioners different spirits of the age – or a few different ages – or are they all fractured pieces of the same age, trying to figure itself out and determine which way its future will go? Either way, both Charges and ordinary people are likely to be crushed underfoot when such spiritual giants go to war.

## **FOLLOWING THE SUN**

The primary goal of every Missioner is to bring magic back into the world. However, the reasons why they're doing this differ from Missioner to Missioner. Some are engaged in the endeavor for its own sake, but others have more distinct – possibly underhanded – goals in mind. When those goals come into conflict, Missioners go to war, with their Charges as ground troops.

What sort of goals might a Missioner have? They might want revenge on a rival Missioner, to corner a certain market, to assemble all instances of a certain kind of talisman to ensure no one else can have them, or other, selfish motives. They may seek to bring back their own kind, re-establish their religion, or return an ancient city to its former glory.

A much less noble – but very common – goal is to establish a parasitic relationship with their Charges. Some Missioners are unable to exist in this magic-deprived age without some kind of "anchor" to weigh them down, and they pick their Charges accordingly. The parasitism may be physical, with the Missioner draining fluids or other substances from the Charge in exchange for magic, or spiritual power, with a transfer of energy taking place. The parasitism may be detrimental to the Charge, either immediately or in the long term, or may even out over time to the point where it's hardly noticeable until the Missioner's gone.

Other Missioners want something a lot less pleasant. Some are not here merely to save the age, or appoint a worthy king to watch over it, but to rule it, themselves. King-making is fairly common. It's not merely enough to bring magic back into the world if they're not in charge of things afterward, and grateful Charges are often known to give their spiritual advisors' "advice" a lot of consideration. Still others want to bring the magic back into the world so as to more easily destroy it, or else rewrite a new and darker reality over the top of what came before. Their Charges are just

means to that end, and will be either swept aside or suborned once the age has turned.

## **SAINTS, SEEKERS, AND SWINDLERS**

Missioners come in all miens, shapes, and sizes, depending on their personal preferences, past history, and desired effect. Some examples are given below, along with their stories, what they appear to be, and what they really want.

*Prue Halliwell: You two will not be laughing when this happens to you. Believe me, everything'll be different now.*

*Phoebe Halliwell: Well, at least our lives won't be boring.*

*Prue Halliwell: But they'll never be the same.*

*Phoebe Halliwell: And this is a bad thing?*

**– Charmed #1.1**

### *Merlin*

In some ways the quintessential Missioner, Merlin has returned several times since that somewhat disastrous imbroglio with Arthur, Lancelot, the Round Table, and that certain sword. That each subsequent revival has met with even less success – and hardly any publicity – has not deterred him.

Merlin seeks to bring back a return of magic by finding the True King (*GURPS Fantasy*, pp. 68, 125), and putting Excalibur into his hands. The fabled sword is a distillation of the magic of England itself, from the age in which Merlin was the greatest sorcerer in the Isles. When that magic began to go away, he saved everything he could, put it into the sword, and then flung it into the timestream, so that his enemies and rivals could not claim it while he slept.

*Sam Winchester: When I told Dad I was scared of the thing in my closet, he gave me a .45!*

*Dean Winchester: Well, what was he supposed to do?*

*Sam Winchester: I was **nine** years old! He was supposed to say, "Don't be afraid of the dark!"*

*Dean Winchester: Don't be afraid of the dark? What are you, kidding me? Of course you should be afraid of the dark. You know what's out there!*

## – Supernatural #1.1

He stirs from his sleep every time a "suitable" Charge comes into the world. Once awake, Merlin puts mundane challenges and puzzles before him, to see what he does and *why*. If the Charge proves worthy, Merlin reveals himself, and begins the process of instruction, advice, and challenge that he used with Arthur, hoping that it produces a True King. Then they quest to find Excalibur, gathering allies along the road, and hopefully returning to rightfully claim the throne.

Unfortunately, no one he's found since then has been even a quarter of the man Arthur was, but Arthur wasn't his first Charge, either – there were many before him who tried and failed to find the sword. When his current group begins to show signs of failure, Merlin turns his back, removes his magic from the land, and leaves them to fend for themselves. He believes he has power, perspective, and patience on his side; whether he has time, however, remains to be seen.

Merlin prefers to appear as he always has: an old man wrapped in plain, gray robes, carrying a tall, wooden staff carved with runes that were ancient when Ogham was in its infancy. His beard is long and white, his eyes fiery with power, and his lips creased with a perpetual smirk. If he has to dress up for this Age, he shortens the beard, changes the robes into an imposing business suit, and turns the staff into a cane.

### *Bexhet the Wanderer*

Once, long ago, the Fae had standing agreements with the Romany, as they often crossed paths in the forests and fields of the Old Country. Respect flourished between the two peoples, along with frequent trade, and sometimes even love. Bexhet was a child of one such romance, gaining his mother's powers of illusion and sense of adventure, and his father's razor-sharp wits and refusal to surrender. So when magic began to leave – and the Fae with it – Bexhet swore he would walk the earth forever until he found a way to bring it back.

Ever since, Bexhet has wandered, looking for the way to regain what was taken from him, and finding Charges who will assist him in this goal, at least for a time. He knows he

must find the True Sword – wrought from lunar silver in the earliest days of the world – and use it to slay the Iron Beast. But where the sword lies, if it's even a sword at all, or what face the Beast is wearing are things he does not yet know. Hopefully, one of these quests, he and his current group of Charges will figure it out.

Bexhet appears as a dark-skinned and willowy European man, with long, slightly curly black hair, slanted eyes that stay no fixed color, and long, dexterous fingers. He wears hardy yet colorful traveling clothes, heavy black boots, and a long, green coat with many pockets. He is a master of casting illusions, but the best trick he can pull is to get his Charges to believe in *themselves*, thus making it easier for them to leave the world they know and risk everything for the sake of the Fae. A kind rogue, he genuinely cares for his Charges, but sometimes becomes so blinded by his desire to bring the age forward that he will expose them to terrible risks.

### *Um Al-Subyan*

When Allah created the world, he also made things, not of blood (like man), but of smokeless fire. These *Jinn* lived fantastic lives in those early days, and were even present in the world up to the point when the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) was active. In the days since then, their power has waned and weakened. What was once merely invisible is now so ephemeral as to be less than a whisper.

Um Al-Subyan is one such creature – actively reviled as a dangerous being that lives to harm children. Mothers throughout the Middle East give their children special amulets to ward away her baleful influence. Everyone knows that there are certain things you do not do or say, lest she come to find you. The lucky ones die before they behold her terrible face, and know fear.

To stay in this world, Um Al-Subyan has become a Missioner of sorts. She focuses her attentions on non-Muslim children living in the Middle East – the children of expatriate workers and diplomats, especially – and appears to them as a gentle, old wisewoman who wants to share her secret world.

*You too must not count  
overmuch on your reality  
as you feel it today, since,  
like that of yesterday, it may  
prove an illusion for you  
tomorrow.*

– Luigi Pirandello

Thus begins a spiritually parasitic relationship: The Jinn uses her Charges to gain traction in this world, and in return creates a zone where magic is real, and the children can have

incredible adventures. She could try to bring back the time of the Jinn through these activities, but is horribly selfish and wants this all to herself.

It's in Um Al-Subyan's best interests to make sure her Charges live through these ordeals, obviously. But sooner or later, they get too old to *really* enjoy them, or start asking too many questions of the crazy, old lady. When that time comes around, she's happy to take them on one last quest – one that most likely leaves them wandering in the Empty Quarter, amidst the bones of those Charges who came before them.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

By day an unassuming bookstore clerk, J. Edward Tremlett takes his ancient keyboard from its hiding place and unfurls his words upon the world. His bizarre lifestyle has taken him to such exotic locales as South Korea and Dubai, UAE. He is a frequent contributor to *Pyramid*, has been the editor of *The Wraith Project*, and has seen print in *The End Is Nigh* and *Worlds of Cthulhu*. He's also part of the *Echoes of Terror* anthology. Currently, he writes for Op-Ed News, and lives in Lansing, Michigan, with his wife and three cats.

## Beddy Teddy

In the far-flung, magic future, when all that separates toys from their children is self-determination, Beddy Teddy is the most popular stuffed animal ever.

Given to a small babe in arms, the warm, snuggly bear with big, wise eyes slowly grows along with the child. It adapts to the child's changing needs, becomes a playmate, friend, and companion – and occasional voice of conscience – and, when needed, deadly protector. The psychosomatic bond between toy and owner is sometimes so strong that when one is hurt, the other bleeds. Indeed, even when the child becomes an adult, and no longer needs the bear as much, if at all, the toy almost always cries itself into inertness upon its owners' death.

Such was *not* the case with Beddy Teddy #BRCDBR-10-456-K. When its owner, a highly successful – if somewhat controversial – temporal mage died during her most daring thaumaturgical experiment yet, the long-neglected bear crawled out of its box of forgotten toys, dusted itself off, and started trying to complete its owner's work. She had a number of theories about the turning of the current age, when magic came back into the world and completely remade it. However, for some strange reason, even the most powerful of temporal magics would not allow one to scry the previous age with any detail, much less see what exactly caused magic to come back into the world.

Beddy Teddy's owner was close to a breakthrough, but the energies she released while ripping open a hole in time killed her. Luckily, his little, stuffing-filled body was made of sterner stuff, and he was able to re-create and complete her experiment. Unfortunately, the hole closed behind him the second he stepped through it, leaving him stranded in

the magically inert past – far from the notes, tomes, talismans, equipment, and ambient magic needed to re-create the event. Only the strange, hyper-magical nature of his construction has allowed the bear to continue being self-motivated in this time, as his very presence brings the magical levels in its proximity up just high enough to support his existence.

Stuck in a past he knows little to nothing about, Beddy Teddy has decided to create the future. To do this, he has sought out magically attuned, quite precocious child Charges who remind him of his dead owner – along with their friends – and takes them on various “adventures,” all of which have an ulterior motive. It's amazing how many toy companies were actually goblin strongholds in need of conquering, the better to take over and put to work creating “special” stuffed animals! (It's also amazing how many former Charges are made to look like grown-ups, and left behind to “guard” these refurbished companies while Beddy takes on a new group of “Adventurers.”)

The theory is that if he can take over enough “goblin castles,” rescue enough magical treasures to enchant those “castles,” and provide enough magically seeded toys for the world's children, Beddy Teddy can raise the magical levels to point where they will tip the scales, and bring the age forward.

It's a theory, at least. The bear is making great strides toward it, and it's to his credit that, whenever one of his Charges – past or present – wonder if there's something ulterior going on, he only needs to bat his big, warm eyes at them and say, “Don't you trust me, anymore?” to silence all dissent.

# MAGIC AS TECHNOLOGICAL PROGRESS

BY DAVID LICHTENSTEIN

The standard spell-based magic system as presented in *GURPS Magic* uses prerequisite chains that resemble technological steps. In the same way that block printing was a precursor to movable type and movable type was a precursor to manual typewriters, Itch is a magical precursor to Spasm, which is a magical precursor to Clumsiness.

Most *GURPS* spells have prerequisite counts (see *GURPS Magic*, pp. 223-237, and *GURPS Thaumatology*, pp. 261-267), but prerequisite counts are not the same as a sequence of discovery. Here, then, is an optional idea to introduce a notion of magical progression in a campaign.

A *sorcery level* (SL) is equivalent to a technology level (TL), as defined in pp. B511-514. In some ways, the levels are arbitrary, but at the same time, they can help to define the sorcerous sophistication level of a society. For most spells, the sorcery level is determined by checking the sorcery level of all of that spell's prerequisites and adding one to the highest SL spell prerequisite. A sorcery level might be further increased if the spell is particularly difficult to learn or has some additional requirement, such as a minimum IQ score or Magic level.

*Example:* Mind-Search (VH) is SL5 because its immediate prerequisite, Mind-Reading, is SL3, and none of its prerequisites are Very Hard spells.

## SORCERY LEVELS IN USE

Sorcery levels are a measure of the magical advancement of a society just as tech levels are a measure of a society's technological advancement. Each SL comprises a set of spells of similar sophistication that are likely to have been discovered contemporaneously. Sorcery levels range from 0 to 12, though only a few spells have been described above SL8.

Just as many societies may be advanced or delayed in certain areas of technology, a magical society may be advanced or delayed in specific colleges. An agrarian society may have great strides in Animal and Plant magic, while a more urban one might be more focused on Communication and Earth magic.

*Example:* The island nation of Knossos focuses on its merchant fleet and on trade with its mainland neighbors. It is TL2 and SL4 (having recently mastered Walk on Water), but they

only have SL3 for Healing while mastering just a bit of SL5 Communication magic (perhaps only Dream Projection).

*All science is concerned with the relationship of cause and effect. Each scientific discovery increases man's ability to predict the consequences of his actions and thus his ability to control future events.*

– Laurence J. Peter

## THE SORCERY LEVELS

The spell lists for each sorcery level are given here. Spells marked with a \* are from *GURPS Bio-Tech*. Those marked with a † are from *Pyramid* #3/25: *Epic Magic*.

### SL0

*Body:* Climbing, Debility.  
*Communication:* Sense Foes, Sense Life.  
*Earth:* Seek Earth.  
*Fire:* Ignite Fire, Seek Fire.  
*Food:* Seek Food, Test Food.  
*Light:* Light.  
*Mind:* Keen Sense.  
*Plant:* Seek Plant.  
*Sound:* Keen Hearing, Sound.  
*Water:* Seek Water.

*It is almost impossible to explain the joy of writing software to someone who has not experienced it. First and foremost, it is an act of creation. From a simple thought, and the arrangement of a few words and symbols, a reality is created that did not exist before.*

*– Peter Jennings, author of the first commercial computer game, **MicroChess***

## SL1

*Air:* Purify Air, Seek Air.

*Animal:* Beast Seeker, Beast-Rouser, Beast-Soother.

*Body:* Itch, Touch.

*Communication:* Sense Emotion.

*Earth:* Seek Pass, Shape Earth.

*Enchantment:* Scroll.

*Fire:* Create Fire, Extinguish Fire, Shape Fire.

*Food:* Decay, Season.

*Healing:* Body-Reading, Detect Poison, Final Rest, Lend Energy, Sense Disease\*.

*Illusion:* Simple Illusion.

*Knowledge:* Analyze Heredity\*, Detect Magic, Find Direction, Measurement, Tell Time.

*Light:* Colors, Continual Light, Remove Shadow, Shape Light.

*Making and Breaking:* Find Weakness.

*Mind:* Dull Sense, Foolishness.

*Movement:* Haste.

*Necromancy:* Death Vision, Final Rest.

*Plant:* Identify Plant.

*Protection:* Detect Poison, Sense Danger.

*Sound:* Garble, Silence, Sound Vision, Thunderclap, Voices.

*Technology:* Identify Metal, Magnetic Vision, Radio Hearing, See Radiation, Seek Fuel, Seek Machine.

*Water:* Purify Water, Seek Coastline.

## SL2

*Air:* Clouds, Create Air, No-Smell, Stench.

*Animal:* Animal Control, Beast Summoning, Master.

*Body:* Alter Voice, Frailty, Hinder, Might, Spasm, Strike Blind, Strike Deaf.

*Communication:* Hide Emotion, Lend Language, Persuasion, Truthsayer, Vexation.

*Earth:* Earth Vision.

*Enchantment:* Enchant, Manastone, One-College Powerstone, Powerstone, Staff, Temporary Enchantment.

*Fire:* Fireproof, Flame Jet, Heat, Phantom Flame, Slow Fire, Smoke.

*Food:* Cook, Far-Tasting, Foul Water, Mature, Preserve Food, Purify Food.

*Gate:* Planar Summons.

*Healing:* Lend Vitality, Neutralize Poison, Remove Contagion, Share Energy.

*Illusion:* Complex Illusion, Illusion Disguise, Illusion Shell, Independence, Know Illusion, Phantom Flame.

*Knowledge:* Alarm, Earth Vision, Far-Feeling, Far-Hearing, Far-Tasting, Glass Wall, Identify Spell, Mage Sense, Mage Sight, Memorize, Pathfinder, Seek Magic, Seeker, Sense Mana, Small Vision, Tell Position, Test Load.

*Light:* Bright Vision, Darkness, Flash, Gloom, Glow, Hawk Vision, Infravision, Light Jet, Mirror, Night Vision, Remove Reflection, Shade, Small Vision, Wall of Light.

*Making and Breaking:* Inspired Creation, Restore, Weaken.

*Meta-Spell:* Conceal Magic, Counterspell, Delay, Magic Resistance, Scryguard, Seek Magic, Ward.

*Mind:* Alertness, Daze, Disorient, Fear, Wisdom.

*Movement:* Apportation, Glue, Grease, Hinder.

*Necromancy:* Banish, Sense Spirit, Summon Demon.

*Plant:* Forest Warning, Heal Plant, Shape Plant.

*Protection:* Block, Nightingale, Resist Sound, Sense Observation, Shade, Shield, Watchdog, Weather Dome.

*Sound:* Alter Voice, Converse, Delayed Message, Far-Hearing, Great Voice, Hush, Imitate Voice, Resist Sound, Wall of Silence.

*Technology:* Irradiate, Purify Fuel, Reveal Function, Seek Power, Seek Radiation, Sense Nano\*, Test Fuel.

*Water:* Create Water, Foul Water.

*Weather:* Clouds, Weather Dome.

## SL3

*Air:* Atmosphere Dome, Destroy Air, Earth to Air, Odor, Predict Weather, Rain, Shape Air, Warm.

*Animal:* Beast Link, Beast Speech, Repel Animal, Rider, Rider Within, Shapeshifting, Spider Silk.

*Body:* Boost Strength, Clumsiness, Ease Labor\*, Hair Growth, Hunger, Pain, Rooted Feet, Stop Spasm, Strike Dumb, Tickle, Vigor.

*Communication:* Borrow Language, Dream Viewing, Hide Thoughts, Mind-Reading.

*Earth:* Earth to Air, Earth to Stone, Earth to Water, Predict Earth Movement, Stone to Earth, Walk Through Earth.

*Enchantment:* Accuracy, Bane, Deflect, Effigy, Fortify, Graceful Weapon, Hex, Lesser Wish, Lighten, Limit, Loyal Sword, Malefice, Name, Password, Penetrating Weapon, Puisseance, Quick-Draw, Remove Enchantment, Speed, Spell Stone, Spellgraft\*, Suspend Enchantment, Talisman.

*Fire:* Cold, Deflect Energy, Essential Flame, Fast Fire, Fireball, Rain of Fire, Resist Cold, Resist Fire, Warmth.

*Food:* Create Food, Essential Food, Fool's Banquet, Hunger, Know Recipe, Poison Food, Prepare Game, Water to Wine, Wizard Nose.

*Healing:* Awaken, Ease Labor\*, Minor Healing, Recover Energy, Relieve Addiction, Relieve Madness, Relieve Sickness, Resist Disease, Share Vitality, Stop Bleeding, Stop Spasm.

*Illusion:* Initiative.

*Knowledge:* Analyze Magic, Aura, Know Recipe, Plant Vision, Projection, Remember Path, See Secrets, Trace, Wizard Eye, Wizard Nose.

*Light:* Blackout, Blur, Dark Vision, Mage Light, Shape Darkness.

*Making and Breaking:* Awaken Craft Spirit, Clean, Dye, Rejoin.

*Meta-Spell:* Bless, Curse, Dispel Magic, Penetrating Spell, Reflect, Reflex, Remove Curse, Scrywall, Suspend Curse, Suspend Spell.

*Mind:* Boost Intelligence, Bravery, Dullness, Encrypt, Fascinate, Forgetfulness, Mass Daze, Memorize, Mental Stun, Panic, Rear Vision, Relieve Madness, Sleep, Strengthen Will, Weaken Will.

*Movement:* Deflect Missile, Freedom, Hold Fast, Increase Burden, Jump, Levitation, Light Tread, Lighten Burden, Locksmith, Poltergeist, Quick March, Slide, Slow, Slow Fall, Wallwalker.

*Necromancy:* Awaken Craft Spirit, Hellspawn\*, Summon Spirit, Turn Spirit.

*Plant:* Bless Plants, False Tracks, Hide Path, Plant Growth, Plant Vision, Pollen Cloud, Rain of Nuts.

*Protection:* Armor, Atmosphere Dome, Bladeturning, Deflect Missile, Force Dome, Freedom, Hardness, Magelock, Missile Shield, Mystic Mist, Resist Disease, Resist Pressure, Resist Radiation, Turn Blade, Warmth, Mage-Stealth.

*Sound:* Noise, Sound Jet, Wizard Ear.

*Technology:* Essential Fuel, Preserve Fuel, Resist Radiation, Seek Plastic, Shape Metal.

*Water:* Destroy Water, Earth to Water, Frost, Icy Weapon, Rain, Shape Water.

*Weather:* Frost, Predict Weather, Rain, Warm.

*The universe is  
full of magical things  
patiently waiting  
for our wits  
to grow sharper.*

*– Eden Phillpots*

## SL4

*Air:* Air Jet, Air Vision, Body of Air, Breathe Air, Breathe Water, Concussion, Cool, Devitalize Air, Essential Air, Resist Lightning, Snow, Walk on Air, Wall of Wind, Windstorm.

*Animal:* Beast Possession, Hybrid Control, Permanent Shapeshifting, Protect Animal, Shapeshift Others.

*Body:* Accelerate Pregnancy\*, Alter Visage, Boost Health, Choke, Control Limb, Fumble, Grace, Haircut, Perfume, Remove Fetus\*, Stun, Tanglefoot.

*Communication:* Compel Truth, Dream Sending, Message, Mind-Sending, Soul Rider.

*Earth:* Create Earth, Entombment, Essential Earth, Flesh to Stone, Summon Earth Elemental.

*Enchantment:* Amulet, Attune, Cornucopia, Ensorescel, Impression Blocker, Power, Resist Enchantment, Spell Arrow, Weapon Spirit, Wish.

*Fire:* Burning Touch, Exploding Fireball, Fire Cloud, Flaming Weapon, Summon Fire Elemental.

*Food:* Distill, Wizard Mouth.

*Gate:* Accelerate Time, Plane Shift, Seek Gate, Slow Time.

*Healing:* Instant Neutralize Poison, Remove Fetus\*, Resist Poison, Restore Hearing, Restore Memory, Restore Sight, Restore Speech, Suspended Animation.

*Illusion:* Perfect Illusion.

*Knowledge:* Air Vision, History, Know Location, Know True Shape, Metal Vision, Wizard Mouth.

*Light:* Continual Mage Light, Hide, Invisibility, Sunlight.

*Making and Breaking:* Copy, Mystic Mark, Reshape, Ruin, Soilproof, Stiffen.

*Meta-Spell:* Charge Powerstone, False Aura, Great Ward, Hang Spell, Link, Remove Aura, Scryfool, Spell Shield, Suspend Magery, Suspend Magic.

*Mind:* Berserker, Dream Sending, Drunkenness, Emotion Control, Enthral, False Memory, Loyalty, Madness, Mass Sleep, Nightmare, Peaceful Sleep, Terror.

*Movement:* Dancing Object, Distant Blow, Great Haste, Lockmaster, Manipulate, Pull, Remove Fetus\*, Repel, Swim, Undo, Winged Knife.

*Necromancy:* Command Spirit, Materialize, Repel Spirits, Skull-Spirit, Steal Energy, Zombie.

*Plant:* Animate Plant, Blight, Blossom, Conceal, Essential Wood, Plant Sense, Tangle Growth, Walk Through Plants, Wither Plant.

*Protection:* Catch Missile, Coolness, Force Wall, Protect Animal, Reflect Gaze, Resist Lightning, Resist Poison, Resist Water, Reverse Missiles, Umbrella.

*Sound:* Concussion, Message, Wizard Mouth.

*Technology:* Create Fuel, Identify Plastic, Lend Power, Metal Vision, Radiation Jet, Sequence DNA\*, Shape Plastic, Spectrum Vision, Stop Power.

*Water:* Body of Water, Boil Water, Breathe Air, Breathe Water, Coolness, Create Acid, Current, Dehydrate, Distill, Dry Spring, Essential Water, Fog, Freeze, Ice Slick, Ice Sphere, Icy Missiles, Icy Touch, Rain of Acid, Resist Water, Snow, Snow Shoes, Swim, Tide, Umbrella, Walk on Water, Water Jet, Water Vision, Waves, Whirlpool.

*Weather:* Cool, Current, Fog, Resist Lightning, Snow, Tide, Waves.

## SL5

*Air:* Lightning, Summon Air Elemental, Wind.

*Animal:* Repel Hybrids.

*Body:* Alter Body, Ambidexterity, Balance, Boost Dexterity, Cadence, Hold Breath, Lengthen Limb, Nauseate, Paralyze Limb, Reflexes, Resist Pain, Roundabout, Sickness, Thirst.

*Communication:* Communication, Compel Lie, Control Person, Dispel Possession, Dream Projection, Gift of Letters, Gift of Tongues, Lend Skill, Mind-Search.

*Earth:* Control Earth Elemental, Earthquake, Purify Earth, Sand Jet, Steelwraith, Stone Missile.

*Enchantment:* Adjustable Clothing, Blank Spell Arrow, Crystal Ball, Dancing Shield, Dancing Weapon, Defending Shield, Defending Weapon, Quick-Aim, Speed Spell Arrow.

*Fire:* Control Fire Elemental, Flaming Armor, Flaming Missiles.

*Food:* Thirst.

*Gate:* Beacon, Scry Gate, Trace Teleport.

*Healing:* Cleansing, Healing Slumber.

*Illusion:* Control Illusion, Inscribe, Phantom.

*Knowledge:* Ancient History, Divination, Echoes of the Past, Invisible Wizard Eye, Plastic Vision, Wizard Hand.

*Light:* Continual Sunlight, See Invisible, Sunbolt.

*Making and Breaking:* Animate Object, Inscribe, Knot, Repair, Shatter, Transparency, Weapon Self.

*Meta-Spell:* Displace Spell, Drain Magery, Pentagram, Spell Wall, Spellguard.

*Mind:* Avoid, Command, Compel Lie, Dream Projection, Lure, Sickness, Suggestion, Will Lock.

*Movement:* Beacon, Cloud-Walking, Long March, Trace Teleport, Wizard Hand.

*Necromancy:* Animate Shadow, Animation, Bind Spirit, Control Zombie, Mass Zombie, Solidify, Soul Jar, Steal Vigor, Steal Vitality, Turn Zombie, Zombie Summoning.

*Plant:* Create Plant, Plant Control, Plant Form, Purify Earth, Rejuvenate Plant, Walk Through Wood.

*Protection:* Resist Acid, Return Missile, Utter Dome.

*Sound:* Echoes of the Past, Invisible Wizard Ear, Scribe, Silver Tongue.

*Technology:* Body of Metal, Conduct Power, Manipulate DNA\*, Plastic Vision, Propel.

*Water:* Create Ice, Create Spring, Create Steam, Frostbite, Hail, Ice Dagger, Melt Ice, Resist Acid, Snow Jet, Steam Jet, Summon Water Elemental, Walk Through Water.

*Weather:* Cloud-Walking, Hail, Lightning, Wind.

## SL6

*Air:* Air Vortex, Ball of Lightning, Body of Wind, Control Air Elemental, Explosive Lightning, Lightning Stare, Lightning Whip, Sandstorm, Shocking Touch, Spark Cloud, Spark Storm, Storm, Wall of Lightning.

*Animal:* Permanent Beast Possession.

*Body:* Gauntness, Retch, Sensitize, Strike Numb, Total Paralysis, Transfer Pregnancy\*, Transform Body, Weaken Blood.

*Communication:* Borrow Skill, Insignificance, Presence, Retrogression, Telepathy.

*Earth:* Alter Terrain, Mud Jet, Rain of Stones, Sandstorm, Stone to Flesh, Volcano.

*Enchantment:* Ghost Weapon, Golem, Great Wish, Homunculus.

*Fire:* Breathe Fire.

*Food:* Monk's Banquet, Scents of the Past.

*Gate:* Control Gate, Planar Visit, Plane Shift Other, Suspend Time, Time Out.

*Healing:* Halt Aging, Major Healing.

*Illusion:* Dispel Illusion, Duplicate.

*Knowledge:* Astral Vision, Images of the Past, Prehistory, Recall, Reconstruct Spell, Scents of the Past, Schematic.

*Light:* Body of Shadow, Images of the Past.

*Making and Breaking:* Fasten, Mapmaker, Sharpen, Shatterproof.

*Meta-Spell:* Lend Spell, Maintain Spell, Suspend Mana.

*Mind:* Charm, Glib Tongue, Hallucination, Mass Suggestion, Mindlessness, Oath, Permanent Forgetfulness, Permanent Madness, Recall, Vigil.

*Movement:* Air Vortex, Cloud-Vaulting, Ethereal Body, Flight, Flying Ransom Carpet, Transfer Pregnancy\*.

*Necromancy:* Affect Spirits, Astral Block, Astral Vision, Entrap Spirit, Pestilence, Slow Healing, Steal Dexterity, Steal Might, Steal Wisdom, Weaken Blood.

*Plant:* Body of Wood, Plant Speech.

*Protection:* Iron Arm, Utter Wall.

*Sound:* Musical Scribe.

*Technology:* Alter Nanovirus\*, Awaken Computer, Body of Plastic, Extinguish Radiation, Machine Control, Schematic.

*Water:* Acid Ball, Acid Jet, Condense Steam, Control Water Elemental, Mud Jet, Storm.

*Weather:* Ball of Lightning, Cloud-Vaulting, Explosive Lightning, Lightning Stare, Lightning Whip, Shocking Touch, Spark Cloud, Spark Storm, Storm, Wall of Lightning.

*Wizards don't power spells directly! When a mage throws a lightning bolt (for instance), he opens a channel that lets him perceive the ambient flow of oz particles, then creates a template that shapes this energy into a specific form.*

*– GURPS Technomancy*

## SL7

*Air:* Body of Lightning, Lightning Armor, Lightning Weapon, Phlogiston Discharge†.

*Animal:* Great Shapeshift, Partial Shapeshifting.

*Body:* Decapitation, Strike Barren, Wither Limb.

*Communication:* Possession.

*Earth:* Adamant Missile‡, Create Earth Elemental, Partial Petrification.

*Enchantment:* Create Chimera\*, Lich, Soul Stone.

*Fire:* Body of Flames, Burning Death, Create Fire Elemental, Hellfire Orb‡.

*Gate:* Divert Teleport, Phase.

*Healing:* Cure Disease, Cure Radiation, Restoration, Stop Paralysis.

*Illusion:* Create Object.

*Knowledge:* Summon Shade.

*Making and Breaking:* Disintegrate, Explode, Rive, Toughen.

*Meta-Spell:* Drain Mana, Restore Mana, Steal Spell.

*Mind:* Ecstasy, Lesser Geas.

*Movement:* Divert Teleport, Hawk Flight.

*Necromancy:* Burning Death, Lich, Stop Healing, Strike Barren.

*Plant:* Arboreal Immurement, Body of Slime, Plant Form Other.

*Technology:* Breathe Radiation, Cure Radiation, Glitch, Machine Possession, Machine Summoning, Steal Power.

*Water:* Body of Ice, Geyser, Rain of Ice Daggers, Stygian Ice Sphere†.

*Weather:* Body of Lightning, Lightning Armor, Lightning Weapon.

## SL8

*Air:* Create Air Elemental, Lightning Missiles, Phlogiston Arc†, Phlogiston Detonation†, Phlogiston Sphere†, Phlogiston Stare†, Phlogiston Touch†.

*Body:* Agonize, Corpulence, Deathtouch, Enlarge, Shrink, Transform Other, Warp Fetus\*.

*Communication:* Machine Speech.

*Earth:* Adamant Hail†, Body of Stone, Flesh to Adamant†, Orichalcum Edge†, Orichalcum Missiles†.

*Enchantment:* Doppelgänger, Hideaway, Simulacrum, Wraith.

*Fire:* Explosive Hellfire Orb†, Hellfire Breath†, Hellfire Jet†, Hellfire Rain†.

*Gate:* Create Gate, Phase Other, Teleport.

*Healing:* Great Healing, Relieve Paralysis, Youth.

*Illusion:* Create Animal.

*Making and Breaking:* Rebuild.

*Meta-Spell:* Catch Spell, Void Bolt†.

*Mind:* Enslave.

*Movement:* Teleport.

*Necromancy:* Evisceration, Rotting Death, Steal Beauty, Steal Skill, Wraith.

*Technology:* Draw Power, Machine Speech, Rebuild.

*Water:* Breathe Steam, Create Water Elemental, Flesh to Ice, Icy Breath, Stygian Cold†, Stygian Ice Dagger†, Stygian Touch†.

*Weather:* Lightning Missiles.

## SL9

*Communication:* Permanent Possession.

*Enchantment:* Leak.

*Gate:* Blink, Create Door, Hide Object, Sanctuary, Teleport Shield.

*Healing:* Instant Restoration, Regeneration.

*Illusion:* Control Creation, Create Servant.

*Meta-Spell:* Throw Spell.

*Mind:* Great Geas, Great Hallucination.

*Movement:* Blink.

*Necromancy:* Age.

*Protection:* Teleport Shield.

*Technology:* Animate Machine, Malfunction, Permanent Machine Possession.

*Water:* Spit Acid.

## SL10

*Body:* Enlarge Other, Shrink Other, Transmogrification.

*Communication:* Switch Bodies.

*Earth:* Move Terrain.

*Gate:* Blink Other, Teleport Other, Timeport.

*Illusion:* Create Mount, Create Warrior, Dispel Creation.

*Making and Breaking:* Transform Object.

*Meta-Spell:* Telecast.

*Movement:* Blink Other, Teleport Other.

*Necromancy:* Steal Youth.

*Water:* Alkahest Sphere†, Essential Acid.

*A novice asked the master: "I have a program that sometime runs and sometimes aborts. I have followed the rules of programming, yet I am totally baffled. What is the reason for this?"*

*The master replied: "You are confused because you do not understand Tao. Only a fool expects rational behavior from his fellow humans. Why do you expect it from a machine that humans have constructed? Computers simulate determinism; only Tao is perfect.*

*"The rules of programming are transitory; only Tao is eternal. Therefore you must contemplate Tao before you receive enlightenment."*

*"But how will I know when I have received enlightenment?" asked the novice.*

*"Your program will then run correctly," replied the master.*

*– Geoffrey James, **The Tao of Programming***

## SL11

*Gate:* Rapid Journey, Timeport Other, Timeslip, Timeslip Other.

*Healing:* Instant Regeneration.

*Making and Breaking:* Contract Object, Extend Object.

*Movement:* Rapid Journey.

*Water:* Alkahest Jet†, Rain of Alkahest†, Spit Alkahest†.

## SL12

*Healing:* Resurrection.

*Making and Breaking:* Enlarge Object, Shrink Object.

*Necromancy:* Resurrection.

## INVENTING NEW SPELLS

A game with a limited sorcery level will have a lot of parallels to games with a limited tech level. The TL and SL both help to define what the society is like – what their capabilities are, and what their interests may be. A TL2 society with advanced (TL3) weapons may also have achieved SL3 with advanced (SL4) Fire magic.

The parallels with technology also reach to the concept of new inventions and gadgeteering. For anyone attempting to invent spells that have not yet been discovered by their society, use the rules on pp. B473-474 with a few modifications. All invention attempts should require at least two skill rolls: Thaumatology and one other skill indicative of the new spell's college.

*Example:* Ariadne, a mage in Knossos (SL4), wants to develop the Flight spell (SL5). She already knows Levitation, Jump, and Winged Knife. The GM determines that the mage must roll against the lower of Levitation or Thaumatology in order to invent the new spell.

Remember that all of the prerequisites of the new spell must be possessed by the inventor. The complexity of the new spell should never be Simple, but it may be Average, depending on how different it is from its prerequisite spells and other spells that the inventor knows. Any spell that is more than one sorcery level above what the inventor has used is impossible for that mage to discover yet.

The GM determines that Flight is very similar to Levitation, though it is a Very Hard spell and requires Magery 2. The GM sets the complexity level for this invention as Average. If Ariadne did not know Winged Knife or any other SL4 Movement spells, the GM would be justified in ruling Flight to be a Complex invention for her. If she had never even seen

an SL4 Movement spell cast, the invention of Flight would have an Amazing complexity.

The modifiers to the concept roll are similar to those for technological inventions. The +5 for copying a working model equates to having witnessed the desired spell being cast by another wizard; use +2 for a mage who is aware that the spell exists, but has not seen it cast. Apply a -5 penalty if the spell does not yet exist anywhere on the inventor's world. A critical failure on the concept roll will seem to be a success, but any attempt to cast the resulting spell will automatically entail a magical critical failure!

The prototype roll is the inventor's attempt to cast the new spell. A critical failure here should be somewhat more impressive than a standard magical critical failure. A critical success on the prototype roll results in the new spell in its final form. A standard success means the spell is less than ideal, but still usable.

Minor bugs in the spell should be similar to nuisance or irritating effects: The caster's skin itches for a short time after the casting, or he suffers from Hard of Hearing during the effects of a spell. Major bugs are much more dangerous: The caster Frightens Animals for twice the duration of a maintainable spell, or he begins suffocating (p. B436) as long as the spell is maintained. See *Magical Bugs* (above) for more examples.

*Example:* Ariadne of Knossos has all of the prerequisites (Average complexity) and is aware that the Flight spell exists (+2) in a secret of a coven of witches. She has Thaumatology 19 and Levitation-18, so her concept roll is  $18 - 10 + 2 = 10$ . The GM rolls in secret and declares that the mage may proceed to the prototype stage. The mage must spend 2d days and \$100,000 to create an average complexity prototype spell formula; at the end of this time, the GM rolls for its success in secret. The GM reveals that the prototype is successful, but has two major bugs and three minor bugs.

Major bugs: The caster will take 1 HP of cold damage per second while the spell is in effect, and the caster suffers retching (p. B429) for 10 seconds after the spell ends. Minor bugs: The subject of the spell suffers nausea for the spell's duration, the caster's skin takes on a blue tint for the spell's duration and 6d hours afterward, and each subject must make a Fright check at -5 the first time the spell is cast on them. But other than those problems, the Flight spell works just fine.

### Magical Bugs

Listed here are some magical bugs for the GM to choose from when incomplete success is determined in the invention of a new spell.

#### *Examples of Minor Bugs*

- Any of the irritating effects from p. B428 (euphoria, nausea, pain, etc.), which may last a few minutes beyond the spell duration.
- Any Supernatural Feature (p. B157) or other -5- to -10-point disadvantage that affects the caster for the duration of the spell and up to a few minutes afterward, or a new Quirk or Unnatural Feature (p. B22) that lasts for an extended time (hours to weeks).
- A larger than expected loss of Fatigue or Energy Reserve, which is replenished at normal rates (see p. B427).

#### *Examples of Major Bugs*

- Any of the incapacitating effects in pp. B428-429 (agony, daze, paralysis, etc.), which may last a few minutes beyond the spell duration.
- Any -5- to -15-point disadvantage that affects the caster for an extended duration (hours to weeks), or any more severe disadvantage that applies only for a few seconds or minutes.
- Any loss of Hit Points or attributes, which are regained at normal healing rates (see p. B424).

## TECHNOMAGIC

Technological progress and sorcery levels will very likely have some influence on one another. For example, the discovery of radiation will allow for the discovery of radiation spells, while the development of Earth to Stone could spur the advancement of stoneworking and metalworking techniques. More significantly, in societies with both magic and technology, researchers may find ways to combine them to create impressive synergies.

*All programmers are optimists. Perhaps this modern sorcery especially attracts those who believe in happy endings and fairy godmothers. Perhaps the hundreds of nitty frustrations drive away all but those who habitually focus on the end goal. Perhaps it is merely that computers are young, programmers are younger, and the young are always optimists. But however the selection process works, the result is indisputable: "This time it will surely run," or "I just found the last bug."*

– Frederick P. Brooks, Jr., *The Mythical Man Month*

For example, bodkin-point arrows (p. B277) enchanted with Penetrating Weapon will have an armor divisor of (4) or better, greatly reducing the effectiveness of any sort of armor (including the Fortify enchantment). Likewise, Levitation may make lighter-than-air flight much more economical than would be possible without such magical assistance.

## ADVANTAGES OF HIGH SORCERY LEVELS

As technology advances, new technological devices are developed. At the same time, new techniques make older technologies more efficient (see *GURPS Low-Tech*, p. 20, for example). The same sort of increasing efficiencies to spells from older sorcery levels can be applied to spells as sorcery levels advance.

It is likely that Enchantment (*GURPS Magic*, pp. 6-18) – developed in SL2 – becomes industrialized by SL5. Industrial enchantment could entail several improvements: Each “mage-day” could add additional energy per SL above SL4 (e.g., each mage-day counts as 1.2 energy at SL5; 1.4 at SL6; 1.7 at SL7; 2.1 at SL8; 2.5 at SL9; 3.0 at SL10; 3.6 at SL11; and 4.3 at SL12). Slow and Sure enchantments should be less subject to failures and critical failures as SL improves, perhaps in the same manner that firearms do not jam as frequently as their construction techniques improve. By SL6, anyone who knows the Enchant spell can participate in the enchanting of any magic item by the Slow and Sure method regardless of whether he knows the spell being enchanted. These improvements should combine to greatly reduce the cost of magic items in a SL5 or higher society. The costs of magic items should be proportional to the number of mage-days required, though somewhat lower if enchanters are more common and critical failures are more rare.

The casting of individual spells outside the Enchantment college should improve as well. A spell cast by a wizard at least three sorcery levels higher than the spell’s SL could have one of the following improvements.

- Regular spells use the *Size and Speed/Range Table* (p. B550) for determining range penalties.
- A critical spell failure becomes a normal failure unless a 15+ is rolled on a confirmation check.
- Spells (except Melee or Blocking spells) may have their energy costs reduced by one.

At the GM’s discretion, an additional benefit may accrue for every three sorcery levels above the spell’s introduction.

*Example:* Light Jet is a regular spell discovered in SL2. In an SL5 society, casters may be able to use the spell for a single energy point and maintain it for free, and a ring with the spell enchanted might only take 167 mage-days to make, rather than 200. In an SL8 society, the improved Light Jet spell would not only be maintainable for free, but would also be less subject to critical spell failures, and enchanting the spell into a ring would only take 95 mage-days.

These ideas make every spell a separate skill for each sorcery level in which it exists. Such a spell would be written “Apportation/SL3”. A character from an SL4 society could cast the less advanced version at -1 to their Apportation/SL4 skill. The same caster would have a -5 penalty to casting Apportation/SL5, however (see p. B168).

## COMPETITION BEGETS INTRIGUE

In the same way that Edison and Tesla competed to popularize their versions of mass electrical power, two wizards or schools of wizards could compete to popularize their own versions of a Flying Carpet spell. In a mature SL5 society, two academies of researchers have each developed a buggy version of that spell. One academy’s version has a handful of minor bugs (including costing the caster 1d extra fatigue at each casting). The other has only a single major bug – it knocks the caster unconscious on any successful casting. The spell is so useful that mages are clamoring to learn even a buggy Flying Carpet spell. The PCs could be hired by one or another side of the competition to try to spy or sabotage the other. Any group with a monopoly on a bug-free Flying Carpet spell will wind up with a lot of money, so the adventurers will not be the only ones trying to interfere with the process.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David Lichtenstein has been a role-player since 1979 and a devoted fan of *GURPS* since 1991. His gaming library is gradually taking over his house, but he foolishly thinks this is a good thing. He is married to another gamer, and he works as a professional sign-language interpreter in the Washington, D.C. area to help support their two cats and his addiction to gaming books. The prognosis for his addiction seems terminal since he refuses to admit he has a problem.

# REAL WEIRD BOOKS

BY REBECCA SEIDEL

You love magic. Your friends love magic. Everyone loves magic. That's why you're running a campaign that's all about magic, right? The trouble with magic, though, is that your erstwhile magicians have to learn their spells from *somewhere*, and making up your own magic books can start to get monotonous at about the fifth garbled Latin title and mysterious (or dubious) historical origin.

Never fear! To circumvent the untold horrors of magic-book-creation burnout, here is a selection of real (and strange) magical books from throughout the history of the Western world. They're interesting, they're fun to read, they're chock full of spells for things that you wouldn't necessarily want a spell for, they're in English (mostly) – and, crucially, they're free. All of these books are available for free online, due to their advanced age or by choice of the authors, either from the Internet Sacred Texts Archive ([sacred-texts.com](http://sacred-texts.com)) or from the Twilit Grotto Esoteric Archives ([esotericarchives.com](http://esotericarchives.com)). Many are also in print, because they're classics, and can be found at your local library or through interlibrary loan.

Please note that this is nowhere near a complete listing. It only touches on a few books from North America and Europe; there are vast numbers of other occult books to read, in other languages and from other places.

## REALLY OLD BOOKS: 1800 AND EARLIER

*Of Occult Philosophy*, Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa (Twilit Grotto). Agrippa is one of the grandfathers of Western occultism, and this three-volume epic is his Britannica. If you're interested in the great classics of European magic, this is where to go. He covers *everything*, from astrology to the creation of magical rings and perfumes (yes, perfumes) to the summoning and identification of various spirits. There is also a fourth book, *Of Magical Ceremonies*, which is of somewhat dubious provenance, but *does* have a chapter on necromancy.

*The Magus*, Francis Barrett (Sacred Texts). This is listed next because much of it is plagiarized from Agrippa. Barrett also discusses other subjects, such as sympathetic magic and the Qabala. At the end of his book, he includes a respectable little bibliography of other great occult writers.

*The Divine Pymander*, Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus (Sacred Texts). A great deal of this is philosophy, not magical instruction. It's one of the most important texts of the Hermetica, a body of literature reputed to relate the magic of

ancient Egypt. The Hermetica remained popular through Victorian times, and are still studied today.

*Coelum Philosophorum* and other works, Paracelsus (Sacred Texts). Paracelsus was one of the great students of alchemy. Alchemy was famously concerned with immortality and gold, but getting there involved all kinds of fun medieval chemistry and astrology. The other writings available on the Sacred Texts archive include an Alchemical Catechism, which is a great run-down of the subject.

### *Extra Credit for the Enterprising GM*

The full works of John Dee, the court magician of Queen Elizabeth I, are not available online, but excerpts can be found on the Twilit Grotto, and full texts should be available through your local library. Dee studied alchemy and supposedly communicated with angels through an intermediary, Edward Kelley. He even learned their language, Enochian, which he wrote about and which is still studied today – those curious about the modern study of Enochian should ask at a local New Age store. Many of the works of Giordano Bruno – a contemporary of Dee's – are available online, but they're in Latin; if that's not an obstacle, it's well worth it to check him out. Of particular interest is *Ars Memoriae*, where he discusses the detailed mnemonic system used by the Catholic clergy to memorize sermons, and which he modified to work with astrological symbols.

## SPECIAL VICTORIAN CRAZY

Victorian England saw a resurgence of interest in all kinds of magic. As a result, a number of good magic books come from that era, including some very readable translations of older works.

*The Key of Solomon the King* and *The Lesser Key*, S.L. MacGregor Mathers, trans. (Sacred Texts). Of the several translations of the *Keys of Solomon*, these are the easiest to read. The books concentrate primarily on the summoning of spirits and the creation of magical tools. The volumes include detailed information about how magicians should dress, conduct themselves, and supply their workshops. The seals, hexagrams, and other symbols included in the book are fascinating; if nothing else, they make wonderfully atmospheric decorations for your gaming space. Aleister Crowley also collaborated on the translation of the *Lesser Key*.

*The Book of the Sacred Magic of Abramelin the Mage*, S.L. MacGregor Mathers, trans. (Sacred Texts). – The first third of this book, translated from an older French text, is a travelogue about the teller’s quest for magical instruction. The teller ends up in Egypt, where he meets the mage of the title. The rest of the book is the actual instruction, focused primarily around the complicated business of summoning and commanding spirits.

*The works of Aleister Crowley*. The one. The only. The “wickedest man in Europe,” or at least that was what he claimed. Some of his books aren’t available online, but the Sacred Texts Archive has a lot of them, categorized under Thelema, the philosophy he espoused.

## **(RELATIVELY) MODERN: FROM 1901 TO THE PRESENT**

*The Golden Bough*, Sir James George Fraser (Sacred Texts). This is not a book of magic, but a lengthy anthropological text, one of the classics of Western anthropology. It’s concerned with magical and religious practice worldwide. It’s worth reading as much for Fraser’s discussion of spells as for the spells themselves. It’s also *immense*; those who want to read the whole thing may consider getting a copy from the library.

*The Gardnerian Book of Shadows*, Gerald Gardner (Sacred Texts). Gerald Gardner was one of the forerunners of the modern Wicca movement. His *Book of Shadows* is a good place to start for those interested in modern magical practice. It’s certainly not the only view of things, but it might provide a refreshing change from the books previously mentioned. Among other ideas, he instructs practitioners to do their magic naked, as opposed to dressed in elaborate vestments.

*The Internet Book of Shadows* (Sacred Texts). Not a book, this is an enormous compilation of newsgroup postings about modern Paganism of all stripes. Whether you want a magical wedding ceremony, Celtic seasonal celebrations, or an essay on shamanism, this is the place to go.

## **WHAT TO DO WITH THIS LIST**

So now you’ve got five or six browser tabs open with books that look interesting to you. What are you going to do with your glorious bounty of magical classics?

The easiest thing is to find spells in your new books that you could apply to your campaign. Maybe what your merry band of magicians really needs is a spell to keep a hunter from bringing down any game (a real spell in *Key of Solomon*), or a list of summonable spirits from Qabalist and Gnostic lore, or precise instructions on determining what house Mars is in so that its influence won’t interfere when they make the Elixir of Immortality.

However, few of these books just cover specific spells. Most of the volumes are intended as instructional texts, and explain the basic principles of the systems that they teach with the intent that the student should do some work independently. It’s a wonderful basis for creating your own magical ceremonies,

especially if you also enlist the help of a Latin-English dictionary to make it sound really authentic. If you’re feeling really inspired, you could even get a complete magical system out of it.

Adventures can even be structured around the books themselves, or the lives of their authors. Aleister Crowley went out of his way to offend and infuriate people. What if some wizened Victorian sorcerer is still holding a grudge, and intends to take it out on anyone who reminds him of his enemy? Giordano Bruno was burned at the stake as a heretic. Perhaps he hid away his *really* heretical work before his execution, with the intent that someone (e.g., the heroes) should find it later and carry on his legacy. *Of Magical Ceremonies*, supposedly Agrippa’s fourth book of occult philosophy, showed up 30 years after his death, and is probably a fake. However, maybe a real fourth book is out there, stashed away in the walls of some decaying house until it gets unearthed by renovators.

Then there’s a wealth of possibilities for secret unexpurgated editions, museum thefts by unscrupulous practitioners of magic, and original manuscripts with exciting marginalia. Players can find ideas for items they’d like their characters to add to their collections, while the GM has a source of adventure ideas.

This list is only a small sample of what’s available for you to use if you spend an hour or three online. Every book of magic listed was at one time studied seriously by scholars in pursuit of mystical mastery. They can lend a touch of historical authenticity to your game, while giving you a break from world-building.

## **Further Reading: Non-Free Books**

While these aren’t available online, they may well be available from the local library. They’re worth the effort to find them.

The *Ægypt Cycle* (*The Solitudes*, *Dæmonomania*, *Love & Sleep*, and *Endless Things*), John Crowley. These books are straight fiction, but they have their fair share of magical history in them. They follow both an academic in the present day whose reading leads him to research the Hermetica, and the lives of Giordano Bruno and John Dee, including documented events and some fanciful and fascinating elaboration. Whichever parts you prefer, there’s a lot to think about in them.

*The Club Dumas*, Arturo Perez-Revert. This book was the basis for the Johnny Depp movie *The Ninth Gate*. It’s almost nothing like the movie, but it’s all about rare books and secret societies, which are a worthy addition to any modern-day magical campaign. It’s an awfully fun read, too.

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Rebecca Seidel is currently in graduate school learning to be a librarian, when she’s not in her apartment teaching herself how to be a wizard. She lives in southern New Hampshire with her fiancé, two degus, a Goth Egyptologist, fifteen Tarot decks, three different sets of dice, and more books than she can conveniently count. Unfortunately, she does not yet own a robe or wizard hat, but she can make a mean plate of nachos, which sometimes seems like magic.

# RANDOM THOUGHT TABLE

## A BOX LABELED: TO PANDORA

BY STEVEN MARSH, *PYRAMID* EDITOR

For a while, I ran an *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* game. The presence of the “Advanced” should give a clue that it was a while ago, and it was – indeed – a Second Edition game . . . back when that was the newest version.

I wanted to do something different from the standard hack-and-slash that many used game system for. Instead, I went for a more character-oriented, “White Wolf”-style version of the game. Combat still happened, but it was once or twice an adventure rather than a nonstop mélange of melee.

During character creation, I explained the premise: There is “magic user”-style magic, but it’s very, very rare, because it’s so corruptive. Likewise, magic items are incredibly rare; most people go their whole lives without ever seeing one. Divine magic is fine – perhaps even commonplace – and there’s a powerful Church (which seems decent enough) that’s the primary source of its practitioners. So (I explained), if anyone wanted to have access to magic, you’d need to come up with a good in-story justification . . . and, in doing so, I’d explain a bit more about what he knew about magic.

One of my players took me up on that offer with his hero.

That campaign didn’t last as long as I would have liked (do they ever?), but it was memorable, and the players had a good time. The fledgling adventurers even traveled to the ethereal plane on their first adventure . . . or, more correctly, a lavishly decorated, madman-owned warehouse with a giant banner inside that read “ETHERAEL [sic] PLANE.” It burned down.

Here, then, are some magic-related thoughts from that campaign.

### SOMETIMES A CIGAR . . .

That seemingly good monolithic Church? It was just that – exactly as it seemed (more or less). There may have been pockets of intrigue or corruption within it, but my intention at the onset was to have it be what it appeared on the tin.

For the players, this was a slightly infuriating decision. I had sold them this campaign as a *Babylon 5*-esque city-based campaign of intrigue and secrets. So obviously the monolithic Church must have something really interesting it’s hiding, right?

Well, no . . . not really.

Sure, they had a very hardline *inquisitive* (ahem) view of non-holy magic. Beyond that, they seemed otherwise legit.

Since it’s nearly impossible to prove the *absence* of ulterior motives or conspiracy, the seeming lack of malice or internal conflict was frustrating (in a good way) to the players.

In my mind, sometimes the most surprising thing you can do is have things be *exactly* what they seem. I could’ve dangled the “seemingly innocent Church is actually innocent” red herring for a long time.

Of course, once the players had finally grown convinced of the Church’s innocence . . . well, maybe something Big and Sinister *might* have infiltrated it in the future.

### SHE BLINDED ME . . . WITH ACID ARROW!

The player who decided he wanted his hero to have access to nonclerical magic gave me a good reason (privately), and I allowed it. This meant that I also got to reveal to him the secret.

As prelude, remember that this was otherwise a “vanilla” *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* campaign, rules-wise. Clerics needed to rest and pray to recover their spells each day, and all spellcasters had a limited number of slots and spells, which needed to be preselected.

Or so the players assumed.

In fact (as the one player discovered), nonclerical magic was *unlimited*; provided the other requirements were met (including any spell components), spells could be cast as often as desired. They were – loosely – “science”: If I witnessed you chanting some words and waving your hands to cause a ball of fire to emerge, and I could mimic those words and movements myself, I could shoot my own ball of fire . . . as many flying infernos as I wanted, provided I wanted to keep chanting and waving my hands.

Suddenly the player realized why the monolithic Church was as keen on suppressing magic as it was. If any observant five-year-old can summon city-burning goutts of flame by imitating the guy in the pointy hat, their vigilance makes sense.

I achieved some game balance by ensuring the PC didn't have too many initial spells. (As I recall he could unlock doors and fall weightlessly – neither of which breaks anything if he could do them as often as he wanted.) However, even if he had eventually discovered some more potent spells, I think this would still have been balanced: “You have this awesome ability that no one else does . . . and if anyone else discovers the secret, the world might be changed forever. Oh, and if the Powers That Be catch you using it, they'll mercilessly hunt you down and kill you.” This is especially true because combat wasn't the focus of the campaign; the ability to rain down unlimited fireballs doesn't help with most friendly diplomatic negotiations.

The player only ever ended up casting one of his spells once during the campaign. He used it to unlock a door . . . having first requested privacy and then hitting the door with a metal hammer (trying to muffle the verbal components of the spell). None of the other heroes were any the wiser.

Even though it never came up in the campaign, I always had the option to revisit the “conventional wisdom” that the reason such magic was banned was that it was corruptive and evil.

## UH, OH . . . IT'S MAGIC!

Lots of gaming columnists have no doubt advised you not to overdo it with magic items. Consider this one more echo of that.

(Ahem.) Don't give out too many magic items.

There. I've done my part.

On to the interesting bit.

In this campaign, I stressed how rare magic items were, and greatly limited the number of them in the world.

Then one of the heroes found an item that seemed like it *might* be magic. She immediately hid it, of course (no sense letting her teammates know she found something interesting), but after that, she didn't know what to do with it.

“Do I put the ring on?”

“I don't know; do you?”

“. . . What will happen?”

“You won't know unless you put the ring on.”

“What if it's something *bad*?!”

“Well, then, I guess you'll need to deal with it.”

“Do I have any way of telling what it would do without putting it on?”

“I don't know; do you?”

“I don't think so . . .”

“Me neither.”

It was a delicious conundrum for a timid character (and player). Not only was magic rare enough that there was no SOP for how to deal with it – outside of calling the Church and saying, “Burn it!!” – there was none of the expected infrastructure for how one *might* deal with a random magic item. No “detect magic” spells or abilities, no sage in a tower waiting to be paid for info . . . nothing. Since magic items were taboo to discuss, she couldn't even try to pay a patsy to put it on. She ended up pocketing it, and the campaign ended before she dared to sort out what it might have been.

If the PC *had* donned it, she would have discovered that it was in fact a fairly minor magic item (I believe it did something trivial like detect metal). It also would have turned her finger preternaturally – and “permanently” – green where the

ring had been (which may have caused problems with the Church if it ever discovered this).

It was a solid 15 minutes of gut-wrenching gaming caused by the most trifling of magic items . . . and it was all fairly trivial to implement.

- Get rid of the usual “crutches” for figuring out what to do with such items (sages, detection abilities, lore, etc.).

- Ensure the item seems interesting enough that the player wants to figure out what it does, but then . . .

- Make sure the possible penalties for such experimentation are possibly quite bad.

In this case, I had ensured that the magic item was interesting enough that if she had discerned its abilities she probably wouldn't have been disappointed . . . but the minor curse – perfectly covered by the ring so long as she would have worn it – may still have caused her some sleepless nights.

*Medicine is magical  
and magical is art*

– Paul Simon,  
“The Boy in  
the Bubble”

## LESSONS IN MAGIC

What insight did I acquire from this approach?

- If something's secret, make sure there's a good reason for why it's secret.

- Players love being “in” on the secret – doubly so if they feel like they're the gatekeepers of that lore.

- Playing off the players' assumptions for how the world works can go a long way toward making magic truly magical.

In my whole approach to this campaign, I was trying to come up with that flavor of magic I remembered from the *Lord of the Rings*: a potential tool for good (or evil) that was fundamentally alien and scary. Even if your side has it, it still feels terrible and terrifying.

Given how I instilled an atmosphere of near-paranoia using only a zealous Church, a trifling magic ring, and an unlock-doors spell, I think I succeeded. The players certainly had a good time . . .

## 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 10 years; during that time, he has won four Origins awards. He lives in Indiana with his wife, Nikola Vrtis, and their son.

# ODDS AND ENDS

## QUIRK AND DIRTY

Giving otherwise-beneficial magic items a quirk or flaw goes a long way toward enhancing the “anything can happen” appeal of enchanted items. They might also be a by-product of magic-item enchantment (especially by mages who make less-than-stellar rolls). Here, then, are a few ideas for how you can add some personality to your sparklies.

- The magic item gives a quirk-level Delusion for as long as the item is held or worn. The user may even *know* that the item bestows the Delusion, but is still unable to disbelieve it. This can lead to interesting situations where the wielder can decide whether having a touch of “crazy” would be detrimental: “I’m about to put on the life-sensing helm; if it’s going to be bad that I believe the world is flat, rip the thing off my head!”

- The magic item can only be wielded in an off-hand. If the user is ambidextrous, the item can only be wielded by foot (or other inconvenient appendage).

- The magic ring likes variety; it needs to be moved to a different finger (or elsewhere) every day, or it starts losing efficacy.

- The object generates annoying levels of static electricity. Doorknobs become the wielder’s mortal enemies.

- Within an hour of the item’s usage (or once per hour of the item’s usage for constantly equipped items), the wielder says a nonsensical or inappropriate metaphor, like a cat trying to paw a mouse at the bottom of a vase.

- So long as the item is in the character’s immediate possession, his views of what is “attractive” are radically different; this doesn’t change orientation (or other core desires), but it may lead a hero who normally prefers tall, quiet blondes to find himself drawn to stocky, strong-willed redheads. (This can be especially awkward since intimacy often requires removing items from one’s possession . . .)

- Each day this constantly equipped item is worn, the user’s sense of time shifts by one minute. (Thus, if it’s equipped for an entire year, the wearer’s sense of time will be six hours out of phase from the world around him.) Removing the item allows his body to reset to normal naturally, similar to overcoming jet lag.

- When no one is looking (about once a day), the item changes significantly: a magic broadsword might become a scimitar, a rune-covered gold band might become a plain diamond ring, a protective cloak might become a jacket, etc.

- Each time the item is used, it removes memories from the wielder of it having been used when the situation is over.

# MURPHY’S RULES

BY GREG HYLAND



“I should get around to using my magic dagger in this battle!” “That’s what you say before every battle, Thog!” It doesn’t remove or alter any other memories and is more annoying than dangerous.

- As long as the hero possesses the item, the most-recent song he heard is stuck in his head. This song can be supplanted by anyone (except the item’s owner) who sings or performs a different song, but it can’t be eliminated entirely.

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