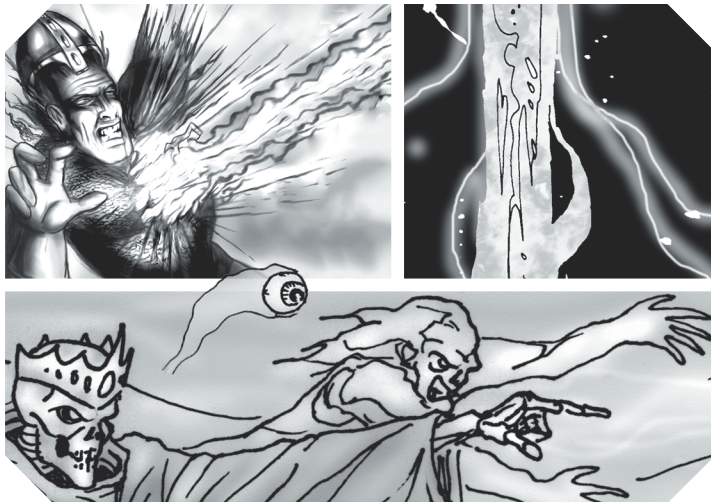


GURPS®

Fourth Edition

MAGIC™

ARTILLERY SPELLS™



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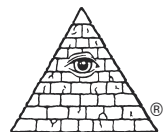
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INTRODUCTION

In a lot of high-powered fantasy gaming (especially *computer* gaming), a key role of magic-wielders is slaughtering hordes of lesser opponents. Slang for magic capable of this – and its users – is “artillery.” It’s easy to see why: Such spells devastate areas and enemies indiscriminately, and though rarely effective against hard targets, particularly “bosses,” they make short work of “cannon fodder.”

Few spells in *GURPS Magic* do this well, however. Many can harm multiple foes, but the damage is too low to penetrate Damage Resistance or to injure quickly enough to turn the tide of battle (e.g., Fire Cloud, Hail, Rain of Acid, Rain of Ice Daggers, Spark Cloud, and Stench), or diminishes too sharply with distance to deliver *effective* “crowd control” (the principal

drawback of Ball of Lightning, Concussion, Explosive Fireball, and Explosive Lightning).

This is by design: If one spellcaster can do the job of a squad of warriors, who’d play a warrior? On the other hand, in a high-points campaign where fighters regularly boast Extra Attacks, Heroic Archer, Weapon Master, sufficient skill for routine Rapid Strikes, and exotic moves like those in *GURPS Martial Arts* and *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 11: Power-Ups* – as well as great gear, such as armor heavy enough to make wading into a mob with Whirlwind Attack (relatively) safe – it can be disappointing to play a wizard who must spend a turn or more concentrating on each opponent.

Fortunately, magic-wielders in such campaigns possess impressive resources of their own – notably high levels of Magery, along with a lot of energy stored in abilities (either FP beyond normal limits or Energy Reserve) and equipment (Powerstones or, in *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy*, power items). *GURPS Magic: Artillery Spells* arms casters with new ways to exploit these assets to deliver fantasy fire support.

To avoid the classic RPG problem of every wizard learning the same few spells – and to provide options for battling all kinds of enemies – this catalog offers numerous ways to blast the battlefield. Savvy casters will learn more than one! And artillery magic isn’t just for the heroes of high-powered fantasy. Many possibilities here suit the arch-villains of lower-powered fantasy (giving adventurers something to fear), malicious cultists in tales of supernatural horror (providing ceremonial castings for protagonists to disrupt), and other NPC adversaries.

Get ready to blow stuff up!

ABOUT GURPS

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Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition*. Page references that begin with B refer to that book, not this one.

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

This supplement requires the *GURPS Basic Set* and *GURPS Magic*. To limit access to artillery magic, the GM might define such spells as the exclusive secrets of particular schools of magic, as defined in *GURPS Thaumatology: Magical Styles* and exemplified in *GURPS Magical Styles: Dungeon Magic*.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sean Punch set out to become a particle physicist in 1985 and ended up as *GURPS* Line Editor in 1995. In that capacity, he has written, edited, or contributed to some 150 *GURPS* releases, revised the game into its fourth edition (2004), and been a regular contributor to *Pyramid* magazine. From 2008, he has served as the lead creator of the *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy* series, which led to his design of the *Dungeon Fantasy Roleplaying Game*, released in 2017. Sean has been a gamer since 1979, but devotes most of his spare time to Argentine tango (and occasionally tending bar). He lives in Montréal.

CHAPTER ONE

THE ART OF ARTILLERY

What makes a spell “artillery” is that it can quickly injure more than one opponent per casting. This admits significant variation.

The spell might have multiple enemies as its subjects, and inflict direct injury on them like a Deathtouch, Dehydrate, or Frostbite spell writ large. The subject may instead be an area, which fills with a noxious substance or energy (similar to a “Rain of” spell). Or the subject could be the *caster*, who is empowered to emanate or hurl something destructive (Explosive Fireball is a prime example) – or even an *item* that radiates a harmful effect.

Some artillery is more insidious. It might mind-control victims into attacking (like a special-purpose Charm spell) or levitate a blade and start slashing (like Winged Knife). In those examples, although people or objects are the subjects, ultimately *weapons* – not magic – are the immediate cause of any damage done.

In all cases, injury is likely to occur in a manner consistent with the spell’s college; e.g., Fire magic burns, whether flames rain down over an area or the caster projects them, while most Movement magic involves kinetic threats, whether it’s victims or objects that hurtle through the air. See *A Congregation of Colleges* (p. 6) for ideas.

The main differences are defenses. Against spells cast directly on subjects, this tends to mean high attributes, Magic Resistance, or suitable countermagic. Against spells that damage via dangerous energies or substances, it may be possible to dive for cover – or to dodge or block – and DR or more-specialized protection (such as Resistant to Poison vs. poison gas) is effective. If the magic is less direct, the counter could be anything; e.g., active defenses against mind-controlled allies. See *The Receiving End* (p. 5) for other thoughts.

In short, there are a lot of possibilities! For the GM interested in exploring these – or the player bent on convincing the GM to allow magical research – some guidelines are in order.

CLASSIFYING YOUR CANNONADE

Certain spell classes are simply *better* for artillery.

Area Spells

Of the 50 spells in this collection, 28 are Area spells, and with good reason: The most obvious

way for a spell to affect many targets is to blanket an area containing them. Write-ups of Area spells need to be clear about a few important considerations.

First, an Area spell might have as its subject *the ground within or space above the area*, which it scourges with some injurious effect. If such a spell has a duration longer than “lasts an instant,” it endures in the area. This means it poses an ongoing threat there, but also that people who leave the area escape it – although they may suffer lasting side effects, like being blinded or set alight.

On the other hand, an Area spell might have as its subjects *the people in the area at the moment the dice are rolled for the casting*; if it’s Resisted, that’s usually the case. If a spell like that endures, there’s no persistent effect in the area. Those who fall prey to it cannot get rid of its effects by leaving the area – they’ll need countermagic – but later arrivals are unaffected.

Next, if the spell is of the kind that affects the people in the area rather than the area proper, the caster can usually leave “holes” for allies (*GURPS Magic*, p. 11). This makes such artillery nicely selective (though if a friend is in close combat with a foe, the wizard must exempt both or neither – on a battle map, the smallest hole is one hex). If that seems too good in the case of a particular spell, state that it doesn’t work that way. Spells that affect the area rather than the people within it don’t normally extend this option; if such artillery *does* allow selectivity, that also needs noting.

Finally, an insidious way to have an Area spell affect lots of people is to have its bad effects somehow spill out of the area. Specify exactly how this works. Examples in this grimoire are Creeping Plague (pp. 10-11), which summons vermin that ride victims out of the area; Flammability (p. 26), which renders subjects’ gear dangerously flammable; Mirror, Mirror (pp. 17-18), which conjures phantoms capable of pursuing subjects far and wide; and Stabbing Party (pp. 20-21), which compels subjects to shoot at or violently rush their allies wherever they may be.

A true “artillery spell” harms many foes with a quick casting.

Regular Spells

The next-best candidates for artillery are Regular spells. These account for 11 of the 50 offerings in Chapter 2. Most have no range; instead, they give the caster a “weapon” with which to attack multiple opponents.

The most obvious such weapon is a “jet” spell so broad that it can blast everyone in a wedge-shaped area. It *might* use *Cone Attacks* (p. B413), as Arctic Blast (p. 27), Cone of Corrosion (p. 27), and Sand Blast (p. 12) all do. However, bursts of projectiles, like Fire Swarm (pp. 14-15), may add complications similar to the Bombardment limitation (p. B111), or work like *Spraying Fire* (p. B409) instead. Such magic could even allow a jet to strike several targets in rapid succession without an All-Out Attack, as with Sun’s Arc (p. 18).

Another possibility is an effect that uses rules similar to the Emanation limitation (p. B112). Such things are a lot like Area spells – but as they always have the caster as their subject, and thus have zero range, they’re best modeled as Regular. These might persist (like Psychic Scream, p. 12) or be one-offs (like Withering Wail, p. 25).

Yet another option is a spell that makes the caster blow up or otherwise *become* a weapon. This is a lot like the previous kind of spell, but bad for the caster as well! The only example in this collection is Self-Destruct (p. 23).

Or the spell might be cast on a patch of ground or volume of space no larger than one hex on a battle map, yet endanger an area around this. Such spells *do* have range; range penalties are to the effect’s point of origin, not to the edge of a fixed area. In most cases, danger tapers off with distance from this source, whether using the rules for explosions on pp. B414-415 (see Explosive Mine, p. 19) or something more complicated (look at Collision, p. 21). However, an effect that leaves its starting point and lays waste to the surroundings, like Twisting Terror (p. 10), is a welcome, um, twist.

Missile Spells

Missile spells resemble real-life artillery the most: Long-range attacks that damage distant targets. There are eight examples in this work.

All the existing Missile spells intended as artillery – Ball of Lightning, Concussion, Explosive Fireball, and Explosive Lightning – explode. To improve on these, damage must taper off more gradually than *Explosions* (pp. B414-415) prescribes. The Explosion enhancement (p. B104) offers a solution: divide damage by less than three times distance in yards from the impact point. Dividing by distance in yards is most dramatic, and is the meaning of “Improved” in Improved Concussion (p. 25), Improved Explosive Fireball (p. 15), and Improved Explosive Lightning (p. 29). Sunburst (p. 18) also does this. Short ranges endanger the caster in such cases, so if Range is less than 50/100, double it – and then add +1 or +2 to Acc to help wizards hit things that far away.

An effect that tapers off with distance doesn’t *have* to be an explosion. It might work more like a lobbed Area or Regular spell that’s easier to resist for targets farther from the impact point. See Null Sphere (p. 16) for one approach.

A further possibility is to let the Missile engage multiple foes. It might jump between them, necessitating carefully worded rules for engaging successive

targets, as Chain Lightning (p. 29) and Force Ball (pp. 24-25) illustrate. To keep it under control, it should lose damage on successive hits (-1d damage/hit is simplest) and have a *total* target-to-target travel distance equal to Max. A Missile might instead do full damage to everything along a line, in which case the odds of hitting all but the initial target should be kept low. The rules for overshooting (p. B390) work, and although they might not seem generous, 9 or less means hitting 37.5% of later targets, with the earlier victims providing no cover DR. Either way, don’t add the complication of 1/2D – damage loss per “bounce” or low odds of a full-damage hit *replace* that rule.

THE RECEIVING END

Artillery spells make a few rules especially important. Make sure “bosses” can exploit these to reduce the threat posed by artillery intended for “cannon fodder”! Heroes expecting to face enemy wizards should also pay attention.

Resisted Area Spells (p. B242): Most artillery spells are Area spells, some of which are Resisted. For these, remember to *double* Magic Resistance (p. B67), add it to the resistance score, and compare the subject’s margin to the spell’s. Magic Resistance never penalizes rolls to cast Area spells, and doesn’t affect Area spells that aren’t Resisted – or cones, explosions, or other harmful effects not cast directly *on* the subject. Magic Resistance is excellent protection for non-spellcasting bosses.

Diving for Cover (p. B377): Against an artillery spell that produces a cone – or *any* Area spell that specifically allows it (most don’t, but a few produce physical effects victims can evade) – it’s possible to roll Dodge at +3 to leap one step in any direction. Defense Bonus, as from a shield, is irrelevant. If the roll succeeds and the step moves the defender out of the area, that person is unaffected; if it succeeds and moves the defender behind *useful* cover (from a cone’s origin, or overhead against devastation from above), the cover protects normally. Against explosions, success means being a step further from the blast’s center and thus taking less damage. Enhanced Dodge (p. B51) is obviously valuable; Enhanced Dodge (Dive for Cover) [5/level], from **GURPS Action 1: Heroes**, adds *only* to rolls to dive for cover. Having Move 11+ to enjoy a larger step (*Step*, p. B368) is also worthwhile.

Large-Area Injury (p. B400): Except as noted, if a spell generates a cone, an explosion, or a damaging physical effect that fills an area, it delivers large-area injury that ignores hit location, and “effective DR” is the average of torso DR and the DR of the *least-protected* hit location exposed (which could still be the torso), rounding up. For fantasy warriors, this generally amounts to averaging torso DR and DR 0 over the eyes: halve torso DR and round up. The most effective protection against large-area injury is uniformly good DR; many monsters have Nictitating Membrane (p. B71) to protect the eyes, and DR with Force Field (p. B47) and the Armor spell (p. B253) enable powers and magic to accomplish the same. Spells that inflict “HP of injury” bypass DR and deplete HP directly; normally, the only defense is Immunity (pp. B80-81) to whatever does the harm.

Everything Else

Melee spells, of which there's just one offered here (Plague Touch, p. 11), are almost the opposite of artillery in that they have no range and affect one person by touch. Such a spell *could* make its victim explode or emit harmful emanations, but it's hard to imagine a thaumatologist smart enough to invent spells being dim enough to develop a curse that puts the caster within at most staff's length of a mass-damage effect – why not cook up a Regular spell? The most likely justification is thematic: The magic delivers something traditionally spread by contact, like infection or flames. Still, a built-in ability *not* to kill the wizard is advisable.

Enchantment spells (pp. 13-14) can do almost anything. For an *item* to be artillery in its own right rather than an artifact that casts artillery spells, visualize it not as a cannon but as a bomb: a single-use item that expends its magical might in an explosion or other mass destruction.

Special spells are too weird to classify. None appear here, but if a spell causes mass harm without an area or individual as its subject, with no attack roll, and no item as its intermediary, it's Special. **GURPS Magic** tends to class Regular spells that affect only the caster as Special. Do this if you prefer – but the discussion under *Regular* (pp. 4-5) remains applicable.

Blocking and *Information* spells aren't suitable as artillery. It's tempting to imagine Blocking spells that deliver mass-damage effects on the defensive, but enabling magic-wielders to wound multiple foes by reflex – without so much as using up a maneuver – isn't balanced. And Information spells might gather knowledge that can do harm in the strategic or social sense, but physical injury makes little sense.

A CONGREGATION OF COLLEGES

Almost anything could prove harmful at sufficiently excessive power levels, so spells that lay waste to areas or injure multiple foes suit *most* colleges – though not all. College influences not only prerequisites but also *how* the magic does damage (often suggesting interesting side effects). Below are some ideas. To state the obvious: Everything here is meant to affect more than one victim!

Air: Concussive shock; crushing pressure; poison gas; suffocating vacuum; tearing winds.

Animal: As general artillery, conjured swarms. More specialized are devastating Body Control-like effects that affect animals only.

Body Control: Deathtouch-style direct injury, mainly – but special effects can vary.

Communication and Empathy: Telepathic mind blasts.

Earth: Collapsing architecture; falling or flying rocks; stinging sands; unnatural disasters such as conjured avalanches, earthquakes, and volcanoes.

Enchantment: One-shot objects that do wide-ranging damage when activated – almost anything is possible!

Fire: Blazing ground, burning explosions, incendiary clouds, pillars of flame, and other fiery spectacles; lava and volcanoes (again); scorching heat *without* open flame.

Food: Not especially suitable, although a “mass” version of Poison Food could be loosely interpreted as artillery against an army.

Gate: Folding space or warping time in harmful ways; portals that admit destructive forces or the attacks of destructive *beings* from other dimensions.

Healing: Bona fide *healing* is unsuitable, but don't forget this college includes spells for sterilizing and surgery – effects that would be harmful if applied to a mass of people without regard for their condition.

Illusion and Creation: Dangerous creations or phantoms numerous or widespread enough to menace many people at once. (True *illusions* lack the necessary teeth.)

Knowledge: Simply not appropriate for artillery, but its spells might be prerequisites for spells of *other* colleges, justifying intricate magical “targeting systems.”

Light and Darkness: Focused sunlight; searing fantasy “lasers”; even bright ordinary light, for creatures of darkness. Dangerous shadow is the realm of Necromantic spells.

Making and Breaking: Weaken, Shatter, Rive, Explode, and Disintegrate variants that cause destruction in ways that endanger anyone nearby – or that cut out the middleman and cause explosions directly.

Meta-Spells: Twisting mana in ways that endanger wizards, supernatural beings, or *all* beings.

Mind Control: Making multiple subjects behave dangerously, whether through direct control or by manipulating perceptions. Damaging attacks on the mind fall into the realm of Communication and Empathy.

Movement: Collisions and falls; flying objects; flying *subjects*; telekinetic blows; teleporting bad things onto people or people onto bad things.

Necromantic: Conjuring minor demons, shadows, or zombie hands (which burst out of the ground) to attack everyone in an area. Directly blighting people falls under Body Control. Blasting all undead or spirits in an area fits, however.

Plant: Falling nuts or boughs; flying splinters; stinging leaves; thorns; toxic pollen; whipping branches. Any harmful effect that affects plants only.

Protection and Warning: Force Dome and Force Wall – being ultimate as they are – lead to excellent force balls, force blades, force fists, etc.

Sound: Harmful vibrations; resonant attacks; shockwaves; sounds loud enough to do actual damage.

Technological: Energy spells that turn energy, especially *fuel*, into artillery; Radiation spells that irradiate or shoot death rays. Machine spells that destroy technology only also qualify.

Water: Acid; dehydration; devastating cold; drowning; jagged ice; steam.

Weather: Destructive winds; freezing; hail and ice storms; lightning in all its forms (bolts, balls, and strange phenomena not found in nature).

BY THE NUMBERS

The artillery spells in **GURPS Magic** don't hint at a design system, and imposing one after the fact would lead to “rules” that consist mainly of exceptions and special cases! What follows are *guidelines* for GMs who want to assign more-or-less balanced statistics to homemade spells. These notes aren't intended for Enchantment spells, which don't have casting times, energy costs, etc. in the ordinary sense; for advice on those, see *Enchantment Spells* (pp. 13-14).

Damage

One-shot damage typically involves either a fixed roll somewhere between 2d and 5d, or a range that depends on energy spent, running from 1d to between 3d and 5d. A fixed 2d or 3d, or an adjustable effect ranging from 1d to 3d, suits spells that largely or entirely bypass DR: direct HP loss, area-effect contact poison, electricity that treats metal armor as DR 1, etc. Save 4d and 5d for magic DR can mitigate to a meaningful extent. If a spell offers variable dice in a campaign that uses *Magery and Effect* (**GURPS Magic**, p. 9), remember that maximum Magery level sets the *real* upper limit.

Missile spells are an important exception. They should be capable of the standard 1d per Magery level per turn, for three turns – in effect, maximum damage is $3d \times \text{Magery}$.

The other major exception is spells that inflict damage over time. Generally, damage should be low: 1 to 2 *points* per turn if the effect bypasses DR in some way – or as much as 1d per turn if there's a penalized attribute roll, standard resistance roll vs. the spell, or similar “saving throw” *each turn*. Damage should be higher only if the roll to avoid it is something ordinary warriors would often succeed at, like a straight DX roll or an active defense roll with the benefits of Defense Bonus and retreating.

Within reason, damage dice can have adds. Look at existing examples to assess this. For instance, Stone Missile is at +1 per die because crushing damage is the least deadly type; Fire spells mostly get 1d per level of effect; and Acid Jet has -1 per die because it *dissolves* DR and causes blindness. Crushing, burning, and corrosion might work this way in general. Damage with many special benefits may also have -1 per die; lightning-related magic is like this because it sets fires as capably as other burning damage *and* short-circuits metallic DR, stuns, and surges electronics.

Damage *type* follows from the college and the spell's special effects: toxic for nasty bugs and plants, and noxious gas; crushing for explosions and impacts; burning for fire, lightning, and intense light; cutting for blades (including blades of force); impaling for pointy things; corrosion for acid. Direct injury – such as the ever-popular “life-draining touch” – requires no damage type, but if it's *actually* damage that ignores DR, assign one.

Artillery spells often have effects beyond damage; e.g., brilliant light blinds, while concussion deafens or stuns. These demand creativity and flexibility. Make lists of *real* upsides and downsides (not just minor special effects). For example, extreme cold might not set fires despite being “burning,” concussion may deafen but also be useless except in air, and poison could cause sickness but also affect only the living. If one list is longer than the other, consider either applying -1 or +1 per damage die to balance matters, or leaving damage alone and adding something to the shorter list. See *Modifiers* (pp. B101-117), especially *Side Effect* and *Symptoms* (p. B109), for inspiration; for instance, cold might paralyze.

Duration

A lot of artillery – notably cones, explosions, and higher-damage Area spells – does damage once per casting. Duration is instantaneous in this case, or at most one second if the spell needs that long to do harm because it inflicts damage on each victim's next turn or on the caster's *following* turn.

Missile spells endure for a single attack but can be “held” indefinitely *before* use.

Other artillery does damage over time. This almost always implies an Area spell, or a Regular spell that produces an area effect around its subject. Recommended duration is five to 10 seconds, with the shorter end being more balanced if damage is more than a couple of points *and* difficult to avoid. For anything longer (even a minute is a long time when you're being injured!), damage should be easily prevented through a “saving throw,” an active defense, or modest DR – or else energy cost ought to be exceptionally high.

All this refers to the *spell's* duration. Injury lasts until healed. Damage effects may endure for turns (stunning), minutes (common for deafness), or even longer (dissolved DR, crippling, etc.) – or “until dealt with” (like ordinary fires set by burning damage).

*In the beginning there was nothing,
which exploded.*

– Terry Pratchett, *Lords and Ladies*

Energy Cost

Most artillery spells are Area spells. For these, a *base cost* of two energy points per 1d of damage is recommended. If the number of dice is fixed (e.g., a flat 3d), adjust final base cost upward or downward slightly to reflect additional effects especially favorable or unfavorable to the caster. If the number of dice is variable, it's better to leave cost alone and adjust damage adds.

For Regular spells that produce cones or area effects, or otherwise cover multiple hexes on a battle map, set energy cost competitively based on the number of hexes they're *likely* to affect. Remember that cones rarely menace *everyone* in their area – closer figures screen more distant ones.

The above assumes a one-shot effect. For damage over time, estimate *total* damage assuming *likely* exposure; a minute-long spell isn't superior to a five- to 10-second spell unless it glues people in place for the duration, and damage may be capped for any spell (e.g., Ironweed, pp. 25-26, doesn't matter after the victim's feet are crippled). Halve this if victims can easily avoid the assumed damage by leaving, making a “saving throw” each turn even if they stay, etc. Throughout, treat every 3.5 points as 1d.

Then use the pricing guidelines for one-shot spells. Round down for spells with few positive damage effects, or up for exceptionally capable ones or those that bypass DR. For instance, if a spell does 1 HP/second that's avoidable by running away, and endures for 10 seconds, it's priced as $1 \text{ HP/second} \times 10 \text{ seconds} \times 1/2 \text{ (avoidable)} = 5 \text{ points}$, or $5/3.5 = 1.4d$, so a base cost of $2 \times 1.4 = 2.8$ energy would be fair, rounded to two points in most cases, to three if DR is ineffective.

For any Area spell, a useful trick to keep casters honest – and to make artillery behave like artillery – is to set a minimum radius of *two* yards. This makes the spell's minimum cost double its base cost, curbing overuse and making wizards think twice before casting close to allies, as they can't manage pinpoint accuracy. Imposing this caveat consistently means Area artillery *without* it (note this!) stands out as special; magic-users might learn such spells for that reason alone.

Missile spells capable of damaging multiple targets by exploding, affecting everyone along a line, ricocheting between enemies, or anything similar start at two energy points per die. If clearly superior to existing explosive Missile spells, bump cost to *three* energy per die. The most common example is an explosion with damage divided by distance in yards from the center of the blast rather than triple that.

Price a Melee or Special spell by comparison to the class above it most behaves like. However, if a Melee spell does just *X* dice of damage in total – all targets considered – then one energy point per die (like Deathtouch) is fair.

Maintenance?

Maintainability for damage-over-time magic is a question of style more than game balance – but if a spell requires more than three seconds to cast, consider making it maintainable. Energy cost to maintain for a period equal to the spell's duration should be the same as cost to cast unless its effects grow less effective because victims can easily adapt to avoid, defend against, or neutralize them. In that case, use half cost.

Time to Cast

GURPS Magic balances spell effectiveness using energy cost and to a lesser extent prerequisite count. Casting time plays only a small role; e.g., “Seek” spells are easy to learn and not overly powerful, yet the majority require 10 seconds to cast, while many deadly combat spells take but one second. In fact, time often comes down to a matter of “feel”: Why does Charm take three seconds to Control Person's 10 seconds, when both last a minute, cost six energy, and let a wizard march people to their death, yet the latter is *less* capable (caster's body falls limp, subject's skills are inaccessible)? Because Mind Control spells are optimized for combat, while Communication and Empathy magic is meant for “social” situations.

Consequently, it's most consistent to use the closest spells of the same college as guidelines – *especially* when they're essentially less-destructive versions of the artillery spell, named as its prerequisites (e.g., as Stench is for Cloud of Doom, p. 9). If rapid recasting of a one-shot area-damage spell seems excessive, one second per yard of radius (for fixed-damage spells), per die of damage (for variable-damage spells, especially those that range up past 3d), or per *X* energy points of base cost (*X* = 2 is consistent with the energy cost per die suggested for artillery) all have precedents and are fairly balanced.

Missile spells take their usual one to three seconds to cast, regardless of how they work.

Prerequisites

To keep artillery spells the province of archmages, assume that most require Magery 4 or more (maybe even Magery 5 or 6!) *and* at least 10 other spells.

The Magery prerequisite is negotiable. In settings where Magery 3 is the maximum, there's no harm in stopping there. If none of the specific prerequisite spells require high Magery, it's possible to go with Magery 2 or even Magery 1, though it's easier to justify making artillery spells rare (if desired) when

their Magery requirements are at least one level higher than the highest among their prerequisite spells. The GM who favors modest Magery levels is welcome to tone these down for the spells in Chapter 2, while one who likes *lots* of Magery – the **GURPS Dungeon Fantasy** approach – might lean in the other direction.

The exact spell prerequisites aren't important, as any 10 spells cost the same number of character points; indeed, the sweeping “one spell from each of 10 different colleges” has many high-powered precedents in **GURPS Magic**. Still, it's *flavorful* to assume that a college's artillery is among its most advanced magic, to mandate that its prerequisites come largely or wholly from within the college, and to specify a few that are similar in “feel” to or even lesser versions of the same magic. For instance, Improved Explosive Fireball (p. 15) requires not just any 10 spells, but 10 *Fire* spells – Explosive Fireball among them.

If it's impossible to learn the artillery spell's prerequisites without going outside its college, the number of prerequisite spells *within* the college may be smaller to compensate. This doesn't have to be the case, though – if artillery is meant to be hard to learn, a few extra prerequisites simply underline this. Think of 10 spells as a minimum, not a fixed target.

Tweaks

There are endless variables in spell design! A spell may be less effective than it looks, commonly because it affects only *some* targets: living creatures, animate beings, magical entities, etc. Its scope might be even narrower, like animals, machines, plants, or undead. The magic's effects could be easy to avoid; e.g., enemies worth blasting with artillery are typically combatants, implying respectable ST, DX, and HT – and fair active defenses – so “saving throws” against these unmodified scores won't be challenging. Or perhaps the effect is highly conditional; for example, Flammability (p. 26) doesn't *do* anything until somebody is set alight.

Other spells are *more* effective than is obvious at first. They might travel beyond their initial boundaries, inflict long-duration side effects or symptoms, or bypass defenses and DR that should be effective against that kind of thing. They may just do lots of damage.

It's entirely reasonable to increase duration, lower energy cost, reduce casting time, and/or call for lesser prerequisites if a spell is relatively anemic – or to do the opposite if the magic is especially potent. A spell with somewhat lackluster foe-smashing potential might still be worthwhile if it's long-lasting, cheap, and quick, while genuine magic of mass destruction merits being expensive in every way.

It's always possible to adjust damage – but be careful! Even if a spell seems too easy to learn and cast, it isn't always wise to lower damage to compensate, because if damage gets too low – and especially if it's affected by DR – it won't threaten “cannon fodder” as intended. Consider leaving damage alone and making the spell more demanding in other respects. Similarly, if the spell feels onerous to learn and cast, raising damage isn't necessarily the fix, as that can create an undesirable “boss killer.” Think about leaving damage modest and softening the spell's requirements to make routine use against fodder more attractive.

CHAPTER TWO

DEVASTATION!

These artillery spells are sorted by college. There are no Food or Knowledge spells; see *A Congregation of Colleges* (p. 6) for more on this. Each college that *does* appear comes with a brief introduction discussing the upsides, downsides, and special effects of its artillery.

The GM decides on the availability of these spells. They *might* be general knowledge in high-powered settings. However, they could as easily be the jealously guarded secrets of schools like those defined in *GURPS Thaumatology: Magical Styles* – or taught only to wizards who pay steep training fees, *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy*-style.

As befits secret and high-powered spells, all of these examples are Very Hard.

Magery and . . .

Several spells become more effective artillery if the GM applies *Magery and Effect* (*GURPS Magic*, p. 9). Exactly how this rule works isn't always obvious, so suggestions appear for each college with relevant spells. Like the rule, this advice is optional – the GM may ignore it or apply it only in certain cases. When using it, it's fairest if it holds for magic enabled by *all* spellcasting advantages; e.g., high Power Investiture increases maximum effect for clerics, just as high Magery does for mages.

*High Magery
turns many spells
into effective artillery.*

AIR SPELLS

"Air-tillery" mostly takes the form of lethal pressure or destructive winds, either of which inflicts crushing damage – although toxic gases (*area-effect* blood, contact, or respiratory agents; see *Delivery*, p. B437) also fit. For additional spells, see Improved Concussion (p. 25) and Improved Explosive Lightning (p. 29).

Magery and Air Spells

Falling Sky (below): Five levels of effect. Magery 6+ allows even higher damage.

Shape Air: Treat every *two* points of energy as a level of effect, meaning this spell has five levels. Magery 6+ allows additional knockback-only damage (and distance).

Cloud of Doom (VH)

Area

Produces a greenish cloud of contact poison. Anyone in the area must roll vs. HT-4 *every second* to avoid 1d toxic injury; DR has no effect. After losing 1/2 of their HP this way, victims are nauseated (see *Afflictions*, p. B428) until the injury is healed above that threshold.

Cloud of Doom cannot injure those with Immunity to Poison or Sealed. Resistant to Poison grants its bonus to the HT rolls. Doesn't Breathe and Filter Lungs (and holding one's breath) are ineffective – the gas needn't be inhaled to be harmful!

The cloud is hazy but not especially dense: Vision and ranged attack rolls through it have a flat -1 (*not* per yard). The gas doesn't persist for long enough for displacement or dissipation by wind to become an issue.

Duration: 5 seconds.

Base cost: 5. Minimum radius two yards. Cannot be maintained.

Prerequisites: Magery 4 *and* at least 10 Air spells, including Devitalize Air and Stench.

Falling Sky (VH)

Area

Instantaneously raises air pressure to extreme levels, crushing everything within the area. This damages anything an ordinary explosion would affect (thus, Pressure Support has no effect), and counts as large-area injury (p. B400). Anyone this spell *injures* must also roll vs. HT.

Modifiers: -1 per *full* five points of injury; +1 for ordinary earplugs, or +5 for Protected Hearing.

Failure inflicts a Hearing penalty equal to margin of failure; failure by 10+, or critical failure, causes deafness. Either effect lasts (20 - HT) minutes, minimum one minute. After that, roll vs. HT each turn to recover. Critical failure on a recovery roll indicates a permanent injury (*Duration of Crippling Injuries*, p. B422): Hard of Hearing if the penalty was -1 to -9, Deafness if deafness occurred. Protected Hearing cuts duration to two seconds and makes recovery automatic. Any failure on the initial HT roll also stuns the victim; roll vs. HT each turn to recover.

Unlike an explosion, there's no damage drop-off with distance from the center and no special effect in enclosed spaces. Effects are uniform within the area and end abruptly at its edges.

This spell is ineffective in vacuum, underwater, in solid earth, etc. – there *must* be a gaseous atmosphere of some kind.

Duration: The spell lasts an instant, but deafness and stun persist as noted above, and injury remains until healed.

Base cost: 2 to 10; the blast inflicts 1d crushing damage per *two* energy points put into the base cost. Minimum radius two yards.

Time to cast: 1 second per two energy points of base cost.

Prerequisites: Magery 4 *and* at least eight Air spells, including Concussion and Destroy Air.

UPPING THE ANTE

When starting a *new* campaign, **GURPS Magic: Artillery Spells** adds a tiny pinch of spells to the 800+ in **GURPS Magic** and hundreds more in the **GURPS** and **Pyramid** libraries. Vetting them adds little to the GM's workload. If something seems overpowered, adjust it (**GURPS Thaumatology** offers solid advice), use **GURPS Thaumatology: Magical Styles** to restrict it to specific schools, or put an Unusual Background cost on it. Review *The Receiving End* (p. 5) to make sure such magic doesn't make it *too* easy to defeat key opponents, like "boss" monsters.

Rolling out artillery in an *ongoing* campaign is a bigger challenge. The above vetting process remains necessary – but now it's after the fact, and the GM must be careful not to leave players feeling cheated, especially if they're familiar with high-powered fantasy and feel limited by **Magic**. Some advice:

Keep your head down! There are no specific defenses against artillery spells, but the heroes shouldn't be caught flat-footed if their first exposure is as targets! Apply *The Receiving End* fairly. Even if the PCs have never seen such magic, it doesn't take genius-level IQ to dive for cover or cast an Armor spell.

Military grade. Artillery magic might be the preserve of nations – not secret, just unshared. In our world, howitzers, missiles, and stealth bombers are known to exist but are LC1 or even LC0, unrestricted only in societies in or near anarchy (CR0 or CR1), and costly regardless. Most fantasy societies are tribal, dictatorial, or theocratic, with CR3-6 – and the feudal kind tend toward the high end.

These might view Missile spells much as our world sees LC3-4 hunting and self-defense weapons, and exploding ones like LC2-3 explosives, yet restrict artillery magic. Access may require the PCs to earn Legal Enforcement Powers, Rank, Security Clearance, or Status, or to be deputized or given a valid military mission, *in play* – any of which might require a long career of "proving" themselves first.

Nobody uses artillery where bullets would do. Perhaps artillery spells weren't *needed* until the moment of introduction. In a campaign with a detailed setting and story arc, the numberless legions of a supernatural overlord, the outbreak of a zombie plague, or the opening of the gates of Hell might spur wizards to invent new "technology" useful for battling hordes many times larger than classic low-tech fantasy armies. In a character-centered game, the PCs may precipitate this reaction! Perhaps they've grown so powerful that their foes are willing to unveil secret, greatly draining magic – or that quest-givers believe hurling the heroes against such enemies is a worthwhile gamble.

Arms dealing. The idea that no authorities are corrupt and all secrets are kept flawlessly strains willing suspension of disbelief. For the right *high* price – or in return for a service – there's surely somebody who will teach artillery magic. The PCs might find grimoires as spoils. If they're attacked by such a spell and try to research it, they should get a bonus: at least +2, but up to +5 for supercharged variants of common spells. The introduction of artillery magic makes a fine quest!

Twisting Terror (VH)

Regular

Conjures a small tornado that rips across the ground, smashing everything in its way. The caster must choose a starting point (calculate distance penalties from that point). The twister appears there and cuts a swath one yard wide, traveling one yard per two energy points in the spell and then dissipating. The caster does *not* control the path – each yard, roll for *Scatter* (p. B414) to determine the direction moved.

Anyone the tornado would touch may attempt to dive for cover (p. B377) to get out of its path. Other active defenses are ineffective. Success means that person ends up on the ground, unharmed. The tornado *can* sweep over a victim repeatedly, doing damage with each pass. If that happens, diving for cover is useful just once.

Those who fail to get out of the way are pummeled with a 2d crushing attack; this is large-area injury (p. B400). Use *double* damage to calculate the amount of knockback, and *Scatter* to determine its direction.

Needless to say, this spell is best cast at a safe distance from the caster and any allies!

Duration: The tornado lasts for long enough to take one turn immediately after the caster's, like a swift fighter tearing around the battlefield. Injury remains until healed.

Cost: Any even-numbered amount! The tornado travels one yard per *two* energy points spent.

Prerequisites: *Magery 4* and at least 10 Air spells, including *Windstorm*.

ANIMAL SPELLS

Artillery spells don't suit this college in many settings. Where they *do* make sense – most often in hack 'n' slash fantasy and horror – they generally take the form of nasty conjured swarms.

Creeping Plague (VH)

Area

Conjures a carpet of crawling, *venomous* vermin: bullet ants, centipedes, scorpions, spiders, and almost any other creeping invertebrate that stings or bites. Water offers no refuge – it's teeming with jellyfish, leeches, stinging echinoderms, and other horrors. Everyone on the ground or swimming in the area is engulfed and attacked. No active defense roll is allowed.

Clothing (DR 0 garments) protects completely against the pests for two turns; armor (DR 1+) protects for five.

After that, DR becomes irrelevant and the victim suffers 1d-1 toxic injury *per turn* in the area, halved (round down) on a successful HT roll. Resistant to Poison aids this HT roll, while Immunity to Poison or Sealed prevents harm.

Unlike a mundane swarm, this one doesn't move on its own. By taking a Concentrate maneuver, however, the caster can shift the area along the ground at Move 2 (though not change its shape) to chase victims or torment new ones.

Also unlike a mundane swarm, this one is unaffected by damage. For the spell's duration, new creepy-crawlers appear within the area to replace slain ones. People who *leave* the area bring vermin with them; these *can* be killed. Fleeing victims continue to count as exposed until the spell ends or they inflict 15 HP of injury on their passengers; see *Attacking a Swarm* (p. B461). Reentering or being overtaken by the area means starting all over again!

Example: An armored orc is caught within a Creeping Plague. He flees immediately, so he's only *in* the swarm for one turn. He begins swatting (2 HP/turn) and stomping (1 HP/turn) at the pests on him; after four turns, he's inflicted 12 HP. While he's flapping and hopping, the caster moves the spell back onto him, so on his sixth turn, not only is he exposed for long enough that he starts to take injury (armor protects for five turns), but his efforts count for naught. If he flees again, he'll need five *more* turns to deal 15 HP, during which time he'll suffer toxic injury every second.

Duration: 1 minute.

Base cost: 2. Same cost to maintain. Minimum radius two yards.

Time to cast: 2 seconds.

Prerequisites: Magery 5, Beast-Summoning, and Vermin Control – or Magery 4 and Create Animal.

BODY CONTROL SPELLS

As presented in *GURPS Magic*, this college includes nothing that could be described as “artillery” (notably, no Area spells). The GM decides whether that's worth preserving. In settings where Body Control magic exists mainly in magical styles modeled on martial arts, yoga, or similar body disciplines, it may be best not to change that.

When Body Control *does* offer artillery, it's limited to affecting *living* beings unless noted otherwise. In particular, variations on Deathtouch (*GURPS Magic*, p. 41) – such as the two below – also affect the undead.

Magery and Body Control Spells

Death Field (below): Three levels of effect. Magery 4+ allows even higher damage.

Death Field (VH)

Area; Resisted by HT

Similar to Deathtouch, but resisted and over an area: Every living or undead being in the area that fails to resist suffers generalized injury (hit location is irrelevant), and DR doesn't protect.

Duration: The spell lasts an instant, but injury remains until healed.

Base cost: 2 to 6; inflicts 1d HP of injury per *two* energy points put into the base cost. Minimum radius two yards.

Time to cast: 1 second per two energy points of base cost.

Prerequisites: Magery 4 and at least 10 Body Control spells, including Deathtouch.

*Human beings are so destructive.
I sometimes think we're a kind of
plague, that will scrub the earth clean.
We destroy things so well that
I sometimes think, maybe that's
our function.*

– Michael Crichton,
The Lost World

Plague Touch (VH)

Melee

This insidious Deathtouch variant affects multiple subjects *in succession*. When cast, its energy cost is spent immediately but held in a “reserve.” Keep track of this, marking off three energy points each time the spell inflicts injury. When the reserve is empty, the spell ends.

The initial victim touched suffers what appears to be a standard 3d Deathtouch, but also becomes a “carrier.” Anybody *that* person touches *without deliberate hostile intent* suffers 3d Deathtouch and becomes a carrier, too. This goes on until the spell exhausts its reserve. While energy remains, all carriers remain carriers – one subject could affect any number of others. Only the living or undead take injury, but anyone can be a carrier! However, nobody can be zapped more than once by a given casting of Plague Touch.

For this spell's purposes, a “touch” includes a deliberate touch (e.g., to render first aid or cast a helpful spell), an accidental bump (as from knockback), or even handing off an object. A person simply *passing through* a non-hostile hex must roll vs. DX, with failure indicating a brief touch. It's unimportant which party initiates contact. Opponents in battle are assumed hostile; the magic won't spread to them under any circumstances.

Counterspell and Dispel Magic can negate Plague Touch, but only for carriers they're cast on. Plague Touch resists separately for each victim. If *any* trace of the spell remains, it can continue to wreak havoc.

This spell is most useful against low-IQ foes who attack in tightly packed hordes, like zombies. However, creative users can exploit it in other ways; e.g., by corralling enemies into contact and *then* casting it.

This is also a Necromantic spell.

Duration: Until the spell's reserve is empty. Does *not* count as a spell “on.”

Cost: Any multiple of 3 – minimum 6, no maximum. Cannot be maintained.

Time to cast: 2 seconds.

Prerequisites: Magery 4, Deathtouch, Pestilence, and Sense Foes.

COMMUNICATION AND EMPATHY SPELLS

This college offers few offensive spells, but if adding artillery, a “psychic” onslaught fits best. Like all Communication and Empathy spells, such magic affects only subjects that have minds (IQ 1+) – never inanimate objects – although victims needn’t be sapient (IQ 6+) or even *living*.

Psychic Scream (VH)

Regular

Causes the caster – who must also be the subject – to emanate an invisible psionic pulse that injures any nearby being that possesses a mind. Despite threatening an area that depends on the energy spent, this is *not* an Area spell. The effect is on and moves with the caster.

For as long as the spell endures, all beings with minds – friend or foe, everybody but the caster – suffer 1 HP of toxic injury *per second* while in the area. This injury bypasses all DR save for that specifically effective against psionic attacks. As the pulse is psionic rather than magical (only the caster is affected by magic), it ignores Magic Resistance, is unaffected by countermagic such as Spell Shield, and can penetrate no-mana areas.

In campaigns that use **GURPS Psionic Powers**, abilities based on Psi Static block this spell, while those that give DR against psionics (notably Psychic Armor) work normally. **GURPS Psi-Tech** gadgets that provide similar effects are likewise effective. Where such things work using a resistance roll, use the caster’s effective skill vs. that of the psionic ability or device.

Duration: 10 seconds.

Cost: 3 per yard of radius. Same cost to maintain. Minimum radius two yards. Figure full cost *before* applying reductions for high skill, as for an Area spell.

Time to cast: 1 second per yard of radius.

Prerequisites: Magery 4 *and* at least 10 Communication and Empathy spells, including Mind-Sending.

EARTH SPELLS

Earth magic already offers some artillery. However, Earthquake and Volcano (both **GURPS Magic**, p. 54) are slow to cast and don’t specifically cause damage, while Rain of Stones (**Magic**, p. 53) works only outdoors and lets victims stop damage with a shield for long enough to flee. More impressive artillery usually involves bigger rocks, speedier effects, or spreading single-target spells over an area.

Magery and Earth Spells

Boulder Barrage (below): Three levels of effect. Magery 4+ allows even higher damage.

Sand Blast (below): Damage – not cone width – marks levels of effect, so there are three levels of effect. Magery 4+ allows even higher damage.

Rain of Stones: The GM may opt to treat the double-cost option as a second level of effect and have Magery 3 allow three levels (3d-3) for triple base cost, Magery 4 permit four levels (4d-4) for quadruple cost, and so forth. If that seems

excessive, try one level of effect per *two* Magery levels: only 1d-1 and normal cost at Magery 2, up to 2d-2 and double cost at Magery 4, and so on.

Boulder Barrage (VH)

Area

Conjures a *lot* of Stone Missiles (**GURPS Magic**, p. 52) over the area and sends them down in a dense hail. Everyone (and *everything*, if material destruction matters) is attacked once at effective skill 12, adjusted only for target Size Modifier. Success means one hit plus one more per two full points of success; e.g., for an SM 0 target, one hit on 11-12, two hits on 9-10, three on 7-8, and so on.

Victims may block or dodge, at -2 for an attack from above (p. B402), but not parry; shield DB adds normally. Success avoids one hit plus additional hits equal to margin of success. Determine hit location randomly. Overhead cover provides its usual benefits; *Dodge and Drop* (p. B377) is *only* effective if there’s cover to dive for!

Boulder Barrage is much like a higher-damage, one-off variation on Rain of Stones. Unlike that spell, however, it works *anywhere*, even indoors. Another difference is that a shield provides only a chance to block – not total protection.

Duration: The spell lasts an instant, but injury remains until healed.

Base cost: 2 to 6; *each* missile inflicts 1d+1 crushing damage per *two* energy points put into the base cost. Minimum radius two yards.

Time to cast: 1 second per two energy points of base cost.

Prerequisites: Magery 4 *and* at least 10 Earth spells, including Rain of Stones and Stone Missile.

Sand Blast (VH)

Regular

Shoots a 10-yard-long cone of high-speed grit from one hand, inflicting large-area injury (p. B400). Maximum width increases with the energy put into the spell, but this isn’t an Area spell.

Use the rules under *Cone Attacks* (p. B413), rolling vs. Innate Attack (Beam) to hit the target point. As for any cone, anybody *completely* screened from the caster is behind cover, and targets may use *Dodge and Drop* (p. B377) to leave the area or get to cover.

Beings with eyes must roll vs. HT if this spell inflicts *any* injury. Failure means being blinded for one turn; critical failure causes 1d seconds of blindness. Once the target can see again, blurry vision gives -3 to all combat skills and Vision rolls for a further 1d seconds.

Duration: The spell lasts an instant, but blindness and Vision penalties persist as noted above, and injury remains until healed.

Cost: 2 to 6, for 1d crushing damage per *two* energy points, multiplied by terminal width in yards (minimum one yard, maximum five); e.g., 16 for a four-yard-wide cone that inflicts 2d crushing. Figure full cost *before* applying reductions for high skill, as for an Area spell.

Time to cast: 1 second per die of damage.

Prerequisites: Magery 4, Sand Jet, *and* Sandstorm.

Seismic Shock (VH)

Area

Triggers a massive, momentary shock that lifts anyone on the ground five yards into the air. On landing, they suffer falling damage from that height. Typically, the ground or floor counts as a hard object, meaning 2d crushing for people with HP 8-12, increasing by +1d per full +5 HP (3d at HP 13-17, 4d at HP 18-22, . . .). For details, see *Collisions and Falls* (pp. B430-431).

If the ceiling is lower than five yards, damage is instead as for *two* falls: one from an effective (5 - ceiling height) yards for smashing into the hard ceiling, and another from ceiling height for crashing to the floor afterward.

A successful Acrobatics roll reduces effective falling distance by five yards. Thus, it's possible to avoid all damage from hitting the ground. This doesn't mitigate damage from being slammed into the ceiling first, however!

In all cases, *Hit Location from a Fall* (p. B431) applies. Injury is *not* large-area, but all armor counts as "flexible" against this damage.

Landing location is random. On a combat map, pick up each affected figure and drop it from 5" up (about the height of a soda can). Upon landing, victims capable of standing may make a DX or Acrobatics roll at -3 to land on their feet.

Example: A victim with HP 15 is standing in a two-yard-high tunnel; smashing into the ceiling is equivalent to a fall of $5 - 2 = 3$ yards, which corresponds to velocity 8. First they slam into the ceiling, for $(15 \times 2 \times 8)/100 = 2.4d$ damage, rounded to 2d; damage is 7 to the leg. Then they drop two yards to the floor with velocity 7, for $(15 \times 2 \times 7)/100 = 2.1d$; rolling 2d, damage is 8 to the torso. With DR 2 armor, injury is 5 HP to the leg and 6 HP to the torso. Those wounds aren't enough to cripple a leg or cause knockdown or unconsciousness, so a DX-3 roll is possible to land standing. Outdoors, arcing up five yards and landing with velocity 10 would inflict $(15 \times 2 \times 10)/100 = 3d$ damage; if *that* happened to a leg, a middling damage roll of 10 would inflict 8 HP after DR 2, crippling the leg and ensuring the victim ends up lying down.

Seismic Shock also causes general chaos. Objects that require checks for breakage if dropped (like potion bottles) must roll for breakage, people taking Aim or Concentrate maneuvers must make Will rolls for distraction, those engaged in long actions must roll vs. the relevant skill or start over, and machinery requires a HT roll to avoid breakdown (e.g., locks on portals would pop open). For targets not securely anchored

to the ground – and *people* rarely are – these rolls are at an extra -3.

This spell has no effect on targets not in contact with the ground.

Duration: The spell lasts an instant, but tactical confusion lasts as long as it takes to resolve and injury remains until healed.

Base cost: 8. Minimum radius two yards.

Prerequisites: Magery 4 and at least 10 Earth spells, including Earthquake.

ENCHANTMENT SPELLS

Magic items bearing spells in this collection should be rare, if they exist at all. This is a matter of game balance: If Ye Olde Magick Shoppe sold artillery as a matter of course, it would be unfair to wizards who've completed quests, invested character points, and/or spent money to obtain such spells, the high Magery levels they require, and sufficient energy to exploit them. It's fairest to treat such gewgaws as extraordinary artifacts.

If the GM wants to allow enchantment, however, a fair energy cost is twice that of the item for the most expensive *named* prerequisite spell. For instance, Death Field calls for 10 Body Control spells but names only Deathtouch (2,500 energy), while Plague Touch specifies Deathtouch, Pestilence (1,000 energy), and Sense Foes (200 energy), implying 5,000 energy in either case. The GM may prefer a single high cost (e.g., 4,000 or 5,000 energy) in *all* cases – or whenever these guidelines fall short, especially when no spells are named – to reflect the rare skill set required and probable monopoly on sales among the enchanters involved. All such items work only for mages, enabling them to cast the spell normally.

On the other hand, some items might be artillery in their own right . . .

Doom Wish (VH)

Enchantment

This Great Wish variant can do but one thing: wreak widespread destruction. Instead of making 1,000 energy available to cast one spell automatically, the full 2,000 energy is available – but only to do harm. Each energy point inflicts 1 HP of injury, and the wish-maker can divide this among any number of people or objects in line of sight. The effect cannot be resisted, and DR is of no benefit.

*Nature has many tricks wherewith she convinces
man of his finity – the ceaseless flow of the tides,
the fury of storm, the shock of the earthquake,
the long roll of heaven's artillery.*

– Jack London, "The White Silence"

The wish-maker must specify the *effective* damage type, which has to be the same for all targets. This counts only for the purpose of exploiting disadvantages and limitations; it causes no special damage effects (e.g., “burning” doesn’t set fires). The injury is *also* considered magical, where relevant.

Example: Marge the Barbarian is surrounded by 20 trolls that have HP 20, Unkillable 3 with Achilles’ Heel vs. burning and corrosion damage, and Regeneration ineffective against the same. Bad odds, even for a barbarian, so she decides to use her tribe’s prized Doom Wish item on them. Not knowing the trolls’ exact HP, she inflicts equal injury on them all: 100 HP apiece. Knowing trolls as she does, she specifies burning injury. All 20 trolls drop to -4×HP and need four HT rolls to avoid death. Any reaching -5×HP due to prior wounds die automatically – and any survivors can’t regenerate the lost HP.

This is *not* a death spell in the **GURPS Magic: Death Spells** sense, but a big dose of injury. While DR is ineffective, other traits can prevent death if the user chooses badly; e.g., if Marge picked crushing injury, the trolls’ Unkillable would keep them alive and they’d regenerate. Foes with Injury Tolerance (Damage Reduction) (**GURPS Powers**, pp. 53, 118-119) may require two or more times the “obvious” amount of injury to slay. Against one victim, this spell is nearly always fatal. Then again, a standard Great Wish could kill almost anybody with an irresistible 1,000-energy casting!

As with Great Wish, this spell can never be learned at a level better than 15, and any failure when casting it costs the caster and each helper a level of IQ and 6d injury. On a critical failure, injury is 6d or 2,000 HP divided by the number of ritualists, whichever is worse (on average the latter, unless there more than 95 participants).

Energy cost to create: 2,000.

Prerequisites: Magery 3, Wish, and a total IQ + Magery of 23+.

Vengeful Staff (VH)

Enchantment

Imbues a handheld item – traditionally but not necessarily a staff – with the one-time ability to explode when broken. *Accidental* breakage never sets off the blast, although it does end the enchantment. The trigger is much more specific!

To blow up the item, the wielder must grasp it with one or more hands (*not* remotely, as via a Movement spell or Telekinesis), declare the intention to activate it, and take one second – a maneuver in combat – to destroy it. Dashing it against something hard and immovable counts as an attack, deals the object maximum swing damage for the user’s ST, and can benefit from All-Out Attack (Strong). Snapping it is considered a Ready maneuver, involves *winning* a Quick Contest of (ST - artifact’s DR) vs. (artifact’s HP), and can involve extra effort. A spell such as Shatter must be cast by touch using the usual Concentrate maneuver(s).

Alternatively, if the item is broken by enemy action while in the owner’s hands – e.g., by an attack powerful enough to shatter it when used to parry (*Parrying Heavy Weapons*, p. B376), or by a hostile artillery spell – the wielder can attempt to initiate the blast with a simple Will roll.

However the blast is triggered, it’s a crushing explosion that does 6d × square root of (object weight in lbs. × 4) damage.

For instance, a 1-lb. baton (“wand”) does 6d×2 cr ex, while a 4-lb. quarterstaff detonates for 6d×4 cr ex. The holder *always* suffers this damage – there’s no workaround – while everyone else divides damage by distance in yards from the holder (*not* triple that). Average damage from an exploding quarterstaff (84 points) could easily kill everyone within four yards (84/4 = 21 points).

Energy cost to create: 20 times dice of damage (e.g., 240 energy for a baton or 480 energy for a staff). This is half the price of a Spell Stone for Concussion with equivalent damage dice because while the blast tapers off slowly, it calls for specialized conditions and *will* blow up the user!

Prerequisites: Magery 3, Enchant, and Explode.

*Gandalf lifted his staff, and
crying aloud he smote the bridge
before him. The staff broke asunder
and fell from his hand. A blinding
sheet of white flame sprang up.*

– J.R.R. Tolkien,
*The Fellowship
of the Ring*

FIRE SPELLS

When most people think of artillery, fire leaps to mind. There’s little else to be said. Blazing destruction is *de rigueur* for wizards in fantasy worlds!

These spells are ineffective underwater – they’re quenched instantly. For even more Fire magic, see Flammability (p. 26).

Magery and Fire Spells

Fire Cloud: Five levels of effect. Magery 6+ allows even higher damage.

Fire Swarm (below): Damage – not cone width – marks levels of effect, so there are three levels of effect. Magery 4+ allows even higher damage.

Rain of Fire: The GM may opt to treat the double-cost option as a second level of effect and have Magery 3 allow three levels (3d-3) for triple base cost, Magery 4 permit four levels (4d-4) for quadruple cost, and so forth. In worlds where magic doesn’t supply ultimate weapons, one level of effect per two *full* Magery levels is advisable. Also, the one-minute casting time is extreme – the one-*second* casting time of other “Rain of” spells is fairer.

Towering Inferno (p. 15): Five levels of effect. Magery 6+ allows even higher damage.

Fire Swarm (VH)

Regular

Unleashes a conical *swarm* of (non-explosive) fireballs from one hand. These streak out to 10 yards and then dissipate harmlessly. Maximum cone width increases with the energy put into the spell, but this isn’t an Area spell.

Use the rules under *Cone Attacks* (p. B413) to position the swarm, rolling vs. Innate Attack (Beam) to strike the target point. This doesn't guarantee hitting everyone and everything, though. Roll once per target in the cone at effective skill 12, adjusted only for target Size Modifier. Success means one hit plus one more per two *full* points of success; e.g., for an SM 0 target, a roll of 9 or 10 gives two hits.

As with any cone, anybody *completely* screened from the caster is behind cover, and targets may use *Dodge and Drop* (p. B377) to leave the area or get to cover. Those who cannot or choose not to use this option may block or dodge individual fireballs, but not parry them; success avoids one fireball plus additional hits equal to margin of success. Determine hit location randomly for each hit.

Duration: The spell lasts an instant, but injury remains until healed.

Cost: 2 to 6, for 1d burning damage *per fireball* per two energy points, multiplied by the terminal width in yards (minimum one yard, maximum five); e.g., 30 for a five-yard-wide swarm that inflicts 3d burning per fireball. Figure full cost *before* applying reductions for high skill, as for an Area spell.

Time to cast: 1 second per die of damage.

Prerequisites: Magery 4 and at least 10 Fire spells, including Fireball and Flame Jet.

Improved Explosive Fireball (VH)

Missile

Similar to Explosive Fireball (*GURPS Magic*, p. 75), but with a bigger blast radius: targets a yard or more from the center divide damage by distance in yards instead of by three times that. For the caster's safety, range is also greater: Acc 2, 1/2D 50, Max 100.

Cost: Any amount up to *three times* your Magery level per second, for three seconds. The fireball does 1d burning damage per *full* three points of energy.

Time to cast: 1 to 3 seconds.

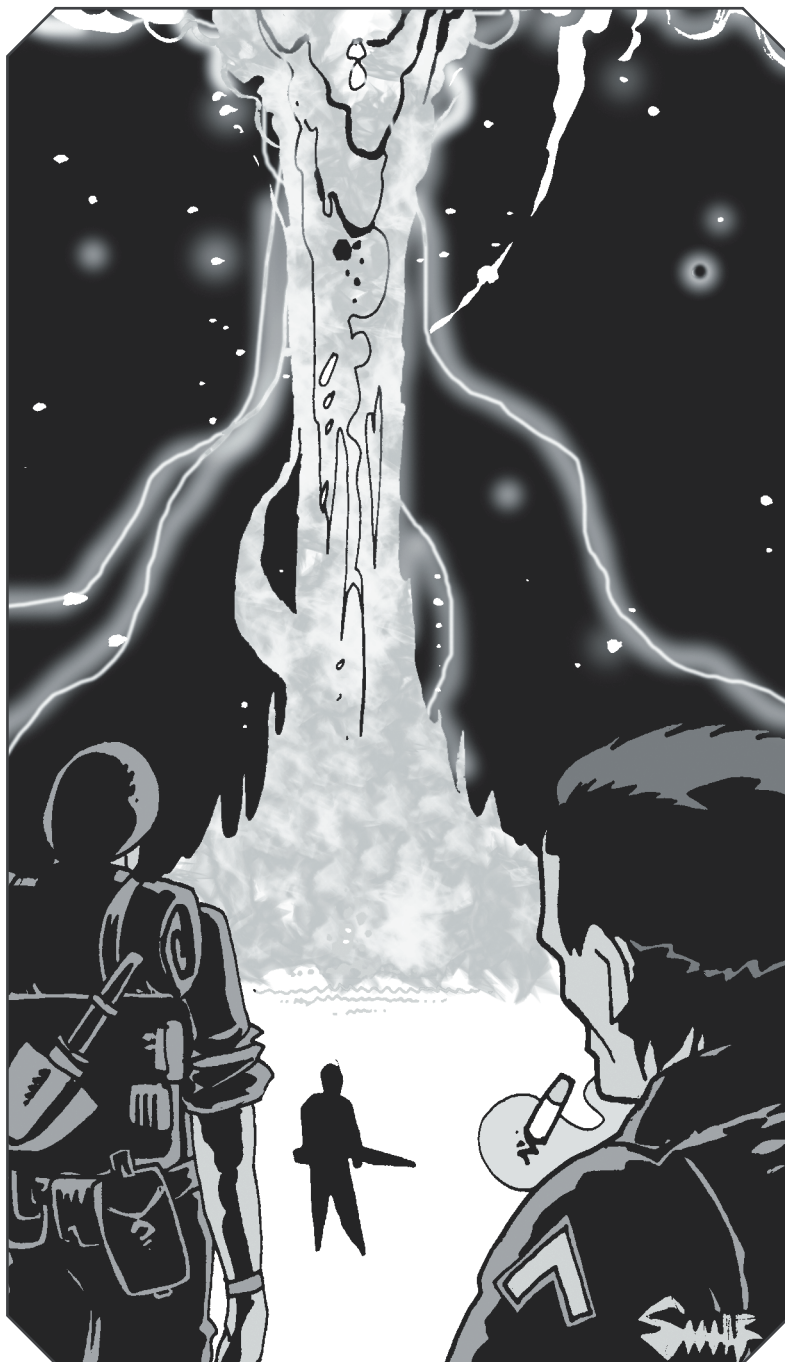
Prerequisite: Magery 4 and at least 10 Fire spells, including Explosive Fireball.

Towering Inferno (VH)

Area

Calls down a vertical column of flame that scorches everything within it. This inflicts large-area injury (p. B400). It's an area effect, not an explosion – damage applies equally throughout the area, yet things beyond the edges aren't even singed. Especially at higher levels, though, this spell is likely to start fires (see *Making Things Burn*, p. B433); these spread normally.

Duration: The spell lasts an instant, but injury remains until healed and any fires set burn until extinguished.



Base cost: 2 to 10; the flames inflict 1d burning damage per two energy points put into the base cost. Minimum radius two yards.

Time to cast: 1 second per two energy points of base cost.

Prerequisites: Magery 4 and at least seven Fire spells, including Fire Cloud and Rain of Fire.

GATE SPELLS

Gate artillery customarily opens channels to realms that are home to deadly physical phenomena – or to Evil, pure and simple, from another dimension. This suits sci-fi and horror gaming better than it does traditional fantasy. Handle with care!

Hell Zone (VH)

Area

“Softens up” local space-time for hostile extradimensional entities: elemental spirits, demons, nightmares from the Dream World, goateed mirror-universe selves, Things Man Was Not Meant To Know, or worse. These attack everyone in the area from the safety of their native realm(s). Every turn, roll for each victim:

Direction (Roll 1d)

- 1 – Behind! Normally, no defense possible.
- 2-3 – Left (2) or right (3) side. Defenses are at -2. Shield or weapon on opposite side cannot defend.
- 4-5 – Above (4) or below (5). Defenses are at -2.
- 6 – Front. Defend normally.

Allowed Defenses (Roll 1d)

- 1-3 – Dodge, parry, or block.
- 4-5 – Dodge or block.
- 6 – Dodge only.

Damage Type (Roll 1d)

- 1 – Direct injury (DR ineffective)
- 2 – Impaling
- 3 – Cutting
- 4 – Crushing
- 5 – Burning
- 6 – Toxic

If the victim fails to defend in the permitted fashion, the attack inflicts 2d damage of the relevant type to a random hit location.

Duration: 10 seconds.

Base cost: 10. Half that to maintain. Minimum radius two yards.

Time to cast: 3 seconds.

Prerequisites: Magery 4, Beacon, and Planar Summons for at least one realm the GM deems “hostile.”

Null Sphere (VH)

Missile

Creates a sphere of black nothingness in one hand – a tiny gate to another dimension! This can be thrown against a wall, floor, etc. (+4 to hit), or at an individual. It has Acc 2, 1/2D 40, Max 80. Roll against Innate Attack (Projectile) to hit.

On striking its target, the sphere collapses, momentarily exposing *this* universe to the alien one beyond the gate. This realm has natural laws inimical to the very existence of regular energy and matter.

Everyone nearby must roll against HT, at -1 per *full* four points of energy in the spell but +1 per yard from the point of impact. If the net modifier is +6 or better, the effect is too weak; don't bother rolling. This checks structural integrity, *not* vigor; it's unaffected by Fit/Very Fit or types of Resistant that aren't explicitly effective against disintegration (notably, Resistant to Metabolic Hazards does nothing).

Failure means the victim suffers 2 HP of injury multiplied by margin of failure. The only DR that protects is that of a

reality-stabilized force screen (*GURPS Ultra-Tech*, p. 192). If damage type matters (say, for Vulnerability), treat this as *corrosion* – the target is partially disintegrated.

Cost: Any amount up to *four times* your Magery level per second, for three seconds. Minimum 4 energy.

Time to cast: 1 to 3 seconds.

Prerequisite: Magery 5 and Create Gate.

Splat (VH)

Area

Briefly opens a connected pair of “doors” (see *Create Door*, *GURPS Magic*, p. 84) in the area: one atop horizontal surfaces in the area, one above them. Anyone on the ground or an inanimate object “falls” through the lower door, emerges from the upper one, falls *again*, and so on, accelerating under gravity – and then the portals close, slamming victims into whatever was supporting their weight a moment ago.

Treat this as a five-yard (velocity 10) fall, usually onto a hard surface; see *Collisions and Falls* (pp. B430-431). This deals 2d crushing to victims with HP 8-12, plus an extra 1d per +5 HP; e.g., 3d at HP 13-17. This is standard falling damage – *Hit Location from a Fall* (p. B431) applies and armor counts as “flexible.” For those on chairs, tables, etc., maximum falling damage equals DR + HP of the furniture; this much damage also *breaks* the object.

As victims have no idea where the ground is until it suddenly appears, it's difficult to use Acrobatics to mitigate this fall. Roll at a basic -10, but being on the receiving end of this spell in the past gives +1 per experience until the penalty is just -5.

On landing, victims who remain capable of standing have to roll against Body Sense, Acrobatics-3, or DX-6. Success lets them land on their feet and act normally. Failure means

falling down and being forced to Do Nothing next turn; critical failure, falling down physically stunned!

This is also a Movement spell.

Duration: The spell lasts an instant, but disorientation persists as noted above, and injury remains until healed.

Base cost: 5. Minimum radius two yards.

Time to cast: 3 seconds.

Prerequisites: Magery 4 and Create Door.

HEALING SPELLS

Healing magic isn't well-suited to artillery. Still, the difference between medicine and poison, or surgery and butchery, is a matter of degree. For effects similar to the “reversed healing spells” found in some fantasy, see *Body Control Spells* (p. 11).

Magery and Healing Spells

Disinfect (below): Five levels of effect. Magery 6+ allows even higher damage.



Disinfect (VH)

Area; Resisted by HT

This extreme version of Remove Contagion (*GURPS Magic*, p. 90) doesn't limit itself to mere microbes. It *aggressively* cleanses the area in a way that's no safer for living beings than being autoclaved, bleached, fumigated, and irradiated.

All *living* things in the area must resist with HT. Failure means suffering toxic injury; DR has no effect. The amount of injury varies with the energy put into the spell, but even the lowest level produces the effects of Remove Contagion. Higher levels are intended to eliminate insects, rats, etc., but aren't exactly healthy for larger life forms.

This spell is similar to Death Field (p. 11), except that it trades being unable to affect the undead for a higher damage range and a useful sterilization effect.

Duration: The spell lasts an instant, but sterilization lasts until the area is reinfected and injury remains until healed.

Base cost: 2 to 10; injury is 1d HP per two energy points put into the base cost. Minimum radius two yards.

Time to cast: 1 second per two energy points of base cost.

Prerequisites: Magery 4 and at least 10 Healing spells, including Cure Disease and Remove Contagion.

Bleaches, Removes Stains, Destroys Odors, and Kills Germs – Clorox Ad (1931)

ILLUSION AND CREATION SPELLS

Area spells in this college – like Complex Illusion, Perfect Illusion, Phantom Flame, and Simple Illusion – already offer battlefield-control potential. But aside from Phantom (*GURPS Magic*, p. 97), which causes genuine physical harm unless “resisted,” results depend on enemies’ *responses*. Even if the GM is generous when roleplaying these reactions, mass-damage results are improbable.

True artillery here is likely to riff on Phantom and produce illusions dangerous to the weak-minded, or else to dip into the college’s creation side to conjure tangible threats.

Create Trap (VH)

Area

Fills the area with *artificial* hazards of the caster’s choice – not beings (see *Creeping Plague*, pp. 10-11), deadly energies (electricity, fire, lasers, etc.), or diffuse fluids (acid, lava, steam, and so on), but artifacts of the sort possible for Create Object (*GURPS Magic*, p. 98). This means things like razor-edged wire, whirring saw blades of enormous size, and toothed snap-traps. The specifics don’t change the spell’s effects.

Anybody moving across the ground must roll vs. DX or DX-based Traps, at -2 in either case, every second. Failure deals dice of cutting damage equal to *half* the margin of failure, rounded up: 1d on failure by 1 or 2, 2d on failure by 3 or 4, and so on. This is large-area injury (p. B400); there are too many simultaneous dangers for any one piece of armor to protect fully.

Travel is also slowed, as victims tiptoe around or extract themselves from trap after trap: Ground movement costs +1 movement point per hex; see *Movement Point Costs* (p. B387). This makes escaping the area difficult . . .

Although Traps skill can help avoid the area’s perils, it cannot disarm them. While the spell endures, any trap triggered or defeated is replaced instantly!

Duration: 5 seconds.

Base cost: 5. Minimum radius two yards. Cannot be maintained.

Time to cast: 1 second per yard of radius.

Prerequisites: Magery 4 and at least 10 Illusion and Creation spells, including Create Object.

Mirror, Mirror (VH)

Area; Special Resistance

This Phantom variant creates one illusory foe per sentient (IQ 1+) being in its area of effect. Each such subject must resist using the *highest* of IQ, Will, or Per. It’s possible to be wise enough to recognize illusion magic, resolute enough to reflexively disbelieve conjured entities, or canny enough to know when sight, sound, and scent don’t agree.

Subjects who resist see their illusory foes fizzle instantly. Those who fail now face shadowy versions of *themselves*. Each victim’s opponent appears directly ahead – a yard away if possible, in close combat if not – and attacks much as a Phantom spell would. It can strike, grapple, etc. as if real. Combat stats are identical to the subject’s, but ST and DX cannot exceed the mage’s skill with the spell, which can limit damage, Basic Speed, Move, skills, active defenses, etc.

Example: Mirror, Mirror is cast at skill 16. An ogre with ST 20 and DX 9 would face a phantom ogre with DX 9 but just ST 16, which would mean less damage. A ninja with ST 11 and DX 17 would face a phantom ninja with ST 11 but only DX 16, and therefore lower Basic Speed, skill, and defenses.

As with Phantom, this entity doesn’t have DR or HP, or suffer normal injury. Instead, it has a damage threshold equal to the caster’s margin of success. Any single attack on the phantom that inflicts this amount (or more) of basic damage immediately dispels it; lesser attacks accomplish nothing.

Materialized phantoms have substance for *everyone*. Thus, anybody may attack one. However, a given phantom only ever attacks its designated victim, maneuvering to stay close to its target. If that person is knocked out or killed, their shadow-self is dispelled – the entity doesn’t stick around to fight others.

This spell doesn’t produce a persistent effect *on the area*. It affects only subjects there at the instant of casting. The phantoms it creates can move beyond the area to pursue their designated victims until dispelled or the spell ends, however.

The entities called up by this spell are already extraordinarily autonomous and cannot be further enhanced with Independence or Initiative. Dispel Illusion and Control Illusion do work, but must affect individual phantoms one at a time.

Duration: 1 minute or until all the phantoms are destroyed, whichever comes first.

Base cost: 10. Half that to maintain. Minimum radius two yards.

Time to cast: 1 second per yard of radius.

Prerequisites: Magery 4, Initiative, and Phantom.

*Sunlight is said to be the best
of disinfectants.*

– Louis Brandeis,
*Other People's Money And
How The Bankers Use It*

LIGHT AND DARKNESS SPELLS

Spells like Blackout, Darkness, Gloom, Glow, Sunlight, and Wall of Light behave as magical flares or smokescreens, affecting visibility on the battlefield, while Flash dazzles many opponents at once. This college is lacking when it comes to damage, however.

Destructive artillery here inevitably focuses on *light* rather than darkness. Light might be amplified to laser-like levels to zap all targets in an area, or merely brilliant enough to damage creatures of darkness without posing too great a danger to everybody else.

Magery and Light and Darkness Spells

Sun's Arc (below): Three levels of effect. Magery 4+ allows even higher damage.

Sunburst (VH)

Missile

Creates a glowing energy ball – resembling a miniature sun – that can be hurled from one hand. This has Acc 1, 1/2D 25, Max 50. Roll against Innate Attack (Projectile) to hit. It can be thrown at a foe, or (at +4 to hit) at a wall, floor, etc.

Upon striking a solid target, this projectile flares with unbearable brilliance. This acts as an enhanced Flash spell (*GURPS Magic*, p. 112): Victims' HT rolls are at -1 per *full* four energy points in the spell.

Creatures with a Weakness to bright light or sunlight, or that suffer extra harm from light-based attacks (e.g., due to Vulnerability), take damage on top of the flash effect. Divide this by distance in yards – not triple that, as with typical explosions. As for any explosion, this is large-area injury (p. B400). Wounding multipliers from Vulnerability or equivalent flaws increase any injury caused.

Example: A Sunburst containing 12 energy points goes off. For most people, this acts as a potent Flash spell – someone facing the burst must roll vs. HT-3 to avoid the worst

effects (DX penalties and/or blindness). A vampire (p. B262) with Weakness (Sunlight) would *also* experience a 6d burning explosion; at three yards, damage would be divided by 3. A being in Shadow Form (p. B83) – like a spirit summoned by Animate Shadow (*Magic*, p. 154) – would suffer the same damage *and* increase final injury by 50%.

Cost: Any amount up to *twice* your Magery level per second, for three seconds. The burst does 1d burning explosive damage to susceptible targets per *full* two points of energy and gives -1 to resist the flash per *full* four points.

Time to cast: 1 to 3 seconds.

Prerequisite: Magery 3 *and* at least 10 Light and Darkness spells, including Flash and Sunbolt.

Sun's Arc (VH)

Regular

Shoots a beam of searing light from one hand. This plays over an area equivalent to that of a cone 10 yards long by five yards wide at its far end. This isn't a true cone, however, and doesn't use *Cone Attacks* (p. B413).

Going from left to right or right to left (caster's choice), roll vs. Innate Attack (Beam) to hit each target in the affected wedge. Anybody *completely* screened from the caster is behind cover. When in doubt, ask whether there would be penalty to hit with a ranged attack; see *Firing Through an Occupied Hex* (p. B389). If not, the target is valid.

Otherwise, treat these attack rolls as *melee* attacks, as if attacking with an unusually long Flame Jet or a Light Jet. Valid hit locations are fuzzier than usual: "high" (face, at -5), "middle" (torso, at no penalty), or "low" (legs, at -2). Targets may dodge or block normally.

The beam is too narrow to inflict large-area injury, but sufficiently broad that if it hits the face, beings with eyes must roll vs. HT if they suffer *any* injury. Failure means being blinded; treat this as a crippling injury for recovery purposes (p. B420). If the ray plays across the legs, roll damage separately for *each* leg – but maximum injury to a leg is a crippling wound, and the beam cannot cause dismemberment.

Duration: The spell lasts an instant, but blindness persists as noted above, and injury remains until healed.

Cost: 5 to 15, for 1d tight-beam burning damage per full *five* energy points.

Prerequisites: Magery 4 *and* at least 10 Light and Darkness spells, including Light Jet and Sunbolt.

MAKING AND BREAKING SPELLS

Making and Breaking magic cannot affect living targets, but that doesn't prevent it from doing damage to everybody when it destroys objects – witness Explode (*GURPS Magic*, p. 118). Artillery in this college is usually a variation on this theme.

The GM contemplating "mass" variants of Disintegrate, Explode, or Shatter – or even of low-powered spells like Weaken or Ruin – is advised to think twice. Magic that aims to destroy *every* object (including personal gear) in an area is unlikely to be balanced, and certain to involve too much dice-rolling.

Explosive Mine (VH)

Regular

A small patch of ground – one hex on a battle map – becomes magically unstable. There’s no mundane way to spot the trap, but it’s obvious to Detect Magic, Mage Sight, and so on.

The first time anyone or anything weighing at least 5 lbs. moves *onto* the subject hex, the ground itself explodes and the spell ends. This does crushing explosive damage, plus incidental fragmentation (1d-4 cutting per fragment) to everyone within five yards.

Falling onto an Explosive Mine is deadly! This is a contact explosion, meaning the victim takes maximum possible damage (but protects others with “cover DR” equal to torso DR + HP).

Also roll the spell’s damage dice against the ground or floor itself. If this reduces the surface to 0 or fewer HP, it leaves a crater that counts as bad footing. If there’s open space underneath, this is an actual hole to the level below, 2” in diameter per damage die.

Duration: 1 minute or until triggered.

Cost: Any amount up to *four times* your Magery level. For every *full* two energy points in the spell, the mine does 1d crushing explosive damage. See *Explosions* (p. B414) for rules for explosive damage. Cannot be maintained.

Prerequisites: Magery 3 and at least 10 Making and Breaking spells, including Explode.

Minefield (VH)

Area

Mines an area at random – even the caster has no idea where the mines are! The first time anyone or anything weighing 5 lbs. or more moves *onto* an affected hex, roll 1d. On 1-3, nothing happens; there’s no mine there. On 4-6, there *was* a mine but there isn’t any more, because it explodes, exactly as per Explosive Mine (above). Either way, mark the hex as cleared.

This spell can be *tremendously* slow and energy-intensive – 12d mines are deadly, but someone with Magery 6 must invest 24 energy points multiplied by radius and spend 12 seconds to fill an area with them. Don’t overlook lower levels, though. A paltry base cost of two energy points can, in a mere second, seed half the hexes in the area with 1d mines that are more than enough to ruin the day of “cannon fodder.”

Duration: 1 minute or until the entire minefield is cleared, whichever comes first.

Base cost: Any amount up to *four times* your Magery level. For every *full* two energy points of base cost, each mine does 1d crushing explosive damage. See *Explosions* (p. B414) for rules for explosive damage. Minimum radius two yards. Cannot be maintained.

Time to cast: 1 second per die of damage.

Prerequisites: Magery 4 and Explosive Mine.

META-SPILLS

Battlefield control with Meta-Spells involves erecting barriers to enemy magic (e.g., Spell Shield), tearing down rival spells (Dispel Magic affects an area), or rendering the combat zone inimical to magical foes (Pentagram and Drain

Mana work well, and also interfere with spells). Using Link to salt an area with magical “mines” is strategic, too. Such options are mostly slow and work best on the defensive, with time to prepare.

To give meta-mages damage-dealing capacity, the GM can opt to treat “magical energy” as a destructive force in its own right, capable of doing harm if focused. This might affect magical creatures or *everything*.

Mana Storm (VH)

Area

Fills an area with intense magical fluctuations that tear away at the magical essence of anything that has an “aura.” Every living or undead creature with IQ 1+ (including elves, humans, Martians, vampires, werewolves, and all other tangible, self-motivated beings) has an aura and is affected. The same is true for all IQ 1+ spirits and entities animated by spirits; e.g., golems. Creatures with IQ 0 – and illusions, creations, and inanimate things (like computers), regardless of IQ – lack auras and are immune.

For as long as the spell endures, all such beings that remain in the area lose 1 HP *per second*. This injury bypasses DR, but Magic Resistance bestows immunity for seconds equal to its level. Treat this delay as “virtual HP” that regenerate at a rate of one point every 10 minutes; e.g., Magic Resistance 5 buys five seconds, after which injury accrues normally until at least 10 minutes are passed outside any Mana Storm.

This effect isn’t blocked by countermagic such as Spell Shield, but can be dispelled like any other magic. If the area overlaps a no-mana zone, there’s no effect on beings in the zone.

Duration: 10 seconds.

Base cost: 3. Same cost to maintain. Minimum radius two yards.

Time to cast: 1 second per yard of radius.

Prerequisites: Magery 4, Drain Mana, and Restore Mana.

*The inquisitive who . . . busy
themselves with evocations . . . sooner
or later . . . will fall victims to some
terrible explosion.*

– Éliphas Lévi,
*Transcendental Magic,
its Doctrine and Ritual*

Punishment Circle (VH)

Area

Creates an area that inflicts pain and injury upon magical creatures. This zone affects any entity that’s summoned or *could be* summoned (e.g., angels, demons, elementals, and other spirits), beings called into existence by magic (creations, illusions, phantoms, etc.), constructs (such as golems), the undead, and individuals with Dependency on mana or Weakness to its absence. Spellcasters *don’t* count unless they also belong to one of those categories.

When the spell is cast, a glowing, rune-edged circle immediately surrounds the area. This is obvious to all kinds of vision and to the special senses (Detect, Magery, Scanning Sense, etc.) of magical creatures. A full circle is thaumatologically significant – the spell encompasses the *whole* area paid for, no “holes” allowed, and if this overlaps a no-mana zone, the casting fails automatically.

For as long as the spell endures, magical creatures that remain in the area lose 1 HP *per second*. This injury is *painful*: Victims have a constant shock penalty (p. B419) of -2 on any turn after losing HP. High Pain Threshold merely halves this to the usual -1; Low Pain Threshold doubles it to -4! Beings with IQ 0-5 must make a Will roll at this shock penalty to stay in the circle; failure compels them to flee as if due to Dread (pp. B132-133).

If injury from a Punishment Circle leads to unconsciousness or death for a creature that could be dispelled or banished, the entity experiences *that* fate as well, vanishing at once and leaving behind anything it didn't arrive with: stolen items, screaming victims, etc.

This is also a Necromantic spell.

Duration: 1 minute.

Base cost: 3. Same cost to maintain. Minimum radius two yards.

Time to cast: 1 second per yard of radius.

Prerequisites: Magery 3 *and* either Pentagram or Repel Spirits.

MIND CONTROL SPELLS

Mind Control offers Mass Daze, Mass Sleep, Panic, Terror, and several other Area spells suitable for battlefield control. Its magic never inflicts damage directly, however, and adding that capacity to such a powerful, well-endowed college isn't recommended. On the other hand, compulsions *to do harm* that go beyond vague suggestions or hostile emotions are on-message!

Below are two examples. As usual for Mind Control, they affect only beings with racial IQ 6+ *and* free will.

Mass Mutilation (VH)

Area; Resisted by Will

This variation on Mass Suggestion (*GURPS Magic*, p. 141) is faster to cast and far shorter-lived and more specific: Subjects who fail to resist must use their next combat maneuver to try to harm *themselves*.

Subjects with suitable ready weapons take Attack or Ready maneuvers to use these on themselves. The GM decides what's “suitable” in the space of a turn. It's plausible to cut oneself with a blade, shoot oneself with a gun or crossbow, arm a grenade and hold on to it, or deliberately mishandle a Missile spell or Molotov cocktail. Falling upon a 15' pike or turning a longbow around fails a reality check.

If a suitable weapon is to hand, skip attack and defense rolls; just roll damage against the torso. Attacks must use the deadliest attack mode, if there's a choice (GM's decision, remembering that the target is the torso) – and no “pulling punches.” Anyone who can Fast-Draw a weapon (or a *better* weapon) does so; e.g., a barehanded fighter with a knife Fast-Draws it and starts cutting, while someone holding a knife

and wearing a sheathed sword drops the knife, Fast-Draws the sword, and falls on that.

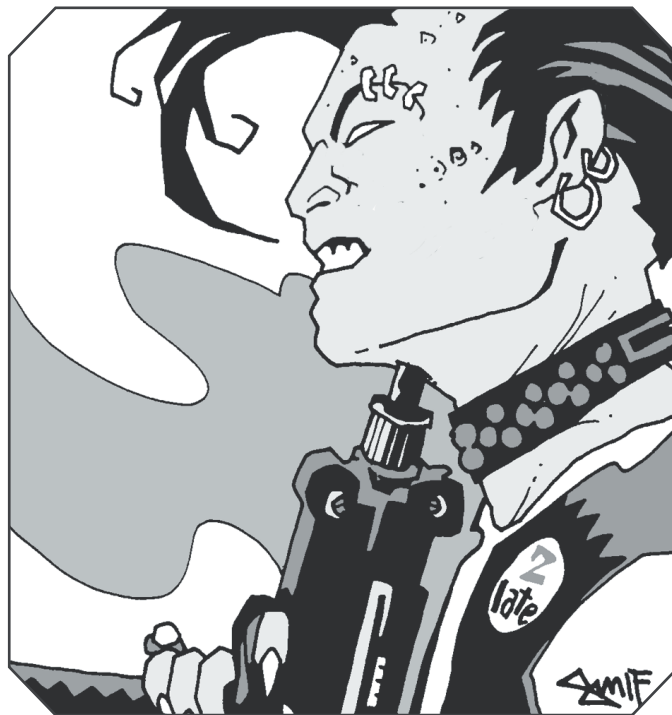
Subjects without suitable weapons do something else that's liable to get them killed. They might use Move to run as close as possible to the nearest enemy; if several foes are equidistant, choose one at random. If a hazard – lava pit, cliff, persistent artillery spell, etc. – is closer, they'll hurl themselves at that instead. In either case, they *choose* to let their guard down: no active defenses, DX rolls not to fall in, or anything similar.

Duration: 1 second – long enough for every affected subject to take one turn. Self-inflicted injury remains until healed.

Base cost: 4. Minimum radius two yards. Cannot be maintained.

Time to cast: 1 second per yard of radius.

Prerequisites: Magery 4 *and* at least 10 Mind Control spells, including Madness and Mass Suggestion.



Stabbing Party (VH)

Area; Resisted by Will

Another swift, short-lived, highly specific Mass Suggestion variant. Those who fail to resist must use their next combat maneuver to attack the nearest *ally* (never an enemy or neutral party); if several are equidistant, choose one at random. Subjects with no allies on the battlefield are unaffected.

A subject with a ready ranged attack (bow, spear, Missile spell, death gaze, etc.) uses it, usually meaning an Attack maneuver. One with only melee attacks chooses Attack if the nearest ally is within one step, All-Out Attack (Strong) if the target is farther away but within half Move forward, or Move and Attack if those options are impossible. A subject who can't attack the nearest ally in one turn *prepares* to do so, dropping a melee weapon to Ready a ranged one, using Concentrate to cast a Missile spell, or – if without a ranged attack – taking a full Move toward the chosen target.

Movement is always as direct as possible, without regard for battle formations or who ends up behind whom.

Subjects suffer unavoidable penalties for their attacks (e.g., distance and visibility for ranged attacks, or the Move and Attack penalty), but won't take *optional* penalties for hit location, Deceptive Attack, Rapid Strike, etc. unless final skill would be 16+. Similarly, they won't try to "spoil" attacks by, for instance, taking Move and Attack if they could Attack, or shifting their weapon to the off hand. For one turn, they truly want to *kill* their allies.

Attacks must likewise be as damaging as possible, never "pulling punches," always choosing the Strong option if making an All-Out Attack, and using the deadliest attack mode or weapon (GM's decision) if there's a choice. Anyone who can Fast-Draw a better weapon does so; e.g., someone holding a dagger and wearing a holstered pistol drops the blade, Fast-Draws the gun, and shoots. If this means expending a one-shot item (even a Doom Wish, pp. 13-14), expensive Missile spell, or limited-use ability, too bad!

Targets of these attacks may defend normally *if they see them coming*. Attacks from allies are likely to come from the back (no defense) or side (-2 to defend), however.

This spell is no cheaper than Mass Mutilation (p. 20). Though it's likely to cause fewer casualties – not everyone is guaranteed to have an ally to attack, and active defenses are permitted – it's more likely to scatter enemy formations and more useful against foes that can't easily harm themselves (wielding long weapons, immune to their own attacks, etc.).

Duration: 1 second – long enough for every affected subject to take one turn. Tactical confusion lasts as long as it takes to resolve and injury remains until healed.

Base cost: 4. Minimum radius two yards. Cannot be maintained.

Time to cast: 1 second per yard of radius.

Prerequisites: Magery 4 *and* at least 10 Mind Control spells, including Command and Mass Suggestion.

MOVEMENT SPELLS

Standard Movement magic includes no mass-damage spells – though Pull is great for dragging victims into an area, and Glue and Grease for keeping them there, making the artillery of *other* colleges deadlier. Artillery added to *this* college typically slams around everything in an area or turns dangerous objects into airborne hazards.

For yet more Movement artillery, see Splat (p. 16) and Force Ball (pp. 24-25).

Collision (VH)

Regular

Briefly creates a high-powered Pull (*GURPS Magic*, pp. 146-147). This must be cast on a point in space or on the ground, not on an object or creature.

At its center, the pull's ST equals twice the energy points in the spell; each yard of distance reduces ST by one. The moment the spell is cast, animate beings nearby must roll a Quick Contest: their ST vs. the spell's. Those who weigh more than 20 lbs. times the spell's ST – that's 20 lbs. × (ST-1) at one

yard, 20 lbs. × (ST-2) at two yards, and so on – are unaffected. There's no time to grab anything, but people *already* hanging onto any person or object (see below) the spell cannot affect may add +2 ST per hand used, while anyone grappled by a foe too heavy to budge rolls only if their rival *chooses* to let them go. Losing the Contest means being yanked into the center; victims and their possessions are pulled (or not) as a unit. There's no fixed Move as with Pull – everything arrives at high speed!

Don't roll Contests for inanimate objects. They're pulled to the center unless they are fixed in place or weigh more than 20 lbs. times the spell's ST. The GM is encouraged to simplify; e.g., in a quarry, all that's important is that *some* rocks move.

If there are *no* movable objects nearby and just one victim, the only effect is being hauled into the center. If there are two or more people and/or solid objects, though, they crash together at the center, much as if hurled by Poltergeist (*Magic*, p. 144). Don't work out detailed collision damage from speed and HP – damage is a flat 2d+2 crushing for everyone involved (and important objects). This is large-area injury (p. B400).

After the collision, victims are clustered around the center. On a battle map, the GM may position them in the center hex or adjacent hexes. Combatants retain their original facings, but those whose injuries haven't caused them to fall down must roll against the *highest* of DX, Acrobatics, or Judo to avoid falling down.

Duration: The spell lasts an instant, but tactical confusion lasts as long as it takes to resolve and injury remains until healed.

Cost: 1 for every 2 ST of "pull." Minimum ST 16.

Time to cast: 3 seconds.

Prerequisites: Magery 4 *and* at least 10 Movement spells, including Poltergeist and Pull.

Crushing Fist (VH)

Area

Similar to Distant Blow (*GURPS Magic*, p. 144), but speedy to cast, works once, and attacks an area. It affects only the caster's hand: A gigantic replica of the wizard's fist appears overhead and pounds everything beneath it!

When the spell is cast, everything within the area is bashed by the giant fist of force. The only possible defense is to dive for cover to leave the area (p. B377). No other active defenses are effective. Those who fail to escape are pummeled for large-area injury (p. B400).

The caster's *magical* strength – not physical might – determines damage. Work out punching damage (thrust-1 crushing) using the wizard's IQ + Magery as effective ST; e.g., a lich with IQ 16 and Magery 6 would have ST 22 and deal 2d-1 crushing. Unlike most artillery spells, where damage depends on energy cost, this one gets deadlier "for free" as the wizard grows in power.

Duration: The spell lasts an instant, but injury remains until healed.

Base cost: 3. Minimum radius two yards.

Prerequisites: Magery 4 *and* at least 10 Movement spells, including Distant Blow and Wizard Hand.

Slasher (VH)

Area

Propels a *cutting* weapon through the area as if wielded by an invisible mad slasher. It must start in the caster's hand. When the spell is cast, the blade takes wing and whirls through the air too quickly for the eye to follow.

Everybody in the area is attacked each turn, on their turn, at skill 15. The victim can try a Hearing roll at -2 to detect the weapon's whine; success permits any active defense, while failure allows only a dodge. All defenses are at -4 for an unseen attacker. Also roll 1d for the attack's origin: 1-3 is front, 4 is right-hand side (*another* -2 to defend), 5 is behind (no defense), and 6 is left-hand side (-2 to defend).

A hit damages a random hit location. Use the weapon's usual swung cutting attack as if swung with ST 15, for a basic swing damage of 2d+1.

It's possible to break or grab the animated weapon. This requires a Hearing roll at -2 first. Success allows an attack on the blade at a basic -6 *plus* the usual -3 to -5 for weapon size (see *Striking at Weapons*, p. B400). The weapon cannot defend. Breaking it ends the spell. Grabbing it doesn't; it may try to break free each turn with ST 15.

The caster can animate several weapons at once: a blade in either hand, even a fistful of knives (one hand can hold weapons weighing up to BL). Find energy cost from total weight. This *doesn't* give more attacks or damage. It *does* mean that disabling a single weapon won't prevent attacks, and it may increase the odds of a hit: add the bonus under *Rapid Fire* (p. B373) to skill, reading "shots" as "weapons." If the weapons aren't alike, choose which hits each target – or is neutralized by enemy action – at random.

Example: A wizard animates six small knives (total 3 lbs.): two fine-quality and four good-quality. This makes base cost 6. The knives have skill 15 + 1 (for six knives) = 16. A hit has a 2 in 6 chance of inflicting swing-3 + 1 (for fine quality), or 2d-1 cutting and a 4 in 6 chance of 2d-2 cutting. Two must be neutralized to reduce skill to 15, and all six to prevent attacks.

Unlike many Area spells, this one can be cast on one hex (radius one yard), making it efficient for defending narrow passages.

Duration: 5 seconds or until all the weapons are destroyed, whichever comes first.

Base cost: 2 per pound of total weapon weight. Minimum weight 1 lb. Cannot be maintained.

Time to cast: 1 second per yard of radius.

Prerequisites: Magery 4 *and* at least 10 Movement spells, including Dancing Object and Winged Knife.

NECROMANTIC SPELLS

Necromancy has a ghastly reputation, but it does most of its bad things to one good person at a time. The closest it has to artillery is Turn Zombie (which blasts a narrow class of targets) and Mass Zombie (which conjures an army). Yet many of its injurious effects are easily extended to groups.

Below is one example. For others, see Plague Touch (p. 11) and Punishment Circle (pp. 19-20). Hell Zone (p. 16) counts as well, in settings where Summon Demon is the only widespread Planar Summons spell.

Spirit Incursion (VH)

Area

Conjures evil spirits related to those called by Skull-Spirit (*GURPS Magic*, p. 151). But instead of a single entity that serves obediently for 24 hours and is free to roam, this spell brings an indeterminate number of spirits that stay for mere seconds, are bound to a place, and don't distinguish friend from foe. Each turn, every *living* creature (only!) in the area suffers 1 HP of toxic injury, which bypasses all DR.

Attempts to battle the entities this spell conjures are pointless – the magic brings a steady stream of spirits that partially materialize where the victim cannot see them, take a "bite," and then vanish into the Spirit World. Neutralizing a small number would change nothing. However, Repel Spirits excludes these beings unless Spirit Incursion can beat it in a Quick Contest, while Astral Block prevents them from partially materializing to attack. Either situation means people inside the area of the defensive spell are safe.

Duration: 10 seconds.

Base cost: 3. Same cost to maintain. Minimum radius two yards.

Time to cast: 1 second per yard of radius.

Prerequisites: Magery 4 *and* at least 10 Necromantic spells, including Skull-Spirit.



PLANT SPELLS

Plant artillery exists already: Pollen Cloud, Rain of Nuts, and Tangle Growth are like less-lethal ammunition, while Wither Plant is an area-effect death spell – against plants. **GURPS Magic: Plant Spells** presents more options, some of which (like Bloodsucking Branches and Razor Grass) can harm everyone in an area. Most such effects require the presence of plants, however, whether as their source or as their target.

Here are two possibilities for fantasy druids who need firepower when they *aren't* out in Nature or battling plant monsters.

Devil's Dust (VH)

Area; Resisted by HT

A cloud of magically allergenic pollen fills the area. This is a contact agent; it needn't be inhaled to be harmful. Thus, Doesn't Breathe, Filter Lungs, and breath-holding are ineffective!

Living beings in the area must resist the spell *each turn* or suffer toxic shock causing 1d HP of injury (DR has no effect). If any resistance roll fails, they also suffer the effects of Pollen Cloud (**GURPS Magic**, p. 162): -2 to DX – in this case, the special effects are itching and burning – until the spell dissipates or they leave the area, and for 3d seconds afterward.

Resistant and Immunity to Poison don't help against Devil's Dust. Resistant to Metabolic Hazards *does* add its bonus to resist, and Immunity to Metabolic Hazards or Sealed grants immunity.

The pollen doesn't persist for long enough for its movement or dissipation by wind to become an issue.

Duration: 5 seconds.

Base cost: 5. Minimum radius two yards. Cannot be maintained.

Prerequisites: Magery 4 *and* at least 10 Plant spells, including Pollen Cloud.

Ironweed (VH)

Area

Causes the ground to sprout pointy, *iron-hard* shoots that behave as a dense field of miniature caltrops. These spring from soil like ordinary plants, appear as though shaped from a wooden floor, force their way up between bricks or cobbles, and create cracks in porous stone or concrete. Only *seamless*, *nonporous* ground in the area – like a sheet of metal, glass, or plastic flooring – remains unaffected.

Each turn, everybody on foot in an Ironweed field automatically steps on one spike plus one per yard traveled within the area. *Falling down* among the barbs means being stabbed SM+4 times; e.g., four times for an SM 0 human or five for an SM +1 ogre. There are no rolls to avoid these fates – the shoots are too closely packed!

Each sprout does thrust-3 impaling damage, based on the *victim's* ST, to a randomly chosen foot – or, on a fall, to a random hit location. Minimum basic impaling damage

“I’LL TAKE YOU ALL WITH ME!”

Brave-hero and sore-loser wizards might decide it's better to go out in a blaze of glory or vengeance than to risk the alternatives. Magical ways to accomplish this include smashing a Vengeful Staff (p. 14) and casting an explosive or area-effect artillery spell at your feet – ideally when surrounded by the enemy.

In some settings, there may be a special spell for this. If you learn it, be aware that if foes who can control minds even *suspect* you know it (mind-controllers are often mind-readers . . .), you're a walking powder keg. The last words you *and your allies* hear might be, “Cast Self-Destruct!”

Self-Destruct

Regular

Blows up the caster at once. If the spell works, the wizard's body immediately explodes much as for Fragile (Explosive) (p. B137), except as a consequence of magical overload rather than physical instability: the crushing explosion causes a basic $6d \times (IQ + \text{Magery}) / 10$ damage; e.g., 10d with IQ 14, Magery 3. If the casting leaves the (former!) magician with unspent FP or Energy Reserve that could have powered the spell, add 1d to the blast per *full* 10 energy points. Everyone within five yards also risks being hit by bones, teeth, shattered gear, and so on, for 1d cutting damage; see *Fragmentation Damage* (pp. B414-415).

The caster is reduced to -10×HP regardless of damage inflicted, and cannot be resurrected – there isn't enough left. The fate of gear is up to the GM. Most equipment is destroyed, but for anything important, assess damage against DR and HP.

Morally and theologically, treat this spell as the equivalent of any kamikaze – one person's sacrifice to slay legitimate enemies is another's terrorist act.

This spell might belong to any number of colleges. Explosions suit Fire, but a magical overload suggests Meta-Spells and suicide smells Necromantic.

Duration: The spell lasts an instant, but injury remains until healed – and the caster and any gear destroyed are gone for good!

Cost: 12. The caster simply needs to have the energy; the details won't matter much once the spell is cast. Still, suicidal wizards should note that while *Burning HP* (**GURPS Magic**, p. 8) is logical, the penalty it gives can cause the casting to fail.

Prerequisites: Magery 1 *and* at least one spell from each of 10 different colleges. The GM may prefer something like 10 Fire spells, 10 Meta-Spells, or 10 Necromantic spells. To increase the barrier to access, add Explode (which implies Magery 2).

is 1 point per attack (p. B378). Any DR protects normally. Impaling damage *isn't* doubled against limbs or extremities (such as the feet); see p. B399. Maximum injury is 2 HP per barb, but keep track of it – accumulated wounds (p. B420) can cripple.

Example: An ogre with ST 21 (thrust 2d), DR 3 skin, and DR 2 boots runs three yards through the area. That means being stabbed $1 + 3 = 4$ times in the feet. Each shoot does 2d-3 imp vs. DR 5; a roll of 9 or more on the dice is needed to get past DR, but even a roll of 11 or 12 inflicts just 2 HP. A typical ST 10 (thrust 1d-2) peasant without DR would suffer 1d-5 imp each time – or 1 HP per barb, with minimum impaling damage.

While easy to learn, cheap, long-lasting, and not very damaging, this spell *is* artillery. A caster with a lot of energy could blanket the entire battlefield and bloodily cripple all DR 0 “fodder” in a few turns with little inconvenience to armored allies.

Duration: 1 minute.

Base cost: 1. Same cost to maintain. Minimum radius two yards.

Time to cast: 1 second per yard of radius.

Prerequisites: Magery 1, Essential Wood, and Plant Growth.

The best offense is a good defense, but a bad defense is offensive.

– Gene Wolfe, The Urth of the New Sun

PROTECTION AND WARNING SPELLS

Protection and Warning spells can control the battlefield. Mystic Mist is *incredibly* cost-effective on the defensive, afflicting foes (but not friends!) with obstructed vision, reduced defenses, confusion, and fear. Less passively, Force Dome can end fights by imprisoning the enemy, while Atmosphere Dome can do real harm to those inside.

Still, the best defense is a good offense, and the absoluteness of Force Dome and Force Wall (*GURPS Magic*, p. 170) practically begs use as artillery.

Diminishing Dome (VH)

Area

Creates a Force Dome that lasts for just long enough to appear, shrink (squashing its contents), and then collapse. Once the spell is cast, the dome takes a full second to form. This is obvious, and everybody within the area has one turn to leave.

On the caster's *next* turn, the dome shrinks out of existence. Magical creatures inside it – anything Pentagram (*GURPS Magic*, pp. 124-125) could affect, including creations, demons, elementals, golems, spirits, and undead – are unaffected as the moving surface of force washes past them. But everybody else in the dome is dragged into the center, regardless of ST.

Unlike Black Sphere (*GURPS Magic: Death Spells*, p. 20), this isn't an instant-death effect – at some point, the dome's

contents push back forcefully enough to break the spell. Still, it isn't healthy: Everyone remaining in the area suffers 4d crushing damage as large-area injury (p. B400).

The GM decides how cramped things get before the dome expires, as well as where people end up. On a battle map, five human-sized victims per hex works. The number of hexes in radius R is $3 \times R^2 - 3 \times R + 1$, so if matters, final radius ends up being one yard for up to five victims, two yards for up to 35, three yards for up to 95, and so on. Multi-hex figures count as one victim per hex of size, and may be forced into unnatural positions. Anybody crushed into the same hex as a being with Spines or an Aura *is* affected.

This spell is cheap to cast because for small areas, it's unlikely to catch many victims unless the battlefield itself is restrictive – everybody who can leave will!

Duration: 1 second – long enough for the dome to form and shrink. Tactical confusion lasts as long as it takes to resolve and injury remains until healed.

Base cost: 4. Minimum radius two yards. Cannot be maintained.

Prerequisites: Magery 4 and Force Dome.

Force Ball (VH)

Missile

Creates a miniature Force Dome in one hand that can be hurled at an enemy. This has Acc 2 and Max 80, but no 1/2D. Roll against Innate Attack (Projectile) to hit. On striking its target, the ball delivers a crushing blow – much like Ice Sphere or Stone Missile – and then *pushes off* from its target, leading to two important differences.

First, this doubles damage for knockback purposes only; e.g., a hit that does 14 points of crushing damage would do knockback as for 28 points. Knockback pushes the victim away along the line of fire.

Second, *if the missile hits*, it regains some energy and ricochets toward a new enemy of the caster – the foe closest to the previous victim's location prior to knockback. The ball is now guided by magic; roll against the wizard's Force Ball level rather than Innate Attack skill. The only modifiers that matter are range penalties for the distance between targets and -5 if the trajectory crosses low mana; the projectile ignores poor visibility and steers deftly around obstructions.

The secondary target is hit for 1d less damage, still doubled for knockback – and then the ball seeks out the nearest foe it hasn't attacked yet. This continues until the missile fails an attack roll, runs out of new targets, reaches zero dice of damage, or travels a total of 80 yards in its quest for enemies, whereupon it expires.

Those hit by a Force Ball may dodge or block. Success prevents damage but doesn't stop the missile from ricocheting toward someone else.

Example: Juniper has Innate Attack-14 and Force Ball-16, and hurls a 6d Force Ball at an orc three yards away; she has skill $14 - 1$ (range) = 13, rolls a 12, and hits. The orc fails to defend, and suffers 20 points of crushing damage, which counts as 40 points for knockback. The spell is now at 5d, and the next-nearest enemy is two yards away (no range penalty); the spell rolls to hit at 16 and succeeds. This continues for two more attacks on other orcs two yards apart, for 4d and 3d damage; one dodges and one doesn't, but there are no misses.

After that, the only foes not yet attacked are some archers 25 yards away. The missile still has enough damage (2d) and range (total range is 34 yards), but attacks at -7 for distance; the spell has skill 16 - 7 = 9, rolls an 11, and misses, so it dissipates instead of seeking another target.

This is also a Movement spell.

Cost: Any amount up to *twice* your Magery level per second, for three seconds. The ball of force does 1d crushing damage per *full* two points of energy.

Time to cast: 1 to 3 seconds.

Prerequisite: Magery 4, Catch Spell, Force Dome, and Sense Foes.

*Have I not heard great
ordinance in the field,
And Heaven's artillery
thunder in the skies?*

*– William Shakespeare,
The Taming of the Shrew*

SOUND SPELLS

Wizards on the battlefield most often use Sound magic to enhance communications on their side or disrupt those of opposing forces. Actual artillery in this college tends to take a page from Concussion (and Thunderclap), and go “Boom!”, or else crank deadly frequencies up to 11.

Magery and Sound Spells

Withering Wail (below): Five levels of effect. Magery 6+ allows even higher damage.

Improved Concussion (VH)

Missile

As Concussion (*GURPS Magic*, p. 26), but with a bigger blast radius: targets a yard or more from the center divide damage by distance in yards instead of by three times that. The radius inside which a HT-3 roll is required to avoid stun remains 10 yards – but even at 11 to 20 yards, everyone must make a HT roll to avoid stun (and if they succumb, a HT roll each turn to recover). Understandably, range is also greater: Acc 2, 1/2D 40, Max 80.

This is also an Air spell.

Cost: Any amount up to *three times* your Magery level per second, for three seconds. The blast does 1d crushing damage per *full* three points of energy.

Time to cast: 1 to 3 seconds.

Prerequisite: Magery 4 and at least seven Sound spells, including Concussion and Great Voice.

Perilous Pulsations (VH)

Area; Resisted by HT

Sets up internal vibrations in all material targets (living or otherwise) within the area of effect. *Each turn*, everything there must resist the spell or suffer 1d HP of injury as it shakes apart. This compromises armor, tough skin, and so on – DR has no effect.

Unlike many Sound spells, this one doesn't require an atmosphere and isn't generally audible. Vibrations are created *inside* those affected. Everyone within the area is acutely aware of a tooth-rattling whine alongside any pain and injury, however!

Duration: 5 seconds.

Base cost: 5. Same cost to maintain. Minimum radius two yards.

Time to cast: 3 seconds.

Prerequisites: Magery 4 and at least seven Sound spells, including Concussion and Sound Jet.

Withering Wail (VH)

Regular

Enables the caster to emit a horrible screech at a frequency that disrupts *living* flesh. Despite doing harm in a radius that depends on the energy spent, this isn't an Area spell. The subject is also the caster, who *must* be able to shriek and not Mute (Cannot Speak is fine), gagged, or silenced by a spell such as Garble, Hush, or Strike Dumb.

While the capacity to wail in this way is magical, the sonic effect is not. It can cross no-mana areas but requires a path from caster to target through a fluid medium (e.g., air or water) – that is, if the wizard were hollering normally, the shouts would have to be audible at that person's location. The victim needn't *hear* the howl, however; deafness, earplugs, etc. afford no protection. Withering Wail must *win* a Quick Contest against Silence or Wall of Silence to cross such areas.

This spell inflicts generalized injury – both hit location and DR are irrelevant.

Duration: The spell lasts an instant, but injury remains until healed.

Cost: 2 to 10, for 1d HP of injury per *two* energy points, multiplied by radius in yards; e.g., 18 to inflict 3d in a three-yard radius. Minimum radius two yards. Figure full cost *before* applying reductions for high skill, as for an Area spell.

Time to cast: 1 second per die of injury.

Prerequisites: Magery 4 and at least 10 Sound spells, including Great Voice and Noise.

TECHNOLOGICAL SPELLS

This college has battlefield applications at high TLs but offers little artillery beyond Stop Power (an effective “kill” against high-tech war machines) and Irradiate (arguably out-of-idiom for low-tech fantasy). The further possibilities below are highly optional, as they won't match every GM's view of what Technological spells – or wizards – should do, at least at TL0-4.

Death Ray (VH)

Missile

Shoots a particle beam with Acc 3 and Max 50, but no 1/2D, that has the potential to affect everything along its line of fire. Choose a primary target and roll a standard ranged attack, using Innate Attack (Beam). Hit or miss, draw a line from the attacker, through the target, out to 50 yards: *Everything else* on that line is *also* attacked, at the lower of the roll the caster would need to hit or 9 less.

This beam is broad enough to inflict large-area injury (p. B400) and sufficiently penetrating that DR protects at only 1/5 value. As a consequence, targets normally don't provide cover DR to one another – everything hit takes full damage. However, the ray *will* stop if it strikes something that has both SM +2 or more and cover DR equal to or greater than five times maximum damage.

Example: Alecks shoots a 6d(5) Death Ray at an orc 10 yards away (-4 to hit); he has Innate Attack (Beam) at 15, and needs 11 or less. The orcish hordes are arranged in six ranks two yards apart, so there are five more potential targets at 12 (-5 to hit), 14 (-5), 16 (-6), 18 (-6), and 20 (-6) yards. The rolls needed to hit these foes on purpose are 10 or less for the first two, 9 or less for the next three, so the beam attacks them all at



9 or less. Just behind the last rank is a foot-thick dungeon wall with cover DR 13 per inch (p. B559), or DR 156 – large enough to stop the ray but not durable enough, as five times maximum damage is 180. Beyond the wall is an orcish chieftain, at 48 yards (-8 to hit), just inside Max 50; the beam has a 7 or less chance of hitting him as well!

Despite being a Radiation spell, Death Ray does *not* inflict rads. It is still hard on electronics, though, and has the Surge modifier (p. B105) just like a Lightning spell.

Cost: Any amount up to *twice* your Magery level per second, for three seconds. The beam does 1d(5) burning damage per *full* two points of energy. This damage isn't tight-beam but won't set fires.

Time to cast: 1 to 3 seconds.

Prerequisites: Magery 4, Lightning, and Radiation Jet.

Flammability (VH)

Area

Everything flammable in the area at the instant of casting grows *more* flammable. In terms of *Making Things Burn* (p. B433), all but Highly Resistant or Nonflammable items are affected, and become Super-Flammable. This includes all paper, cloth, wood, and leather items – even armor and weapons – plus candles, oil, spirits, and other actual fuels. The only things not affected are metal, stone, glass, deliberate fireproofing, anything soaked with water, and anything high in moisture, like flesh, green wood, or (obviously) water.

In principle, those affected might never know. In practice, anybody carrying open flame (candle, torch, flaming arrow, ready matchlock, etc.), smoking, striking flame (say, to *light* a torch, cigar, or low-tech grenade), hit by a fire attack (weapon or spell that does burning damage), or touched to fire (e.g., lit match, Ignite Fire, or Create Fire) catches fire unless *nothing* carried was affected. Being in the same hex with somebody who's ablaze can set fire to those whose gear is altered by this spell; roll vs. DX to avoid contact. Use standard active defenses against fire attacks, hurled Zippos, attempts to touch someone with fire, etc.

The effects of being on fire are explained in *Catching Fire* (p. B434). These flames are exceptionally violent, doing 1d burn per second, like a Molotov cocktail or a fantasy oil flask (p. B411) rather than the usual 1d-1. If everything burning is worn or carried *outside* fireproof armor, armor DR protects – but if clothing, or cloth or leather armor, is involved, it doesn't. Equipment burns itself out in 10d seconds if not extinguished.

Though not *direct* artillery, this works much as if it were. Flicking a match into a close-packed group – or tagging the area with a quick Create Fire – is all it takes to do massive damage.

This belongs to the Energy sub-college, and is also a Fire spell.

Duration: 1 minute. This is the duration of enhanced target flammability – resulting fires last until extinguished or 10d seconds pass, while the spell *effectively* ends early on those who are doused with or jump into water.

Base cost: 2. Half that to maintain.

Prerequisites: Magery 3, Essential Fuel, and Purify Fuel.

WATER SPELLS

The Water college is already chock-full of artillery: Create Steam, Geyser, Rain of Acid, and Rain of Ice Daggers for damage; Ice Slick and most of the borrowed Weather spells for battlefield control, both on land and in the water; and even Foul Water, if the goal is to make enemy forces *start* the fight in bad shape.

Of course, more is better – and acid, cold, dehydration, ice (see also the Ice Storm spell, p. 29), and steam offer endless possibilities. Water is almost better than Fire at mass slaughter!

Magery and Water Spells

Arctic Blast (below): Damage – not cone width – marks levels of effect, so there are three levels of effect. Magery 4+ allows even higher damage.

Cone of Corrosion (below): Damage – not cone width – marks levels of effect, so there are three levels of effect. Magery 4+ allows even higher damage.

Rain of Ice Daggers: The GM may treat doubling base cost to inflict 1d damage per second rather than 1d-2 as a second level of effect, and have higher Magery allow higher levels: 1d+2 for 3× cost at Magery 3, 2d for 4× cost at Magery 4, 2d+2 for 5× cost at Magery 5, 3d for 6× cost at Magery 6, and so on. The damage increase is smaller than that of most “Rain of” spells, so this is balanced as it stands.

Scald (below): Five levels of effect. Magery 6+ allows even higher damage.

Wilting (p. 28): Three levels of effect. Magery 4+ allows even higher damage.

*Its violence in seaquakes,
waterspouts, Artesian wells,
eruptions, torrents, eddies, freshets,
spates, groundswells, watersheds,
waterpartings, geysers, cataracts,
whirlpools, maelstroms, inundations,
deluges, cloudbursts . . .*

– James Joyce, *Ulysses*

Arctic Blast (VH)

Regular

Shoots a 10-yard-long cone of cold from one hand, damaging anything that is alive or requires warmth, entities that can freeze (such as water elementals), and creatures of fire (e.g., fire elementals). Maximum width increases with the energy in the spell, but this is not an Area spell.

Use the rules under *Cone Attacks* (p. B413), rolling vs. Innate Attack (Beam) to hit the target point. As for any cone, anybody *completely* screened from the caster is behind cover, and targets may use *Dodge and Drop* (p. B377) to leave the area or get to cover.

This spell inflicts burning damage because that suits thermal effects best; however, it *cannot* set fires and is considered

cold, not heat, where important (e.g., Vulnerability). It causes large-area injury (p. B400), on top of which victims must make a HT roll at -1 per *full* two points of penetrating damage or be paralyzed: too cold to move, encased in ice, frozen solid, nearly extinguished, etc., as fits the target. Roll vs. HT at the same penalty each turn to recover.

Duration: The spell lasts an instant, but paralysis persists as noted above, and injury remains until healed.

Cost: 2 to 6, for 1d burning damage per *two* energy points, multiplied by terminal width in yards (minimum one yard, maximum five); e.g., 24 for a four-yard-wide cone that inflicts 3d burning. Figure full cost *before* applying reductions for high skill, as for an Area spell.

Time to cast: 1 second per die of damage.

Prerequisites: Magery 4, Frostbite, and Icy Breath.

Cone of Corrosion (VH)

Regular

Sprays a 10-yard-long cone of acid from one hand. Maximum width increases with the energy put into the spell, but this is not an Area spell.

Use the rules under *Cone Attacks* (p. B413), rolling vs. Innate Attack (Beam) to hit the target point. As for any cone, anybody *completely* screened from the caster is behind cover, and targets may use *Dodge and Drop* (p. B377) to leave the area or get to cover.

This spell inflicts corrosion damage (p. B379) as large-area injury (p. B400). Every *full* five points of basic damage rolled destroys one point of the target’s DR on *all* hit locations! Moreover, beings with eyes must roll vs. HT if they suffer *any* injury, unless wearing goggles, sealed armor, or similar. Failure means being blinded – treat this as a crippling injury for recovery purposes (p. B420).

Duration: The spell lasts an instant, but blindness persists as noted above, and injury and DR losses remain until healed.

Cost: 2 to 6, for 1d-1 corrosion damage per *two* energy points, multiplied by terminal width in yards (minimum one yard, maximum five); e.g., 16 for a four-yard-wide cone that inflicts 2d-2 corrosion. Figure full cost *before* applying reductions for high skill, as for an Area spell.

Time to cast: 1 second per die of damage.

Prerequisites: Magery 4 and Acid Jet.

Scald (VH)

Area

The area is “cleansed” with a high-pressure steam blast that inflicts large-area injury (p. B400). It causes burning damage but *cannot* set fires; it’s considered heat and water, but *not* fire, where important (e.g., Vulnerability). This is an area effect, not an explosion – damage applies evenly throughout the area, but no steam escapes beyond the edges.

Duration: The spell lasts an instant, but injury remains until healed.

Base cost: 2 to 10; the steam inflicts 1d burning damage per *two* energy points put into the base cost. Minimum radius two yards.

Time to cast: 1 second per two energy points of base cost.

Prerequisites: Magery 4, Create Steam, and Steam Jet.

Wilting (VH)

Area; Resisted by HT

Similar to Dehydrate (*GURPS Magic*, p. 188), but over an area: Every living being or creature of water in the area must resist or suffer generalized injury; hit location is irrelevant and armor doesn't protect.

Duration: The spell lasts an instant, but injury remains until healed.

Base cost: 2 to 6; inflicts 1d HP of injury per two energy points put into the base cost. Minimum radius two yards.

Time to cast: 1 second per two energy points of base cost.

Prerequisites: Magery 4 and at least 10 Water spells, including Dehydrate.

WEATHER SPELLS

Aside from many ways to make huge (even *naval*) battlegrounds favor your side in a major conflict, this college offers lots of artillery suitable for smaller skirmishes: Ball of Lightning, Explosive Lightning, Hail, Spark Cloud, Spark Storm, and Wall of Lightning.

Hail and lightning are the smart bets for additional artillery. For lightning, the effects noted for the Lightning spell (*GURPS Magic*, p. 196) apply: metal armor provides DR 1, victims must roll vs. HT at -1 per *full* two points of injury to avoid stun, and electronics suffer the effects of the Surge modifier (p. B105).

NATURE'S FURY AND DIVINE WRATH

Artillery spells for holy magic-workers are the subject of debate. On the "nay" side are those who feel deities wouldn't hand out such shows of force, to ensure that mortals – even their clergy – remain in awe of them. There are also gamers who dislike blurring the line between the blessing-and-healing niche of priests and the more destructive role of secular magicians.

On the "yea" side are people who regard priests as militant proxies of divine masters, calling down plagues and storms like prophets and god-kings in myth and scripture. There are gamers who believe it fairest to put all magic-users on an equal footing, too.

And there's a side-question: Do distinctions like "cleric," "druid," and "wizard" *make sense*? In real-world beliefs, magic is customarily attributed to conjurers, medicine men, shamans, and similar spirit-workers who aren't strictly priest *or* magician, and who heal and harm as needed.

In games where such distinctions exist, many artillery spells are thematically best-suited to secular casters. Some smack of "magic as technology" (**Create Trap**, **Death Ray**, **Explosive Mine**, and **Minefield**); others, of a small-mindedly mortal "hit stuff and smash it" mentality (**Collision**, **Diminishing Dome**, **Force Ball**, **Slasher**, and **Splat**). Still others exploit forces not traditionally associated with gods, like the acid, pressure, vibrations, and steam of **Cone of Corrosion**, **Falling Sky**, **Perilous Pulsations**, and **Scald**. **Psychic Scream** is borderline, but psionics tend to evoke tech *and* not-so-divine forces. **Mana Storm**, which manipulates mana, and **Vengeful Staff**, which is iconic wizardly imagery, are *intended* for wizards.

Conversely, some spells definitely suit "classic" fantasy clerics: **Disinfect** is a Healing spell; **Punishment Circle** and **Sunburst** exist to combat unholy beings; and **Sun's Arc** is as much cleansing holy light as laser. And not all clerics deal in healing and light. The chthonic could justify **Cloud of Doom** (Hell's vapors!), **Hell Zone**, and **Spirit Incursion**; the out-and-out evil might add **Death Field**, **Mass Mutilation**, **Null Sphere**, **Plague Touch**, and **Wilting**.

In faiths where martyrs are held in esteem, **Self-Destruct** could be standard, though its *use* might be

circumscribed. Good clerics may find it works only when sacrificing their lives to save innocents or destroy Evil. Still, even self-professed "good" faiths often value blowing up their detractors.

For nature-worshiping druids, a different range of artillery fits. **Creeping Plague** calls on beasts; **Devil's Dust** and **Ironweed** conjure plants; and **Arctic Blast**, **Chain Lightning**, **Improved Explosive Lightning**, **Ice Storm**, **Sand Blast**, and **Twisting Terror** exaggerate harsh natural conditions. Those last six suit clerics of storm gods, too.

Certain magic seems fitting as punishment from *any* greater deity. Celestial gods may enable clerics to call down **Boulder Barrage** or **Crushing Fist** (*God's fist*). **Seismic Shock** befits not just druids and earth priests, but also clerics of cosmic forces. **Withering Wail** (*God's voice*) suits faiths whose celebrations incorporate song. **Mirror, Mirror** and **Stabbing Party** – while harsh – are perfect for judgmental deities who have mortals punish themselves or face their own demons. And **Doom Wish** is the ultimate reckoning, though in the form of relics rather than temple-manufactured equipment.

For the rest: "it depends." If fire gods exist – or if Evil needs cleansing by flame – clerics could wield **Fire Swarm**, **Flammability**, **Improved Explosive Fireball**, or **Towering Inferno**. Storm gods might add **Improved Concussion** to the harsh-weather spells mentioned earlier. *Any* god of a domain that resembles a magical college may grant clerics that college's spells.

The prerequisites for holy spells are particular Power Investiture (PI) levels. Requiring PI 4+ for artillery makes meting out divine retribution a privilege of the exceptionally blessed. In *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy*, PI goes to 6, which is the suggested level for most of this collection. Exceptions might be Self-Destruct (available to dispensable cultists at PI 1), Ironweed (comparable to other druidic tricks at PI 3), Sunburst (*made* for undead-slaying clerics, so say PI 4), Explosive Mine (sufficiently passive that letting eco-terrorist druids have it at PI 4 shouldn't, um, break anything), and Punishment Circle (a Pentagon alternative at PI 5).

Magery and Weather Spells

Ice Storm (below): Five levels of effect. Magery 6+ allows even higher damage.

Spark Cloud: Five levels of effect. Magery 6+ allows even higher damage.

Spark Storm: Three levels of effect. Magery 4+ allows even higher damage.

Wall of Lightning: Three levels of effect. Magery 4+ allows even higher damage.

Chain Lightning (VH)

Missile

Shoots a lightning bolt with Acc 3 and Max 100 – but no 1/2D – that arcs to multiple targets. To fire it at the *first* target, make an ordinary ranged attack using Innate Attack (Projectile). The victim may block or dodge.

On a miss or a dodge, roll to see if the bolt hits someone else; see *Hitting the Wrong Target* (pp. B389-390) and *Overshooting and Stray Shots* (p. B390). If it hits something that's rooted in place (floor, wall, pillar, flagpole, tree, etc.), it damages that object and "grounds out." If it travels its full 100 yards without a hit, it's wasted.

However, if the bolt hits someone who isn't rooted in place – regardless of whether that's the *intended* target – and that person either fails to defend (and takes damage) or successfully blocks (and doesn't), the bolt arcs! A block prevents damage but *not* arcing.

An arcing bolt loses 1d-1 damage and attacks the valid target nearest the previous victim. Targets rooted in place aren't valid, and neither are those already hit (they're "ionized" and ignored) or the caster (whom the spell protects), but the bolt can't tell friend from foe. To hit with an arcing bolt, roll against the caster's Chain Lightning spell – not Innate Attack skill – applying only the range penalty for the distance between targets.

Handle the secondary target exactly like the primary one: A miss or a dodge lets the bolt go on without losing damage, and it may hit the wrong target (along a line between the previous and current victim in this case) at the usual maximum of 9 or less. A failed defense or a successful block causes the bolt arc to a new target with 1d-1 less damage, attacking at the wizard's Chain Lightning level modified for distance between targets.

This continues until the lightning runs out of valid targets, reaches zero damage dice, or travels a total of 100 yards, any of which cause it to dissipate.

Example: Nell has Innate Attack-15 and Chain Lightning-17, and hurls 8d-8 of Chain Lightning at a soldier five yards away; she has skill 15 - 2 (range) = 13, rolls an 11, and hits. The warrior blocks and takes no damage; this diminishes the bolt to 7d-7. The next-nearest foe is 10 yards away (-4); the spell rolls to hit at 13 and succeeds, and that man fails his block, so he's hit for 7d-7 of lightning damage and the bolt is reduced to 6d-6. Three yards (-1) from him are a trio of fighters standing one yard apart in a line; the spell needs 16 to hit, and does so, but the target dodges. The bolt, *still* at 6d-6, has a 9 or less chance of hitting the wrong target; it streaks past one warrior (a 14) but hits the next (an 8), and he tries but fails to dodge, taking 6d-6 damage and reducing the bolt to 5d-5. The bolt has 80 yards of range remaining and goes after the *next* target at full skill modified for range.

This is also an Air spell.

Cost: Any amount up to *twice* your Magery level per second, for three seconds. The bolt does 1d-1 burning damage per *full* two points of energy.

Time to cast: 1 to 3 seconds.

Prerequisite: Magery 4, Ball of Lightning, and Resist Lightning.

Ice Storm (VH)

Area

Blasts the area with a *lot* more ice than Hail or Rain of Ice Dagers – but only for an instant, and even indoors. Jagged ice pellets slash in from all sides, so there's no way to defend or take cover, although victims near the edge may try *Dodge and Drop* (p. B377) to escape the area completely. Aside from those lucky few, everyone and everything in the storm suffers large-area injury (p. B400).

The ice *doesn't* just disappear at spell's end. It coats the ground in the area, producing the equivalent of an Ice Slick (*GURPS Magic*, p. 186) that lasts for 10 seconds per die of damage.

This is also a Water spell.

Duration: The spell lasts an instant, but icy ground persists as noted above, and injury remains until healed.

Base cost: 2 to 10; inflicts 1d cutting per *two* energy points put into the base cost. Minimum radius two yards.

Time to cast: 1 second per two energy points of base cost.

Prerequisites: Magery 4, Hail, and Storm.

*Thunder is good,
thunder is impressive;
but it is lightning that
does the work.*

– Mark Twain

Improved Explosive Lightning (VH)

Missile

As Explosive Lightning (*GURPS Magic*, p. 196), but with a bigger blast radius: targets a yard or more from the center divide damage by distance in yards instead of by three times that.

This is also an Air spell.

Cost: Any amount up to *three times* your Magery level per second, for three seconds. The bolt does 1d-1 burning damage per *full* three points of energy.

Time to cast: 1 to 3 seconds.

Prerequisite: Magery 4 and at least 10 Air spells or 10 Weather spells, including Explosive Lightning.

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One day, I shall explode like an artillery shell and all my bits will be found on the writing table.

– Gustave Flaubert

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