

# PYRAMID<sup>®</sup>



Issue 3/13 November '09

## THAUMATOLOGY

### THE MAGIC OF STORIES

by Kelly Pedersen

#### THE MYSTIC KNIGHT

by Antoni Ten Monrós

#### SALVING MAGIC

by Demi Benson

#### RED DIABOLISM

by Mark Gellis

#### THE BOOK OF NULL

by J. Edward Tremlett

# STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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*A dreamer lives forever,  
And a toiler dies in a day.*  
– John Boyle O'Reilly

## Article Colors

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

*Pale Blue:* In This Issue

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

*Dark Blue:* **GURPS** Features

*Purple:* Other Features

# IN THIS ISSUE

Welcome to the *Thaumatology* issue of *Pyramid*, where we look at a plethora of magical possibilities – especially if you play **GURPS**!

First, we have a meaty article presenting a new type of Path/Book magic for **GURPS Thaumatology** that infuses your tales with the power of fairy tales. Use it in traditional fable-style campaigns or more self-referential postmodern settings that tap the primal power of stories.

Fans of the **GURPS Dungeon Fantasy** line have a new reason to don their dungeon-delving gear! Combine magic and might with *The Mystic Knight* for **GURPS Dungeon Fantasy** campaigns. In addition to a character template, this article offers new Imbuement Skills and – for the first time – Imbuement Perks.

For those looking for a variation on healing magic in their **GURPS** settings, consider the possibilities opened by *Salving Magic*. If the gods restrict access to the power to heal, this variation can still keep the heroes in the thick of the action – so long as they're careful.

If magicians wield terrifying powers, what power terrifies magicians? Find out in *The Book of Null* – an artifact, a cult, and a possible world-shattering threat, all in one.

Everyone knows that absolute power corrupts absolutely; some sorcerers simply start dabbling with “absolute corruption” and hope it works out. For them, *Red Diabolism* presents another new Path/Book magic for *Thaumatology* that might just be what they seek.

All the articles in this issue tinker with the basic magic rules in some way. *Pyramid* editor Steven Marsh looks at the motivations behind this desire in his *Random Thought Table*.

Fighting and flinging spells can be great fun, but not all the time! *Wizard's Squares* provides a way for players to flex their mental muscles.

Finally, *Odds and Ends* offers its usual assortment of goodies, including *Murphy's Rules*, a new magic item, and a new Imbuement for **GURPS** campaigns.

So grab your book of spells, dust off your divination foci, and wake up your apprentice. Even more so than normal, this issue is packed with *magic*!

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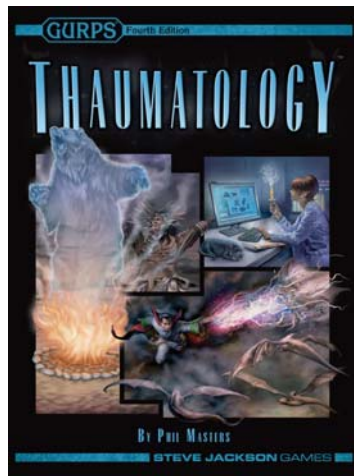
# FROM THE EDITOR

## IS SOMEONE WHO TAKES MAGICAL PICTURES A THAUMATOGRAPHER?

Welcome back! It seems like just 28 days ago since we last saw you. You're looking good!

This month's theme is *Thaumatology*. When we devised the theme, we were expecting magic-related articles; we picked the theme name by virtue of its relationship to the hot-selling *GURPS Thaumatology*; we've never been one to leave a bandwagon unjumped. But imagine our surprise when we started getting in books that really delved into what the *GURPS* magic system has to offer! They're good articles, too, many of them by writers who've proven their *GURPS* chops in previous issues of this mag.

One thing I've noticed while working on this latest incarnation of *Pyramid* is that issues have tied together a lot more than they did in the "old days"; it's a lot easier to get back issues than the paper



days, and I think having matter laid out in an easy-to-read PDF format makes accessing previous articles more inviting. This comes at a time when *GURPS* has been building off itself in new and interesting ways, too; I'm reminded of both of these points as I enjoyed *The Mystic Knight* (pp. 16-19), which developed from *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy*, *GURPS Power-Ups 1: Imbuements*, and the *Perfect Defense* article from *Pyramid* #3/4: *Magic on the Battlefield*. (That fan-favorite article was written by Kelly Pedersen, who has another article in this very issue – *The Magic of Stories* – on pp. 4-14. Check it out!)

This month is *GURPSier* than ever; we hope you enjoy it! Let us know if the callbacks to previous issues are working for you, or if we should try to limit them in the future.

## WRITE HERE, WRITE NOW

Speaking of "letting us know" – we love to get your feedback! This is an especially good time to make your thoughts known, since we'll be crafting the themes for future issues in the next few weeks. Do you have a brilliant topic you'd like us to wrap an issue around, or perhaps a previous theme you'd like to see repeated? Send comments or questions to [pyramid@sjgames.com](mailto:pyramid@sjgames.com), or post online on our forums at [forums.sjgames.com](http://forums.sjgames.com).

And if you'd like to try your hand at writing for us, we're always happy to expand our multitude with magical masters of magazine morsels! Check out guidelines at [sjgames.com/pyramid/writing.html](http://sjgames.com/pyramid/writing.html).

*Once again, Pyramid proves that my subscription was a worthwhile purchase.*

*– Mailanka, on the Steve Jackson Games forums*

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# THE MAGIC OF STORIES

BY KELLY PEDERSEN

Traditional fantasy stories, usually called “fairy tales” (although they don’t always involve fairies), have their own type of magic, with a very different feel from the standard suite of supernatural powers that most modern fantasy

provides. This article is intended to let groups run campaigns with a traditional fairy-tale feel or in a more modern, self-aware style, using the Path/Book magic rules from *GURPS Thaumatology* (pp. 121-165).

## FAIRY-TALE STYLE

Supernatural powers in fairy tales differ from modern fantasy in several ways: They are less predictable, often out of the hands of the protagonists, and – even when the protagonist does use them – commonly take the form of supernatural beings or objects rather than definite spells.

*Our truest life is when we  
are in dreams awake.*

–Henry David Thoreau

Characters in a fairy-tale story almost never seem to have complete knowledge of everything that is possible with magic. The typical protagonist lacks all but the most basic knowledge of the occult – stableboys, beautiful princesses, and noble knights rarely understand anything of the mysteries of magic. Even the wizards and black sorcerers of fairy tales are often surprised by some charm, mystical object, or magical beast that the hero has acquired in the course of the story, and thus they are defeated. This tendency for magic to be ultimately mysterious contributes to one of the essential traits of the fairy-tale feel: the *sense of wonder*. Fairy tales engage our curiosity about the world itself, reminding listeners there are always more miracles that haven’t been found yet.

Protagonists in fairy tales rarely have a great deal of magic at their fingers. Wizards, witches, and other workers of magic are seldom the stars of a fairy tale; they are the villains,

the supporting characters who help the hero, or the mysterious figures with unknown motives who start the story. While the main character in a fairy tale might learn a single spell that will leave the villain vulnerable, or acquire a magical object that will break the curse of his family, he almost never has a vast repertoire of spells at his command or the ability to make magical objects at will. The inability of protagonists to master vast swathes of magical power emphasizes the element of the *underdog* in fairy tales. Fairy tales are about the small and weak triumphing over the great and powerful, and the heroes of fairy tales must overcome significant odds.

Magical *allies* and *objects* are the supernatural forces that the main character of a fairy tale is most likely to command a number of. Allies are creatures, spirits, or people with magic of their own. Fairy-tale heroes encounter other beings frequently in the course of their travels and often make friends with them, usually by doing them a good turn. Later on, the friends the hero made will help him in return, allowing him to complete his quest. Objects are items of magical significance that the protagonist finds on his journey. Magical objects in fairy tales usually have a very specific purpose: cauldrons that revive the dead, singing swords that disrupt the spells of the Silent Mage, or the slippers of the Ice Princess that allow the hero to walk across the River of Fire.

Often, a hero will acquire an object or make a friend early in his travels and not realize its utility until he encounters the challenge it is designed to overcome. Allies and objects in fairy tales play on the element of *providence*. In fairy tales, the world is fundamentally good and rewards those who are noble at heart. The pure hero is given the objects he needs to succeed in his quest, even if he doesn’t realize it at first.

*To create a different kind of mage, consider appending unusual ideas to traditional concepts. This can reinvigorate the ideas and provide a tactical advantage against those expecting stereotypes.*

Allies provide the hero a chance to demonstrate his nobility of spirit. Most allies are won by the kindness of the protagonist: pulling a thorn from a lion's paw, giving food to an old beggar-woman, saving a colony of ants from drowning. In return for his generosity, the creature he aided will assist him, either by providing advice or a magical object immediately, or by help him overcome a challenge later in the story in an unforeseen manner.

When running a fairy-tale game, the GM should keep these elements firmly in mind. Together, they combine to create the essential feel of fairy tales: a world that is mysterious and magical, where heroes struggle against foes much bigger than they are, but eventually prevail because of their goodness. To maintain this feel, certain methods are encouraged. First, if possible, the GM shouldn't let the players see the entire list of supernatural powers available in the game. This keeps the sense of wonder alive and lets the GM spring surprises on the players. For the same reason, magical items and creatures should be kept mysterious, and most should simply be created for the adventure at hand. Such items and allies should occur frequently, of course, but their utility should generally be limited to the current tale; magical items are usually highly specific, with one obvious use. A magic sword will never be generically better at attacking or damaging everything it cuts – instead, it will be enchanted to cut through the thick hide of the Ogre of Brigsamen. Fairy-tale magic items often have no obvious use at all when they are first encountered, appearing as seem-

## What Does Magic Look Like?

In a traditional fairy-tale game, not all uses of ritual magic will be *obviously* magic, at least to the characters. A mighty wizard may cast spells with lots of flash and fire, and a dark sorcerer might make a curse accompanied by a stench of brimstone and the cackling of the damned, but a great deal of the magic of fairy tales is subtler. Much of the “magic” involved is that of dramatic conventions – the hero befriends the *exact* creature he needs to complete a task, without ever knowing what the task is; the knight arrives at exactly the right time to rescue the princess from the dragon and not a moment later.

In a traditional fairy-tale game, this system assumes that all the characters are using the ritual magic system. However, only obvious spellcasters are aware of using magic. Other characters just go about their business, and magic – in the guise of implausible coincidence and fortuitous happenstance – simply occurs. The players make the rolls for rituals as per usual, and if a ritual succeeds, the magic of the story helps the character out.

ingly whimsical enchantments, such as a singing loaf of bread or a dress that changes color to match the sky. Their use will only be discovered when the obstacle only they can overcome is revealed.

Allies usually show up in only one adventure as well, although they are somewhat more likely to carry over from story to story. However, magical allies have their own limitations. Their motivations, methods, and availability are probably not exactly what the protagonist would desire, and the more they reoccur, the more these elements should become an issue. An ally intended to appear in one story will faithfully fulfill their designated task, while one who stays with the hero will behave in a manner that should make the protagonist question the wisdom of calling on outside assistance.

## SELF-AWARE FAIRY TALES

A recent trend in fantasy literature has been to use the framework of fairy tales, but to add a postmodern twist: The stories and their dramatic conventions represent a driving principle within the world of the stories itself. In this sort of setting, the world itself conspires to make events play out in a “fairy tale” way. Sources for this sort of story include the *Discworld* novels by Terry Pratchett (particularly those dealing with the witches, who often consciously manipulate plots to make them play out the way they want) and the *500 Kingdoms* novels of Mercedes Lackey.

The major difference in this style of fiction from traditional fairy tales is that some or all of the characters *know* they are living in a world where stories have power, consciously acting to bring that power to bear. In this sort of world, the greatest magical power doesn't come from chanting in obscure languages or manipulating bizarre ingredients; it comes from knowing what story you are currently in and understanding how to either play that tale out or change it to a different one

that you like better. Magic becomes a function of your ability to tell stories to the world.

A GM running a game set in this sort of universe has to approach the matter differently from a traditional fairy-tale game, of course. In particular, the element of the underdog present in standard fairy tales changes into almost the reverse. A protagonist in a setting where fairy tales define reality might want to *appear* weak, since stories are usually about the weak triumphing over the strong. However, a protagonist who grasps the power that stories have and knows how to turn them to his own ends will rarely be actually weak, since he can control a fundamental force of the universe. In this sort of setting, it's fine to let players whose characters practice story magic know what some of the available magic powers are; their characters would know what is generally possible due to their familiarity with the stories. Players can actually be encouraged to metagame, since their characters would be expected to know and react to genre conventions.

*A “Death Mage” might have healing spells, which he uses to draw out damage (“death energies”) from allies.*

## Fairy Tales and Gender Roles

Though this article tends to use stereotypical gender roles when describing fairy tales and their Archetypes, this should not be considered a constraint on the players in a fairy-tale game. Traditional gender roles should only be adhered to in a game when they *contribute* to the enjoyment of all the players. If everyone decides that they want to play an ultra-traditional fairy-tale campaign, then avoiding a female Noble Knight is reasonable. However, subverting or simply ignoring stereotypes gives players more options for their characters and GMs more flexibility in storytelling, so perfect adherence to rigid tradition is usually unnecessary. Even the original fairy tales themselves often subverted roles. For example, while the Fortunate Son Archetype is described as male, many fairy-tale heroines fit the mold of the lucky young person, starting from humble beginnings to achieve greatness. Even the Captive Maiden Archetype is not exclusive to females; the traditional ballad of Fair Janet and Tam Lin is essentially the

story of a young woman defeating the Fairy Queen to win back her captive lover. Of course, modern fantasy authors often subvert the gender roles even when writing in a traditional fairy-tale mode, such as the *Enchanted Forest Chronicles* of Patricia C. Wrede.

In self-aware fairy tales, changing the traditional gender roles can make things even more interesting, as characters with nonstandard roles for their sex must contest with the narrative force of the universe that expects certain things from them. Whether the conventions of the genre treat the nonstandard character as if they were the standard gender, or if they simply make the life of the non-standard character more difficult, the hero will have additional challenges. For example, a female Noble Knight may be placed in an awkward position if the power of the story tends to cause princesses she rescues to fall in love with her! Likewise, a princess who rescues a prince from peril may have difficulty convincing the world it wasn't the other way around.

# MAGIC BY THE NUMBERS

The Path/Book magic system from *GURPS Thaumatology* provides an excellent framework for fairy tale-style magic. Path/Book magic has a large number of rituals and can be easily expanded further, allowing the GM to keep the players vigilant with magic's unexpectedness. The rituals in *Thaumatology* already have a fairy-tale feel, usually being subtle effects that can be adapted to the circumstances required by the story. The Path/Book rules also lend themselves well to the self-aware fairy-tale style, allowing someone with the appropriate knowledge of stories to produce practically any effect by applying the right narrative elements.

## BASIC PARAMETERS

Path/Book magic for fairy-tale games uses certain of the options laid out in *GURPS Thaumatology* to produce the appropriate feel. Paths are referred to as "Archetypes"; Books are called "Tales." These rules assume that fairy-tale protagonists are using rituals to create the unlikely and outright supernatural effects that aid them in the story, even if the characters themselves are unaware of doing magic at all.

### *Effect Shaping vs. Energy Accumulation*

The GM should choose which version of Path/Book magic working is used. The two versions have different strengths. With traditional fairy tales, Effect Shaping's long rituals and potential for very high, nigh-irresistible margins of success closely model the behavior of most actual spellcasters.

Energy Accumulation, meanwhile, models the behavior of the protagonists better – a hero can work a "spell" to find a way out of a forest by repetitively searching and calling for help, for example. The GM may want to consider mixing the two styles; outright magicians use Effect Shaping while heroes use Energy Accumulation.

In the self-aware style, the two versions represent different approaches to altering the story. In Effect Shaping, the PC tries to shape the story in one mighty effort. He accumulates the necessary dramatic elements to encourage the effect he wants to produce, then makes the roll to "tell the world the story." If he is sufficiently convincing (i.e., makes the roll), the world incorporates his desired element into the story. Magic with Effect Shaping is a matter of going with the story, producing the effects that the world already expects. With Energy Accumulation, however, rituals represent a more gradual method of changing the flow of the tale. The character who wants an effect slowly gathers dramatic weight behind the desired change, until finally the world accepts the new path of the story. Energy Accumulation magic can radically shift the story, if the magician is patient and persistent.

### *Path/Book Magery and Adept Advantages*

Fairy-tale magic uses Magery (Path/Book) with the *Limited Non-Mage Ceremonies* option (see *Thaumatology*, p. 123), allowing those without Magery 0 to cast rituals at a -5 penalty.

*A "Fire Mage" might have flight (riding jets of flame) or emotion control (inciting "burning" passions).*

The option presented to allow “fractional” Magery 0 to buy this penalty off is also recommended. In fairy-tale games, Magery 0 often represents the fact that a PC is important to the story and thus can expect unusual effects to begin applying to him. Allowing fractional Magery 0 permits a previously minor person to gain in importance and ability to use magic. The “One Path/Book Only” limitation on Magery is recommended for traditional fairy-tale games, where characters are typically restricted to producing only the sort of effects appropriate to the Archetypes they play. Those in self-aware fairy tale worlds typically don’t have this limitation, unless they are somehow constrained from ever changing the role they play in a story.

The Path/Book Adept advantage can be used in traditional fairy-tale games to represent the protagonist’s natural ability to influence the narrative without a lot of work. Dispensing with ritual space and time requirements are the most common options. Material/symbolic elements are more important to the fairy-tale feel, and the GM should think carefully before allowing anyone to get ride of them. If characters have the One Path/Book limitation on their Magery, they should have a similar limitation on their Path/Book Adept.

Folks in self-aware fairy-tale games can take Path/Book Adept to eliminate any or all of the ritual requirements – in their case, it represents increasing storytelling skill, allowing them to convince the world to go with their version of the story with considerably less effort. The GM may want to impose a minimum amount of skill in storytelling as a prerequisite for Path/Book Adept.

### *Learning Fairy-Tale Magic*

In a traditional fairy-tale game, having all Archetypes default to a single overriding Ritual Magic skill does not work. The ritual effects produced by most characters in a traditional fairy tale do not represent knowledge of deeper truths of the universe that they can manipulate to produce other effects; instead, they are the dramatic framework of the story working in their favor. A brave weaver’s daughter should not be able to call down lightning, no matter how much narrative power there is in her life. There are two ways to avoid this problem.

First, the GM can implement the *No Defaults to Core Skill* optional rule (see *Thaumatology*, p. 73). In this system, a character’s level in Ritual Magic (Fairy Tale) skill represents how much “protagonist power” they have. It limits the level they can raise a given Archetype skill to without necessarily giving them access to any inappropriate rituals.

The other option is to simply do away with the notion of a “core skill” altogether. In this system, each Archetype defaults, at -6, to a specific Expert Skill that covers “how to be a good (Archetype)”. This Expert Skill deals with knowing how to perform the normal tasks of the Archetype’s role and behaving in a manner appropriate to the role. It acts as an influence skill to impress other members of the same role. Skill in a specific Archetype can never exceed the level in the relevant Expert Skill (Archetype). For example, the third son of a woodcutter could have Expert Skill (Fortunate Son)-18. He could roll against his Expert Skill to know how to do typical manual labor, or to make friends with the poor son of a miller whom he meets. His skill in

the Fortunate Son Archetype would default to his Expert Skill at 12, and he could potentially buy it up to 18.

In self-aware fairy-tale games, Archetypes and Tales *do* all default to a single core skill, since there is a unifying principle behind magic in such settings. However, the core skill is not Ritual Magic. Instead, all Archetypes or Tales default to Mystic Storytelling, an IQ/VH skill. Mystic Storytelling includes knowledge of a large body of tales and the ability to tell a story well. For these purposes, Mystic Storytelling is similar to the Literature and Public Speaking skills. If the setting has more than one body of tales, then practitioners of magic must specialize by group. This is often divided along cultural lines: Mystic Storytelling (Western European), Mystic Storytelling (Russian), and so forth.

## **Applying the Extended Rule of 20**

In traditional fairy-tale games, the Extended Rule of 20 (see *Thaumatology*, pp. 73 and 125) isn’t necessary, since the core skill either provides no default to specific Archetype skills, or does not exist at all.

In self-aware fairy-tale games, the Extended Rule of 20 can be applied to the core Mystic Storytelling skill for the usual reasons – preventing players from raising their core skill to extreme heights, and using all rituals at default. However, the GM may *like* the idea that great knowledge of stories allows a character to easily mold the world around himself, and accordingly ignore the Extended Rule of 20. A middle ground between these positions is to increase the effective default cap – to 25 or 30, for example. This allows great storytellers to be potentially more powerful, without making it so that putting all points into Mystic Storytelling is the only viable choice.

### *Ritual Elements*

Various aspects of rituals warrant discussion on how they apply to fairy-tale magic.

#### **Time**

The time element of Path/Book magic remains essentially the same. It takes a certain amount of time to produce a ritual effect, even if the activities performed during that time are probably not the chanting and meditation of standard ritual magic.

#### **Ritual Space**

In fairy-tale magic, the notion of “ritual space” has to be rethought. Characters who work fairy-tale magic, either in traditional or self-aware settings, rarely consider whether an area is “sanctified” in the standard sense. Most traditional characters don’t work magic as such at all, and self-aware narrative magic workers don’t consider whether the location they are in is sacred – they consider whether or not it is appropriate to the *story*.

*A “Plant Mage” might have necromantic spells and can resurrect plant-infused bodies of skeletons and zombies.*

The GM can simulate this by insisting that characters take the Path/Book Adept advantage to eliminate the ritual-space element, of course, but the other option is to change the ritual-space requirement into a requirement for *dramatic* space.

In this system, an area's appropriateness for ritual magic depends on how dramatic it is for the desired effects to occur there. Casting a dread curse inside a church is very difficult, while working a ritual to summon a faithful ally while languishing in a dungeon is easy. Use the following guidelines for applying modifiers for dramatic space:

- Conducting a ritual in a completely inappropriate place (summoning a demon in a churchyard) gives -10 to skill.
- Conducting any ritual in an uninteresting location (the side of the road, in a generic tavern, in a random room in a castle) gives -5 to skill.
- Performing any ritual in a reasonably interesting location (a crossroads, the throne room of a palace, the dungeons of a black sorcerer) gives a skill penalty of -1.
- Performing an *appropriate* ritual in an interesting location (a ritual to seek the proper path at a crossroads, a curse on a kingdom from its throne room) eliminates any penalty.
- Performing an appropriate ritual in an interesting location at an appropriate *time* (a ritual to seek the proper path at a crossroads at midnight, a curse on a kingdom from its throne room on the birthday of its heir) can give from +1 to +5, depending on how appropriate the GM deems the combination of time and location.

In self-aware settings, the GM may also apply a bonus based on how many *other* stories a location has been involved in, as being the setting of many tales gives the location a dramatic "charge."

<i>Number of Stories</i>	<i>Bonus</i>	<i>Number of Stories</i>	<i>Bonus</i>
First story	0	21-50	+3
1-5	+1	51-100	+4
6-20	+2	101+	+5

### Material and Symbolic Components

Components, particularly symbolic components, are particularly important to fairy-tale magic. A fairy-tale sorcerer is just as likely as a voodoo houngan to use hair from the victim's head when casting a curse, and many a villain has been defeated when the hero learned their true name. The standard rules for Symbolic Representations, Names, and Contagion (*Thaumatology*, pp. 128-129) are in effect.

The *Spiritual/Magical Symbols* rules (*Thaumatology*, p. 129) need some adjustment, however: fairy-tale magicians rarely need explicit magical symbols to work their magic. Instead, they draw power from "looking the part" of their Archetype. A noble knight finds it easier to raise his companions' spirits against a dread beast when he is dressed in shining armor and holding a sword, and a brave peasant lad can better locate allies to aid him in his quest when he is dressed in simple homespun clothes. Having no appropriate clothes or tools for the Archetype of the ritual the PC is trying to cast gives -3 to skill. Having *completely* appropriate clothes and

tools can give from +1 to +3, depending on how much the PC evokes the correct Archetype. To claim a bonus, you must at minimum have *nothing* on his person that would evoke an inappropriate Archetype.

Sacrifices can give a bonus, but it must be an appropriate sacrifice for the Archetype involved. Rituals from good Archetypes can gain power from self-sacrifice by the caster, of their own possessions (or even their body), or from willing sacrifices made by others in the full knowledge of what the desired ritual will accomplish. Evil Archetypes can gain power from sacrificing others' goods or bodies, even unwillingly, but they get less raw power from each sacrifice. The bonus provided from a willing sacrifice should be doubled compared to an unwilling one.

Acolytes (see *Thaumatology*, p. 129) can provide a fairy-tale magic worker power, if they help the caster fulfill the Archetype of the ritual he is trying to cast. It is easier to perform rituals relating to the Black Sorcerer Archetype when surrounded by groveling creatures of darkness, for example, and a Noble Knight is better able to work magic standing in front of a band of peasants he is defending. This bonus should be restricted to a maximum of +3 for 12 participants, to prevent Archetypes who naturally function in large groups from overshadowing those who have a limited supporting cast. People who are present at a ritual but not actively contributing to the caster's Archetype do not provide a bonus, while those who are actively detracting from it (for example, a jester capering about in a Black Sorcerer's hall, mocking him) subtract *twice* their number from the total contributing participants.

### Ritual Parameters

Most ritual parameters function the same for fairy-tale magic as in the standard Path/Book system, with the following exceptions.

#### Magic Resistance

Methods of resisting magic are fairly common in fairy tale settings, particularly magic-resistant materials and objects. Nailing a horseshoe over the door of the house to block a curse, holding a sprig of moly to prevent being transformed into a pig, and so on, are effective wards. However, fairy-tale protagonists rarely stay in safe locations, waiting for the villain to go away. To discourage homebodies, the GM should apply any penalty from magic-canceling materials equally to someone trying to cast a ritual inside the protected area as well as into it.

#### Duration

Actual spellcasters in fairy-tale settings frequently use the *Conditional Termination* rules for duration (see *Thaumatology*, p. 242). In some cases, duration is established as being for some time period, or until some event occurs, whichever comes first ("a year and a day, or until you are kissed by your true love," for example). In such cases, find the duration modifiers for both the time and the event, and average them. In the example, the modifier would be -8, assuming that "until you are kissed by your true love" is a reasonably rare event that warrants -6, and "a year and a day" is -9.

A "Sound Mage" might conjure earthquakes (seismic vibrations) or teleport "slowly" (at the speed of sound).



## Combined Efforts

Users of fairy-tale magic can use the Combined Effort rules as normal. The *High-Powered Collaboration* rules (see *Thaumatology*, p. 132) are recommended – they permit the truly epic effects often seen in fairy tales. However, doubling the penalty for each participant past the first, from -1 to -2, is also a good idea; this means that only *truly* epic will be cast collaboratively, and that ordinary, day-to-day effects will be better left in the hands of a single caster.

*Few have greater riches than the joy  
That come to us in visions,  
In dreams which nobody can take  
away.*

– Euripides

# ARCHETYPES

Archetypes are the Paths of fairy-tale magic – a set of magical effects, united by a broad theme. Each Archetype below includes the rituals that are typically part of it, including new rituals. Each section also offers a description of the role in the story the Archetype typically fills, and how those that fulfill that Archetype tend to look like and behave. The ritual statistics presented follow the form given in *Thaumatology*.

## ARCHETYPE OF THE CAPTIVE MAIDEN

The Captive Maiden is often the object of quests. Dark forces hold her prisoner, because of her beauty, her wealth, or intemperate bargains she or her guardians made. Young and pure, she is prone to falling in love with her rescuer. She wins friends and allies with her kindness and with pity for her situation. She often charms the servants of her enemy, gaining covert aid.

The Captive Maiden's role in a story is to provide the hero a reason to defeat the villain, and to offer crucial knowledge as to how to defeat the evil that holds her captive. She is not always passive – many Captive Maidens escape, or at least attempt to do so, from their immediate captivity, and only need assistance to avoid the pursuit of their erstwhile captor.

The rituals of the Archetype of the Captive Maiden relate to knowing her captor's plans and weaknesses, manipulating her captor, escaping her captivity, and winning the love of her savior.

### Aura Reading

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Captive Maiden; 10 minutes.

*Energy Accumulating:* 2 points.

See *Thaumatology*, p. 151. This version of the ritual can only be used to read the aura of the caster's captor or that of those in his captor's employ.

### Finding Achilles' Heel

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Captive Maiden-6; 1 hour.

*Energy Accumulating:* 12 points.

This ritual gives the caster a vision of the target's greatest weakness. The caster must make a roll against ritual skill, opposed by the target's Will plus any bonus for magic resistance the target has. If the ritual succeeds with a higher margin of success than the target's Will roll, the caster gets a brief flash of information that relates to the object, activity, or concept most likely to lead to the target's downfall. This information can be cryptic and confusing, but if the ritual succeeds, it is accurate.

### Gentle Beast

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Captive Maiden-4; 10 minutes; gives a reaction bonus equal to margin of success (minimum 1).

*Energy Accumulating:* 3 points, +1 per point of reaction bonus.

See *Thaumatology*, p. 156

### Love Charm

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Captive Maiden-3; 1 hour.

*Energy Accumulating:* 8 points.

See *Thaumatology*, p. 154. The client of this version of the ritual must be the caster.

### Loyal Friend

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Gentle Maiden-3, Archetype of the Fortunate Son-2; 1d minutes.

*Energy Accumulating:* 6 points.

This ritual calls a friend to the caster's side. The caster can choose, when she performs the ritual, whether she wants to summon a friend she already knows, or if she wants to call someone she doesn't know but who is inclined to be friendly. Anyone whose most recent reaction to the caster was Good or better counts as a known friend for purposes of this ritual, as well as Allies, Patrons, and similar characters pleasantly disposed to the caster.

*Campaign idea: All magicians are druids reliant on "ley lines" made up of rows of their plants. Much of the campaign would involve tending and caring for these lines, traveling from place to place.*

If the ritual summons a known friend, the summoned individual gains a strong sense that the caster needs him (once the ritual has been successfully cast), as well as the direction he should travel to reach her. The ritual gives him no special travel powers, however, so a distant friend may take a long time to arrive. As long as the ritual's duration endures, he continues to have a sense of the caster's need and her general direction.

If the ritual summons a new friend, the potential ally arrives at the end of the ritual, if it was successful. The caster must immediately convince the newcomer to be friends, which usually requires a reaction roll. The caster may add half her margin of success on the ritual as a bonus to her reaction roll in such cases – the better the ritual, the friendlier the potential ally summoned.

New friends summoned through this ritual will expect the caster to reciprocate the friendship. They will not do anything that would not be within the bounds of the friendship as they see it.

## Read Memories

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Captive Maiden-6; 1 hour.  
*Energy Accumulating:* 12 points.

See *Thaumatology*, p. 151. This version of the ritual can only be used to read the memories of the caster's captor or those in his captor's employ.

## Read Thoughts

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Captive Maiden-6; 10 minutes.  
*Energy Accumulating:* 9 points.

See *Thaumatology*, p. 152. This version of the ritual can only be used to read the thoughts of the caster's captor or those in his captor's employ.

## Suggestion

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Captive Maiden-6; 10 minutes.  
*Energy Accumulating:* 8 points.

See *Thaumatology*, p. 141.

# ARCHETYPE OF THE DARK SORCERER

The Dark Sorcerer is the antagonist to the heroes. He keeps the princess captive, oppresses the country with his magic, and plots to steal away the sun. He is blatantly, cacklingly evil. The Dark Sorcerer indulges in sadism, greed, betrayal, and all manner of perversities.

The Dark Sorcerer's role in the story is to be an opponent, of course. He openly wields powerful magics that can control nature, kill the innocent, and curse the hero. The Dark Sorcerer is intelligent, but he tends to be uncreative – he rarely will be prepared for unusual solutions to the challenges he places in the

way of his foes. The Dark Sorcerer almost never considers his defeat by the forces of good a possibility, and always seems to underestimate the power of those on the side of righteousness.

Rituals from the Archetype of the Dark Sorcerer relate to curses, controlling forces of nature, and creating or controlling servants.

## Bind

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Dark Sorcerer-3; 10 minutes.  
*Energy Accumulation:* 5 points.

See *Thaumatology*, p. 160.

## Cloud Memory

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Dark Sorcerer-7; 1 hour.  
*Energy Accumulating:* 12 points.

See *Thaumatology*, p. 140.

## Command Beast

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Dark Sorcerer-5; 10 minutes.  
*Energy Accumulating:* 6 points.

See *Thaumatology*, p. 155.

## Command the Waves

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Dark Sorcerer-5; 10 minutes; gives levels of effectiveness equal to margin of success (minimum 1).

*Energy Accumulating:* 6 points, +1 per level of effectiveness.

See *Thaumatology*, p. 143.

## Conjure Flame

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Dark Sorcerer-4; 10 minutes.  
*Energy Accumulating:* 6 points.

See *Thaumatology*, p. 143.

## Doom

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Dark Sorcerer-8; 1 hour.  
*Energy Accumulating:* 13 points.

See *Thaumatology*, p. 152.

## Dream Shackles

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Dark Sorcerer-8; 1 hour.  
*Energy Accumulating:* 13 points.

See *Thaumatology*, p. 142.

## Evil Eye

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Dark Sorcerer-5; 1 hour.  
*Energy Accumulating:* 12 points.

See *Thaumatology*, p. 149.

*Wizards (and GMs) of all stripes may find GURPS Locations: The Tower of Octavius handy. It provides a ready-made (mapped) wizard's tower, suitable for mentors, adversaries, or even blueprints for heroes to make their own headquarters!*

## Hallucination

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Dark Sorcerer-6; 1d×10 minutes.

*Energy Accumulating:* 10 points.

See *Thaumatology*, p. 140.

## Journeyman's Curse

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Dark Sorcerer-3; 1 hour.

*Energy Accumulating:* 8 points.

See *Thaumatology*, p. 153.

## Malaise

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Dark Sorcerer-4; 1 hour; gives the subject -1 to HT rolls against the disease inflicted per 2 full points in the margin of success.

*Energy Accumulating:* 10 points, +2 per -1 to HT rolls against the disease inflicted.

See *Thaumatology*, p. 149.

## Night Terrors

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Dark Sorcerer-5; 1 hour.

*Energy Accumulating:* 10 points.

See *Thaumatology*, p. 142.

## Shake the Earth

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Dark Sorcerer-7; 20 minutes; success by 0-4 gives level 0, success by 5-9 gives level 1, success by 10+ gives level 2.

*Energy Accumulating:* 10 points for level 0, 15 for level 1, 20 for level 2.

See *Thaumatology*, p. 144.

## Skinchange

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Dark Sorcerer-7\*; 20 minutes.

*Energy Accumulating:* 9 points\*.

\* Adjusted for form; see *Thaumatology*, p. 145

See *Thaumatology*, p. 145.

## Spirit Slave

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Dark Sorcerer-6; 1d×10 minutes.

*Energy Accumulating:* 10 points.

See *Thaumatology*, p. 162.

## Summon

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Dark Sorcerer\*; 1d×10 minutes.

*Energy Accumulating:* 4 points\*.

\* The GM may modify this for different types of spirits.

See *Thaumatology*, p. 162.

## Summon Beast

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Dark Sorcerer-4; 10 minutes.

*Energy Accumulating:* 5 points.

See *Thaumatology*, p. 156.

## Weatherworking

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Dark Sorcerer-6; 1 hour.

*Energy Accumulating:* 10 points.

See *Thaumatology*, p. 156.



## ARCHETYPE OF THE FORTUNATE SON

The Fortunate Son is one of the most common roles in fairy tales. He is a young, inexperienced man, just old enough to be going out in the world for the first time. Sometimes the Fortunate Son is the only son in his family or sometimes he has brothers; if he has brothers, the Fortunate Son is the youngest.

The Fortunate Son typically starts the story with little respect. He may be from a poor family. If his family is not poor, then they will not support the Son for some reason – perhaps they consider him feckless and foolish, or an evil stepparent wants to deprive him of his inheritance.

The Fortunate Son succeeds in life through a combination of luck, kindness, and cleverness. Good things always seem to fall into his path, whether they are allies, unexpected treasures, or the *exact* poem needed to defeat the Evil Wizard. The Fortunate Son's kind heart often gets him into trouble (say, causing him to make rash vows to save beautiful maidens), but it also inspires him to help those he encounters, who will later aid him in turn. Rarely book-learned, the Fortunate Son knows how to use his mind; he is always ready to solve a problem with some lateral thinking.

The rituals in the Archetype of the Fortunate Son relate to luck, finding allies, and tricking his foes.

## Gambler's Token

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Fortunate Son-1; 20 minutes.

*Energy Accumulating:* 3 points.

See *Thaumatology*, p. 153

*This article's magic system could be perfect for a GURPS Thaumatology: Alchemical Baroque campaign. Much of that setting's conflict draws on the friction between the closing of the rural "fairy tale" era and the rise of the "modern" (18th-century-esque) one.*

## Guise

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Fortunate Son-1; 20 minutes.

*Energy Accumulating:* 4 points.

See *Thaumatology*, p. 140.

## Journeyman's Blessing

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Fortunate Son-3; 1 hour.

*Energy Accumulating:* 8 points.

See *Thaumatology*, p. 153

## Liar's Charm

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Fortunate Son-4; 1 hour; grants -1 to opponents' rolls, plus a further -1 per full 3 points in margin of success.

*Energy Accumulating:* 3 points per -1 to opponents' rolls.

See *Thaumatology*, p. 141

## Love Charm

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Fortunate Son-3; 1 hour.

*Energy Accumulating:* 8 points.

See *Thaumatology*, p. 154. The client of this version of the ritual must be the caster.

## Loyal Friend

See p. 9.

## Obscurity

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Fortunate Son-3; 10 minutes; gives points of skill modifier equal to margin of success (minimum 1).

*Energy Accumulating:* 6 points, +1 per point of skill modifier.

See *Thaumatology*, p. 141. This version of the ritual can only disguise a person or object, not a place.

## Stroke of Luck

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Fortunate Son; 10 minutes; grants 1 benefit per full 2 points in margin of success (minimum 1).

*Energy Accumulating:* 3 points, +2 per extra "benefit" granted.

See *Thaumatology*, p. 154.

## Windfall

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Fortunate Son-2; 1 hour.

*Energy Accumulating:* 7 points.

See *Thaumatology*, p. 155.

## Other Archetypes

Other Archetypes besides the ones presented here are possible, of course. The number of story roles in fairy tales is large, and each role can have its own list of appropriate rituals. Some other examples include:

- The Faithful Companion, devoted to supporting the hero and helping him overcome challenges.
- The Clever Animal, the classic talking animal, who succeeds with caution, stealth, and intelligent use of its natural abilities.
- The Good King, who rules his land wisely and justly, seeking to end threats to his people.
- The Oracle, who foretells the future and tries to warn others of coming dangers.
- The Dread Beast, the monstrous creature threatening the countryside.
- The Treacherous Counselor, the dark power behind the throne twisting the monarch to his will and corrupting the land.

## ARCHETYPE OF THE GENTLE FOOL

The Gentle Fool is the fairy-tale version of stories of "holy madness." He can be simple or outright insane. Regardless, his perception and behavior are divorced from common society – but this very separation gives him insight. The Gentle Fool can see the follies and lies that the constraints of society prevent others from recognizing, and he doesn't fear to point them out. He never does so maliciously; as his name implies, the Gentle Fool is unfailingly kind to everyone he meets. His insights may unsettle, but in the long run, listening to him makes everyone wiser and happier. The Fool's mild nature also makes him good with other simple creatures, such as children and beasts.

In a story, the Gentle Fool seems to act with no clear goals or plans at all, yet he always overcomes adversity. Luck protects him, but his greatest power is his perception, which allows him to see through the deceptions and schemes of the villains and do exactly the right thing to stop them.

The rituals in the Archetype of the Gentle Fool relate to protection from evil, understanding of what he sees, showing others the truth, and dealing with simple creatures.

### Aura Reading

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Gentle Fool; 10 minutes.

*Energy Accumulating:* 2 points.

See *Thaumatology*, p. 151.

### Chaperone

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Gentle Fool-3; 1 hour.

*Energy Accumulating:* 8 points

See *Thaumatology*, p. 152. The client of this version of the ritual must be the caster.

*Grimm's Fairy Stories is available for free from Project Gutenberg – [gutenberg.org](http://gutenberg.org) – as are many other books.*

## Charm Against Dark Beasts

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Gentle Fool-4; 1 hour.  
*Energy Accumulating:* 11 points.

See *Thaumatology*, p. 157. The client of this version of the ritual must be the caster.

## Dream Visitor

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Gentle Fool-4; 10 minutes.  
*Energy Accumulating:* 4 points.

See *Thaumatology*, p. 142.

## Dreamwalk

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Gentle Fool-2; 1 hour.  
*Energy Accumulating:* 5 points.

See *Thaumatology*, p. 142.

## Gentle Beast

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Gentle Fool-4; 10 minutes, gives a reaction bonus equal to margin of success (minimum 1).  
*Energy Accumulating:* 3 points, +1 per point of reaction bonus.

See *Thaumatology*, p. 156.

## Know Fault

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Gentle Fool-5; 10 minutes.  
*Energy Accumulating:* 5 points.

See *Thaumatology*, p. 146.

## Pierce the Veil

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Gentle Fool-2; 1 minute.  
*Energy Accumulating:* 4 points.

This ritual allows the caster to see through illusions and glamours. This ritual acts against any supernatural effect that confuses the senses. It does not function against mundane stealth or disguises, or physical reshaping of the form. For the duration of the ritual, whenever the caster would be subjected to effects that alter his senses, compare his margin of success on this ritual to the margin of the power or ability trying to confuse him (if using the Energy Accumulating system, the caster should make an effectiveness roll when he casts the ritual, to determine his margin). If the caster's margin is better, he penetrates the illusion, seeing what lies beneath it.

## Read Thoughts

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Gentle Fool-7; 10 minutes.  
*Energy Accumulating:* 9 points.

See *Thaumatology*, p. 152.

## See the True Face

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Gentle Fool-6; 10 minutes.  
*Energy Accumulating:* 3 points

See *Thaumatology*, p. 145.

## Suggestion

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Gentle Fool-2; 10 minutes.  
*Energy Accumulating:* 3 points.

See *Thaumatology*, p. 141. This version of the ritual can only be used to plant commands related to truth. The subject can never be commanded to lie, or to act on or believe knowledge the caster knows is false.

## ARCHETYPE OF THE NOBLE KNIGHT

The Noble Knight is a warrior for good. He quests to protect the innocent, defeat evil creatures, and win honor for himself. The Noble Knight is the model of chivalry: fair, humble, courteous to those beneath him, and obedient to his superiors. He has the usual accessories of his profession: a sword, armor, and often a horse and a lance.

The Noble Knight's role in a story is to ride in and save the day. He attacks problems forcefully, head on. Sometimes he may run across a problem he can't immediately hack apart, but he can usually find a way around such obstacles and attack from a different direction. The Noble Knight is one of the Archetypes most likely to continue from story to story, refusing rewards in order to continue his quest for justice.

Rituals in the Archetype of the Noble Knight relate to combat prowess, resisting the manipulations and temptations of evil, and enduring hardship.

## Chaperone

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Noble Knight-5; 1 hour.  
*Energy Accumulating:* 8 points

See *Thaumatology*, p. 152.

## Courageous General's Standard

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Noble Knight-2; 10 minutes; gives +1 to rolls, +1 per 3 full points of margin of success.  
*Energy Accumulating:* 4 points, +2 per +1 to rolls.

This ritual creates a charm that bolsters the courage of the holder and all his allies who can see it. The ritual automatically includes the client, but to encompass allies, the caster must increase the ritual parameters to include the appropriate number of people. Everyone affected by the ritual gets a bonus to all Fright Checks, as well as all rolls to recover from mental stunning, as long as they can clearly see the charm.

*The settings for fairy tales were once near-modern; the times and situations they spoke of would have been commonplace to their listeners (or required little mental adjustment). As an interesting twist, then, what if the fairy-tale tropes and situations were applied to different genres. What would a fairy-tale Transhuman Space or World War II campaign resemble?*

## Curse Sanctum

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Noble Knight; 1 hour.  
*Energy Accumulating:* 5 points.

See *Thaumatology*, p. 157.

## Endure Elements

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Noble Knight; 10 minutes; grants levels of Temperature Tolerance equal to 10 × margin of success (minimum 10 levels).

*Energy Accumulating:* 2 points, +1 per 10 levels of Temperature Tolerance.

See *Thaumatology*, p. 143.

## Ghost Shirt

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Noble Knight-7; 1 hour.  
*Energy Accumulating:* 12 points.

See *Thaumatology*, p. 158.

## Ghost Sword

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Noble Knight-3\*; 30 minutes.

*Energy Accumulating:* 8 points\*.

\* Modified for weapon weight; see *Thaumatology*, p. 161.

See *Thaumatology*, p. 161.

## Hasten Mount

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Noble Knight-3; 10 minutes; gives +1 Move per 3 full points in margin of success (minimum +1 Move).

*Energy Accumulating:* 7 points, +3 per +1 Move granted.

See *Thaumatology*, p. 149. This version of the ritual must be cast on the caster's mount. He can dismount without ending the ritual, but if anyone ever mounts the animal without the Noble Knight also on the mount, the ritual's duration immediately ends.

## Hunter's Blessing

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Noble Knight-2; 1d×10 minutes; grants a base +2 to hunting skills, and another +1 per 2 full points in margin of success.

*Energy Accumulating:* 9 points for a base +2 to skill, +2 per additional +1 to skill.

See *Thaumatology*, p. 156. This version of the ritual can only be cast to hunt a species dangerous to humans, and the caster must be part of the hunting party.

## Repair

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Noble Knight-3; 30 minutes.  
*Energy Accumulating:* 8 points

See *Thaumatology*, p. 148. This version of the ritual only repairs the caster's personal and *necessary* equipment – it will fix a broken armor strap, but not a loose button on a court outfit.

## Tirelessness

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Noble Knight-2; 30 minutes; gives +1 to endurance roll every full 2 points in margin of success (minimum +2).

*Energy Accumulating:* 9 points, +2 per +1 granted to endurance rolls.

See *Thaumatology*, p. 150. This version of the ritual can only affect the caster or his mount.

## Warrior's Blessing

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Noble Knight-4; 1 hour.  
*Energy Accumulating:* 11 points.

See *Thaumatology*, p. 150.

## Weapon Blessing

*Effect Shaping:* Archetype of the Noble Knight-4\*; 1 hour.  
*Energy Accumulating:* 11 points\*.

\* Modified for weapon weight; see *Thaumatology*, p. 155.

See *Thaumatology*, p. 155.

# TALES

Tales are the equivalent of Books in the standard Path/Book system. A Tale organizes magic not by theme but by common story. A character who knows a Tale can potentially work *any* of the magical effects commonly described in the story. For example, someone who knew the Tale of Snow White could cast magic to find the fairest person in the land, to charm someone sent to kill him, to find his way through a dangerous forest, to befriend allies, to poison an apple for an enemy, or to wake someone under a curse.

Dividing magic into Tales only works with self-aware fairy tale settings, since it relies on the characters understanding that they live in a narrative and can actively work to invoke the elements of the narrative that their Tale describes. A character who knew the Tale of Cinderella would need to put herself in a position of losing all her efforts before she could use a ritual from the

Tale to summon an ally to give her a second chance. Tales can coexist with Archetypes in a self-aware fairy-tale world; this gives some story magicians the broad flexibility that Archetypes permit while providing others with the eclectic selection of Tales.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kelly Pedersen lives and works in Saskatoon, Canada, where he continues to search for a job that will both pay for gaming books and allow him enough free time to participate in gaming sessions. He feels that writing for *Pyramid* is a good step toward fulfilling both of these goals. He enjoys a wide range of game systems and styles, but he remains committed to annoying his friends by pointing out, "You know, we could do this with **GURPS**." In his free time, he bothers his cat.

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# THE MYSTIC KNIGHT

BY ANTONI TEN MONRÓS

Imbuement Skills, as detailed in *Power-Ups 1: Imbuements* and *The Perfect Defense* from *Pyramid #3/4: Magic on the Battlefield*, are especially fitting for **GURPS Dungeon Fantasy**, and the former includes some suggestions on how to add them to existing templates. It is, however, much more in the style of *Dungeon Fantasy* if such special qualities are only available to those with a certain template. If you include this template in your games, it is recommended that you only allow access to the Imbue advantage through it, and the associated lens.

*Be brave and pure, fearless to the strong and humble to the weak; and so, whether this love prosper or no, you will have fitted yourself to be honored by a maiden's love, which is, in sooth, the highest guerdon which a true knight can hope for.*

– Arthur Conan Doyle

## MYSTIC KNIGHT

250 points

You've unlocked the power to access your internal lines of power, and, by making precise muscle movements, you can make them resonate with the magic around you. You might have had an innate gift, achieved it through rigorous spiritual exercises, or had forced them open with an excruciating ritual that left scars on your mystical aura. Whatever the reason, you can now channel magical energies to power your attacks, on an instinctual level.

Like the holy warrior, you wield supernatural powers in combat. Unlike him, you're not focused solely on fighting evil, nor are you blinded by fanaticism. Instead of the energies of a

fickle god that may end up displeased with you due to your practical nature, you wield arcane energies. Wizards consider you an uneducated brute, toying with mysteries better left to them, but you have enough applied knowledge of harnessing magical forces to boost your martial prowess.

**Attributes:** ST 14 [40]; DX 14 [80]; IQ 10 [0]; HT 13 [30].

**Secondary Characteristics:** Damage 1d/2d; BL 39 lbs.; HP 14 [0]; Will 10 [0]; Per 10 [0]; FP 13 [0]; Basic Speed 6.00 [-15]; Basic Move 6 [0].

**Advantages:** Imbue 2 (Magical, -10%) [18]; Eldritch Talent 3 [15]; and Magery 0 [5]. • Another 51 points from among ST +1 to +5 [10/level], DX +1 to +2 [20/level], HT +1 to +5 [10/level], HP +1 to +4 [2/level], FP +1 to +3 [3/level], Basic Speed +1 or +2 [20 or 40], Combat Reflexes [15], Enhanced Block 1 [5], Enhanced Parry 1 (One melee skill) [5], Eldritch Talent 4 [5], Fearlessness [2/level], Fit [5] or Very Fit [15], Hard to Kill [2/level], Hard to Subdue [2/level], High Pain Threshold [10], Imbue 3 (Magical, -10%) [18], Imbued Weapon [1], Imbued Weapon Bond [1], Luck [15] or Extraordinary Luck [30], Signature Gear [Varies], or Unfazeable [15]. Put any leftovers in more Imbuement Skills.

**Disadvantages:** -20 points chosen from among Bad Temper [-10\*], Bloodlust [-10\*], Callous [-5], Code of Honor (Pirate's or Soldier's) [-5 or -10], Frightens Animals [-10], Magic Susceptibility 1-5 [-3/level], Obsession (Slay some specific type of monster) [-5\*], One Eye [-15], Sense of Duty (Nation) [-10], Unnatural Features 1-5 [1/level], or Wounded [-5]. • Another -15 points chosen from among those traits or Bully [-10\*], Greed [-15\*], Honesty [-10\*], Lecherousness [-15\*], Overconfidence [-5\*], Pyromania [-5\*], Sense of Duty (Adventuring companions) [-5], Social Stigma (Excommunicated) [-5], or Supernatural Features (Flagrant Aura or Unmistakable Power) [Varies]†.

**Primary Skills:** Fast-Draw (any) (E) DX [1]-14 and Shield (E) DX+2 [4]-16‡. • One of Crossbow or Thrown Weapon (any), both (E) DX+2 [4]-16; Bow or Throwing, both (A) DX+1 [4]-15; or Sling (H) DX [4]-14. • One of Axe/Mace, Broadsword, Polearm‡, Shortsword, Spear‡, Two-Handed Axe/Mace‡ or Two-Handed Sword‡, all (A) DX+5 [20]-19; or Flail (H) DX+4 [20]-18.

*The GURPS Range Ruler is a handy item to speed up combat. It's available at [e23.sjgames.com](http://e23.sjgames.com) – and it's free!*



**Secondary Skills:** Armoury (Body Armor or Melee Weapons) (A) IQ+1 [4]-11 and Thaumatology (VH) IQ+1 [2]-11§. • One of Brawling (E) DX+1 [2]-15 or Boxing (A) DX [2]-14.

**Background Skills:** Four of Forced Entry (E) DX [1]-14; Climbing or Stealth, both (A) DX-1 [1]-13; First Aid, Gesture, or Savoir-Faire (High Society), all (E) IQ [1]-10; Gambling, Heraldry, Hidden Lore (Elementals, Spirits, or Undead), or Streetwise, all (A) IQ-1 [1]-9; Strategy or Tactics, both (H) IQ-2 [1]-8; Carousing (E) HT [1]-13; Hiking (A) HT-1 [1]-12; Intimidation (A) Will-1 [1]-9; Scrounging (E) Per [1]-10; or Observation (A) Per-1 [1]-9.

**Imbuement Skills:** 10 Imbuement Skills, all (VH) DX [1]-14§.  
• A further 10 points in either existing Imbuement Skills or new Imbuement Skills, all (VH) DX [1]-14§.

\* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

† From *GURPS Thaumatology*, p. 25.

‡ Mystic knights who prefer two-handed weapons can omit Shield and raise a two-handed combat skill by a level.

§ Includes +3 from Eldritch Talent.

### Customization Notes

Your 20 points in Imbuement Skills allow a great deal of variation. Melee Imbuements allow you to boost your offensive capabilities greatly. Defensive ones, coupled with heavy armor and a shield, give you resilience unmatched by other adventurers, and Ranged ones allow you to hold your own in ranged combat, without being a specialist like the scout. Some proposed archetypes:

*Brilliant Defender:* Shield and Armor Imbuement Skills are critical. Concentrate on being able to take a lot of damage and protect other party members while still being too dangerous to ignore: Annihilating Weapon, Blinding Defense, Blunting Armor, Corrosive Strike, Dancing Shield, Energizing Defense (Armor and Shield), Expand Armor, Fireproof Armor, Healthful Armor, Impenetrable Armor, Insulated Armor, Lighten Armor, Padded Armor, Reinforce Armor, Restorative Armor, Rigid Armor, Sovereign Armor, Vengeful Defense, and Widen Shield.

*Death Knight:* You focus on crippling, incapacitating, and killing your foes. This is one of the few archetypes that can forego a shield and take full advantage of two-handed weapon options. Suitable Imbuement Skills include Annihilating Weapon, Chilling Strike, Continuing Attack, Corrosive Strike, Crippling Blow, Dancing Weapon, Drugged Weapon, Envenomed Weapon, Forceful Blow, Ghostly Weapon, Penetrating Strike, Shockwave, Stealthy Attack, Strike of Negation, Stupefying Blow, Toxic Strike, Traumatic Blow, Vampiric Weapon, and Withering Strike. Place an extra point in Vampiric Weapon.

*Knight of the Elements:* You excel at taking advantage of your foes' elemental weaknesses, and withstanding their elemental attacks. You specialize in battling elementals. Take Hidden Lore (Elementals) to identify such creatures. Suitable Imbuement Skills include Binding Shot, Burning Strike, Chilling Strike, Corrosive Strike, Cutting Strike, Electric Weapon, Fireproof Armor, Ghostly Weapon, Guided Weapon, Incendiary Weapon, Insulated Armor, Nullifying Armor, Reinforce Weapon (p. 18), Restorative Armor, Shockwave,

Sovereign Armor, Spiritual Defense, Strike of Negation, and Withering Strike.

Like knights, most mystic knights trade the 5 points from quirks for cash for arms and armor.

## Eldritch Might

This is the arcane equivalent to Holy Might, as used by mystic knights.

### Power Modifier: Magical

-10%

The powers of Eldritch Might are based on the instinctive channeling of magical energies through one's body, and they suffer the same penalties for low mana zones as wizard spells.

### Eldritch Abilities

Imbue 1, 2, or 3 (PM, -10%) [9, 18, or 36].

### Eldritch Talent

5 points/level

Eldritch Talent gives a bonus to all Imbuement Skills purchased as part of Eldritch Might, to Thaumatology, and to Magery rolls to detect magic items and changes in mana levels.

## POWER-UPS FOR MYSTIC KNIGHTS

Mystic knights can get up to Eldritch Talent 6, Energy Reserve 20 (Magical) [3/level], and Enhanced Parry 1-3 (Imbuement Skills) [5/level] (which gives +1 to all defensive uses of Imbuement Skills). They can purchase Imbuement Perks and are able to add and improve Imbuement Skills whenever they have enough points – even in battle!

## MIXING PROFESSIONS

These lenses are provided for those using the *Mixing Professions* rules from *Dungeon Fantasy 3: The Next Level*.

### Lenses for Mystic Knights

Mystic knights should use the lenses described for knights (*Dungeon Fantasy 3*, pp. 28-29), with the following exceptions:

• Mystic knight-wizards should upgrade Eldritch Talent 3 to full Magery 3. As they already possess Magery 0, this frees a total of 10 points from the lens, which may be spent on further Magery or more spells.

*GURPS Power-Ups 2: Perks has hundreds of new options to give your hero the upper hand he needs.*

## New Enhancement Skills

### Reinforce Weapon

Melee; DX/Very Hard

*Default:* Specialty for related weapon at same penalty as weapon default.

*Prerequisite:* Imbue 1.

Reinforces the structure of the weapon, changes it into adamant, or coats it with an indestructible force field for an instant. For unarmed attacks, this protects you from the situations governed by the rules for *Hurting Yourself* (p. B379) and the *Parrying Unarmed* (p. B376) rules. For armed attacks, this makes the weapon unbreakable when parrying with it (as per *Parrying Heavy Weapons*, p. B376). This Imbuement also protects the weapon (or body part) from the damage from attacks that are destructive for parrying purposes – such as force swords and attacks enhanced with *Annihilating Weapon* – and innate attacks with the *Aura* enhancement, as long as they are not Cosmic.

*Modifiers:* -5 to protect your weapon against Cosmic attacks.

### Returning Weapon

Ranged; DX/Very Hard

*Default:* Specialty for related weapon at same penalty as weapon default.

*Prerequisite:* Imbue 2.

This makes any single imbued projectile return to you. It can either fly straight to you, or dematerialize and reform in your possession. Thrown weapons appear directly in your hands, and ammo appears – intact – in your quiver, magazine, or equivalent. Any single-use effect on the projectile is still expended, though. If the weapon has RoF greater than 1, only the first projectile returns.

*Modifiers:* -1 per additional projectile returned, up to the weapon's RoF.

• Mystic knight-knights should use the template for the holy warrior-knight. This is mostly a level-up template, since most of the choices are already in the mystic knight template. However, it grants access to *Born War Leader*.

### Becoming a Mystic Knight

Any class can benefit from Imbuement Skills. The GM, however, might wish to add special training difficulties, charge a premium for it, or add some mandatory disadvantages, representing metaphysical scars resulting from the acquisition of such powers.

#### Mystic Knight Lens

50 points

**Advantages:** Eldritch Talent 1\*† (p. 17) [5]; Imbue 1 (Magical -10%) [9], Magery 0 [5].

**Skills:** Thaumatology (VH) IQ-2 [1].

**Special Abilities:** 30 points total in Eldritch Talent 2 to 4 [5/level], Imbue 2 or 3 [9 or 27] and Imbuement Skills all (VH) DX-2 [1].

\* Gives +1 to Thaumatology and Imbuement Skills, already included in the relevant skills.

† Wizards who take the mystic knight lens should drop Eldritch Talent, since Magery already gives them bonus to magical Imbuement Skills, and should base those skills on IQ instead of DX. Likewise, bards have the option of dropping Eldritch Talent from the lens. In this case, they should apply the Bard-Song power modifier to Imbue, changing the cost to [7, 14, or 28], and basing Imbuement Skills on IQ. In any case,

the GM is encouraged to limit access to Imbuement Skills to those he feels are reasonable, for those that do not take the whole lens.

*A true knight is fuller of  
bravery in the midst, than  
in the beginning of danger.  
– Sir Philip Sidney*

## MAKING A MYSTIC KNIGHT USEFUL

Given their strong combat focus, mystic knights are always useful in the situations where knights are useful. If using Defensive Imbuement Skills, mystic knights can be incredibly resilient. Having the Thaumatology and Hidden Lore (Elementals) skills, plus Magery 0, they can fulfill some of the roles of the wizard, though not as well. In order to make him shine, however, you need to add foes that require some of his special skills to defeat: insubstantial ghosts, creatures with weaknesses to some types of damage, and the like.

*If you're tapping Imbuements, consider giving them cool names. After all, "harnessing the Winter Wind's Edge" sounds better than "activating my Chilling Strike."*

## Imbuement Perks

Imbuement Perks are magical in nature, and thus have Magery as a prerequisite and require mana to work. Mystic knights can purchase 1 Imbuement Perk per 10 points spent in Imbuement Skills. The base template offers up to two Imbuement Perks, as it already includes 20 points spent on Imbuement Skills.

### *Frightening Side Effects*

Mystic knights take pride in putting unsettling flourishes on Imbuement Skills in order to unnerve enemies: Annihilating Weapon that makes your weapon project an uncanny aura of darkness, Vampiric Weapon that makes your weapon emit blood-curdling shrieks when damaging enemies, etc. These are mostly just special effects, but with enough practice, a particular Imbuement Skill can be truly frightening. You must specialize by Imbuement Skill.

On any turn during which you incapacitate – daze, knock out, paralyze, petrify, etc. – or kill an enemy while you’re using the chosen Imbuement Skill, make an immediate second roll against that skill. Success manifests scary side effects that let you try Intimidation (p. B202) against any witnesses as a free action that turn. You must specialize by Imbuement Skill. Note down the exact nature of the effect. Not all specializations might be possible; the GM’s word is final.

### *Illumination*

Imbuement Skills are assumed to make the items you imbue glow, be covered in flames, or show similar special effects. You have managed to focus this mostly cosmetic effect to provide useful illumination. You can charge an item you’re able to imbue to make it glow like a torch (see *Dungeon Fantasy 1: Adventurers*, p. 24). The nature of the glow depends on what Imbuement Skills you possess, on the setting, and on the GM’s prerogative; it lasts indefinitely, without rolls or FP expenditure.

### *Imbued Weapon*

You own a ritually named and attuned weapon (or shield) that you must purchase as Signature Gear; details depend on the setting, and may involve oaths, spells, or inscriptions, and/or require a fine-quality, or similarly special item (GM’s decision). This perk grants that weapon the potential for gaining special abilities. It earns character points at the same rate as you when you per-

form deeds of supernatural significance. Each point can be exchanged for \$500 worth of enchantments chosen by the GM, which optionally increases the possession’s value as Signature Gear. See *Dungeon Fantasy 1*, p. 30, to determine what’s possible. You can only have one Imbued Weapon perk, but should you lose it, you can purchase it a new for a new weapon.

### *Imbued Weapon Bond*

*Prerequisite:* Imbued Weapon

The Weapon Bond perk in *Dungeon Fantasy 1* assumes a balanced, familiar weapon that grants the owner +1 to effective combat skill; it isn’t a supernatural attunement. Mystic knights can purchase a variant that is supernatural. The mystic knight must specialize in a weapon (or shield) that he has selected with the Imbued Weapon perk, and can have only one Imbued Weapon Bond at a time. However, he may freely shift the bond to another suitable item with a day of meditation, which makes replacing lost items easier to manage.

### *Improvised Imbuement*

You can manifest Imbuements without knowing the relevant Imbuement Skills. Each try costs 2 extra FP in addition to the normal costs, and requires a roll against DX-7, with a bonus equal to any relevant power Talent (such as Magery or Eldritch Talent). Whether this is due to natural connection with the forces in play or due to extensive knowledge of the mechanics of Imbuement is setting specific and up to the GM to explain.

### *Mana Compensation*

You have discovered how to use mana more efficiently to power your Imbuements. You cannot imbue if there’s no mana; however, as long as there is any mana at all, the total penalty you suffer for lower-than-normal mana and for negative aspects is -1 less severe for you.

This perk is only available if your Imbue has the Magical power modifier.

### *Sacrificial Imbuement*

You know how to burn your life force to power Imbuement Skills. You can spend HP instead of FP to pay for the costs of Imbuement Skills.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Antoni Ten Monrós is a 27-year-old Spanish information technologies specialist and Java programmer, who started role-playing 15 years ago, with *Stormbringer* and *MERP*. He found *GURPS* 10 years ago and has been hooked since. He lives in Alboraya, Valencia, Spain (to his chagrin), and is a retired

member of Steve Jackson Games MIB Program and an active playtester. When he saw *GURPS Power-Ups 1: Imbuements* he knew he had to write a template for his *Dungeon Fantasy* games. He thanks Emily “Bruno” Smirle, who proofread the original draft; Joan “Artic” Sanchís and Luis “Yolum” Soriano, who field tested it; and the rest of his group, who patiently put up with him while he tweaked it every session.

# WIZARD'S SQUARES

Included on the following pages is a puzzle to present to players who enjoy real-world challenges. You'll need the tiles on p. 21, and one grid from pp. 22-25. (The ones on pp. 24-25 are for those who would prefer to print in black-and-white only.)

## THE PREMISE

The basic idea and goal is the same throughout: Put the tiles such that no two of the same type are placed in the same row, column, or region (either the five-square blocks on pp. 22 and 24, or the four blocks connected by circles on pp. 23 and p. 25). In other words, from a puzzle standpoint, this exists *exactly* like traditional sudoku-style puzzles, albeit using a 4x4 grid instead of the traditional nine-by-nine.

Of course, the obfuscation is fairly significant; turning the puzzle at a 45-degree angle and adding other superfluous symbols hides what's really going on. Once the players figure out what the objective is, the puzzle itself should be fairly straightforward to solve; 4x4 sudoku-style puzzles are usually quick. (This is intentional; no one wants to gobble up the game time required to solve a long-form 9x9 puzzle!)

## THE PUZZLE

Puzzles can be generated by hand (starting with a completed grid and then removing enough tiles – up to 12 – to make it as challenging as desired). Alternatively, the Internet provides any number of 4x4 puzzles that can be adapted; simply assign one type of tile for each number 1 to 4 (for example, Earth is 1, Air is 2, etc.). As a final possibility, you can simply provide the players with a totally blank grid and the tiles; in this case, *any* solution that meets the criteria can be accepted.

The image below provides a sample starting layout, as well as demonstrating how the tiles are set on the grid.

## THE TILES

Three sets of tiles (each consisting of two columns) are presented for use. The first set uses just the alchemical symbols for classical elements (Water, Fire, Air, Earth); in this case, the dot represents “up.”

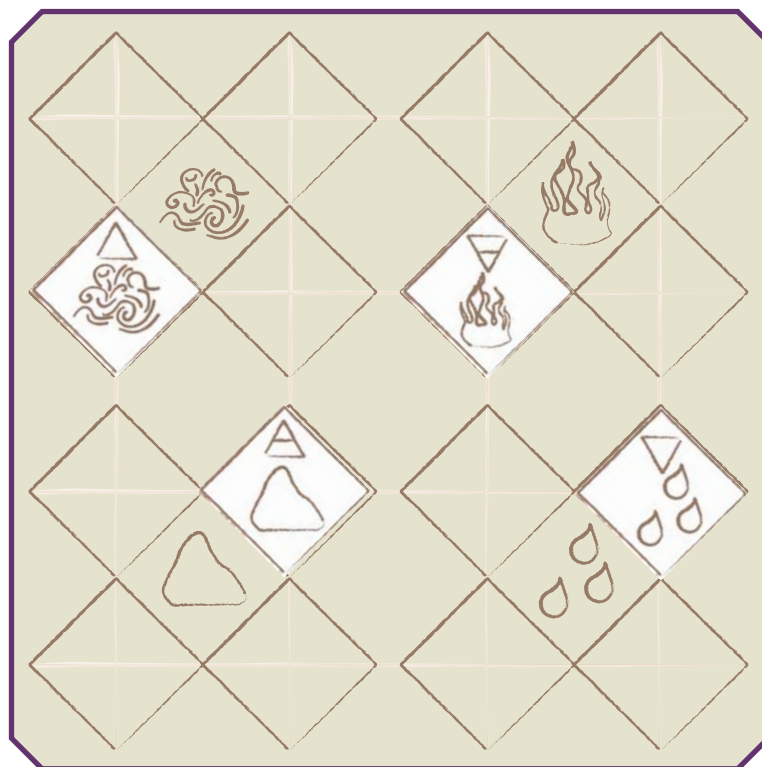
The second set includes both the alchemical symbols as well as the stylistic symbols; they're primarily intended for the grids on p. 22 and p. 24. In this case,

there is a secondary necessity to line up the tiles with their respective stylistic symbols (having the four wind tiles surrounding the wind icon, etc.), and then having the alchemical symbols line up without repeats in each row, column, and quadrant. This set of tiles should actually make the puzzle easier; once the players figure out to sort out the symbols by stylistic symbol, the rest has an easier shot at falling into place.

The last set includes blank areas in the center, for which the GM can come up with a clever use. For example, they might contain letters that spell out a secret message – although, in this case, the GM should remember that each tile will need to be placed in its correct spot, which can make it even trickier!

## GAME USE

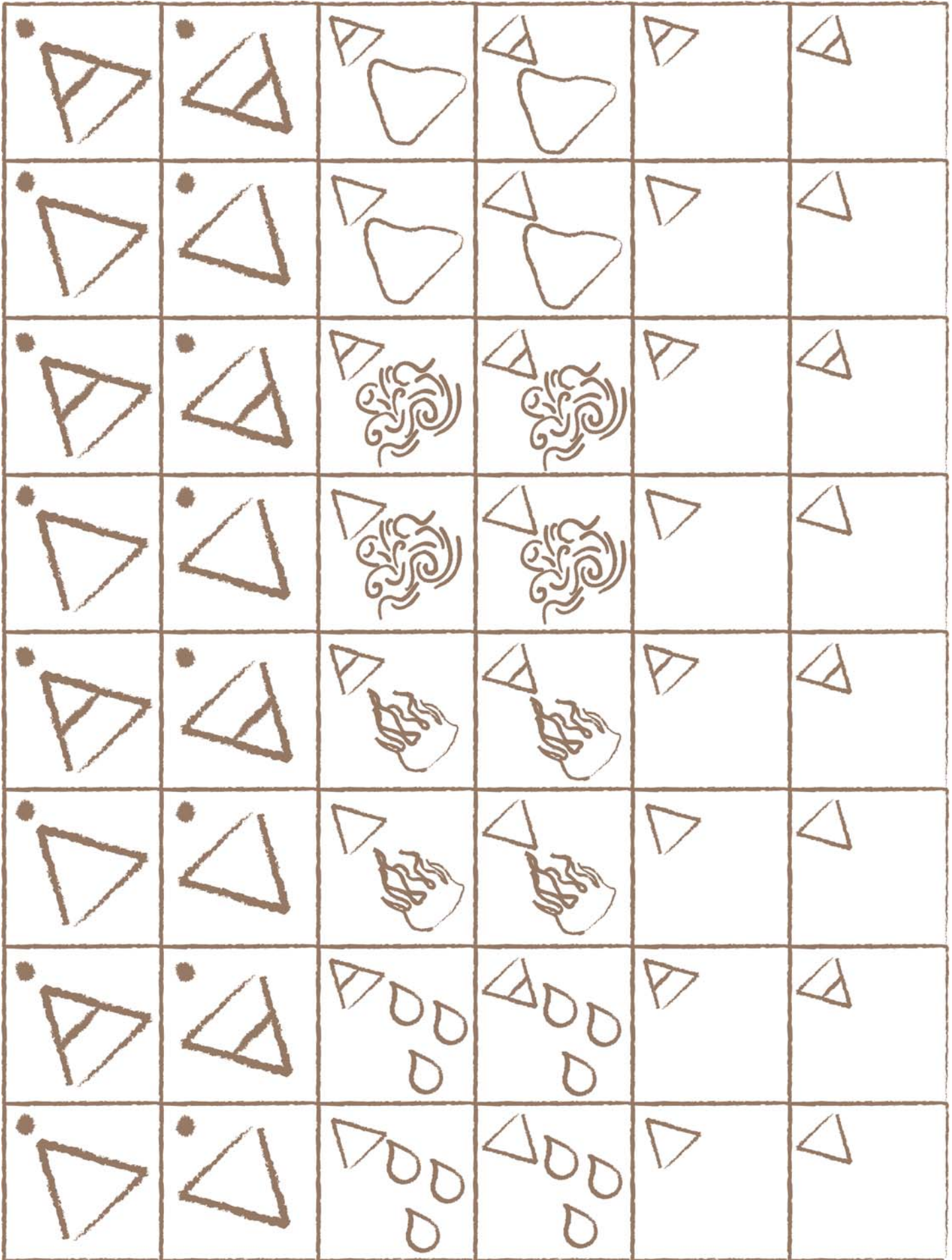
Obvious choices include using it as an elaborate magical lock for a door, a means to disarm a trap or activate a teleporter, and – as a low-magic possibility – the way to reveal a clue or piece of information (especially using the third tile set).

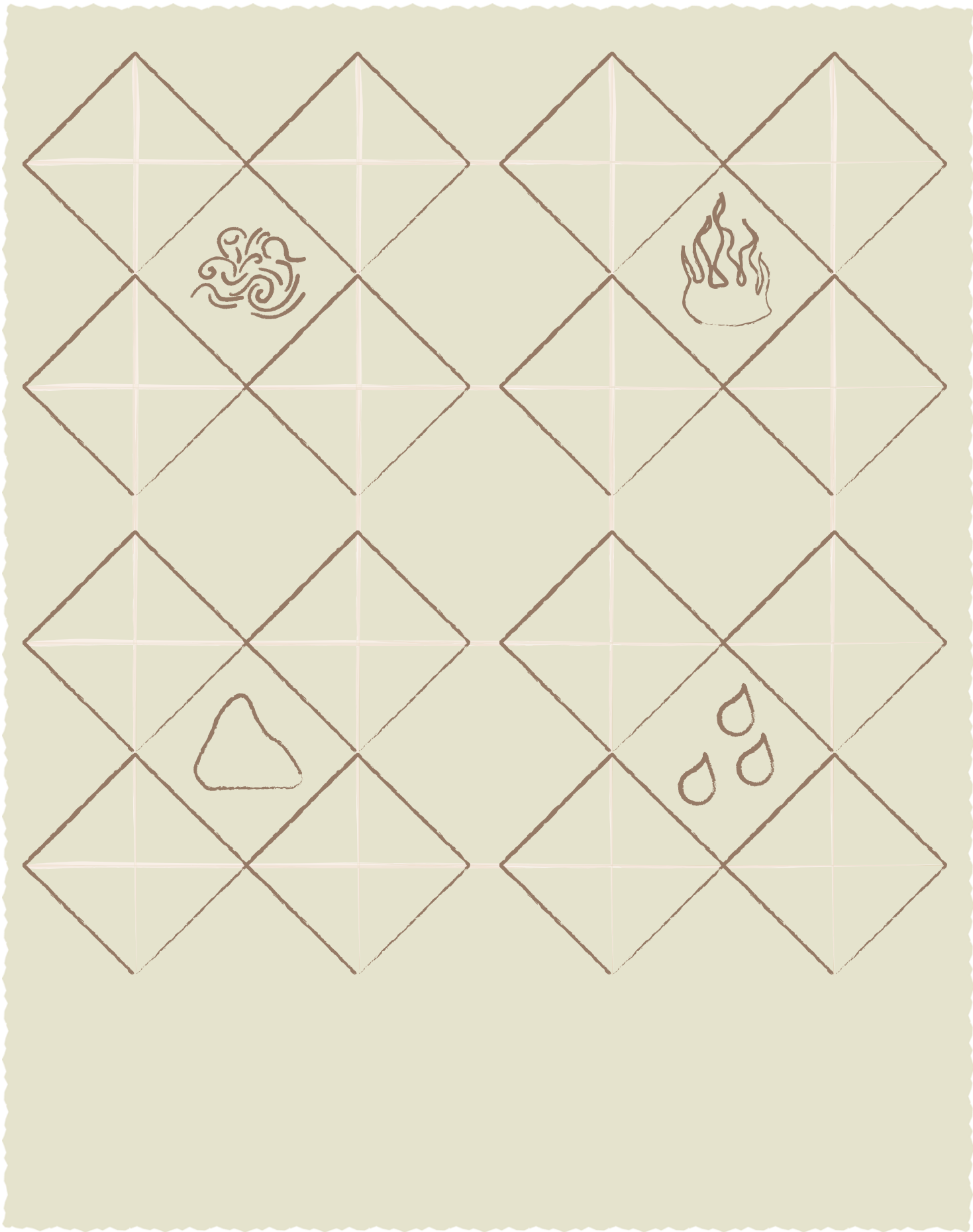


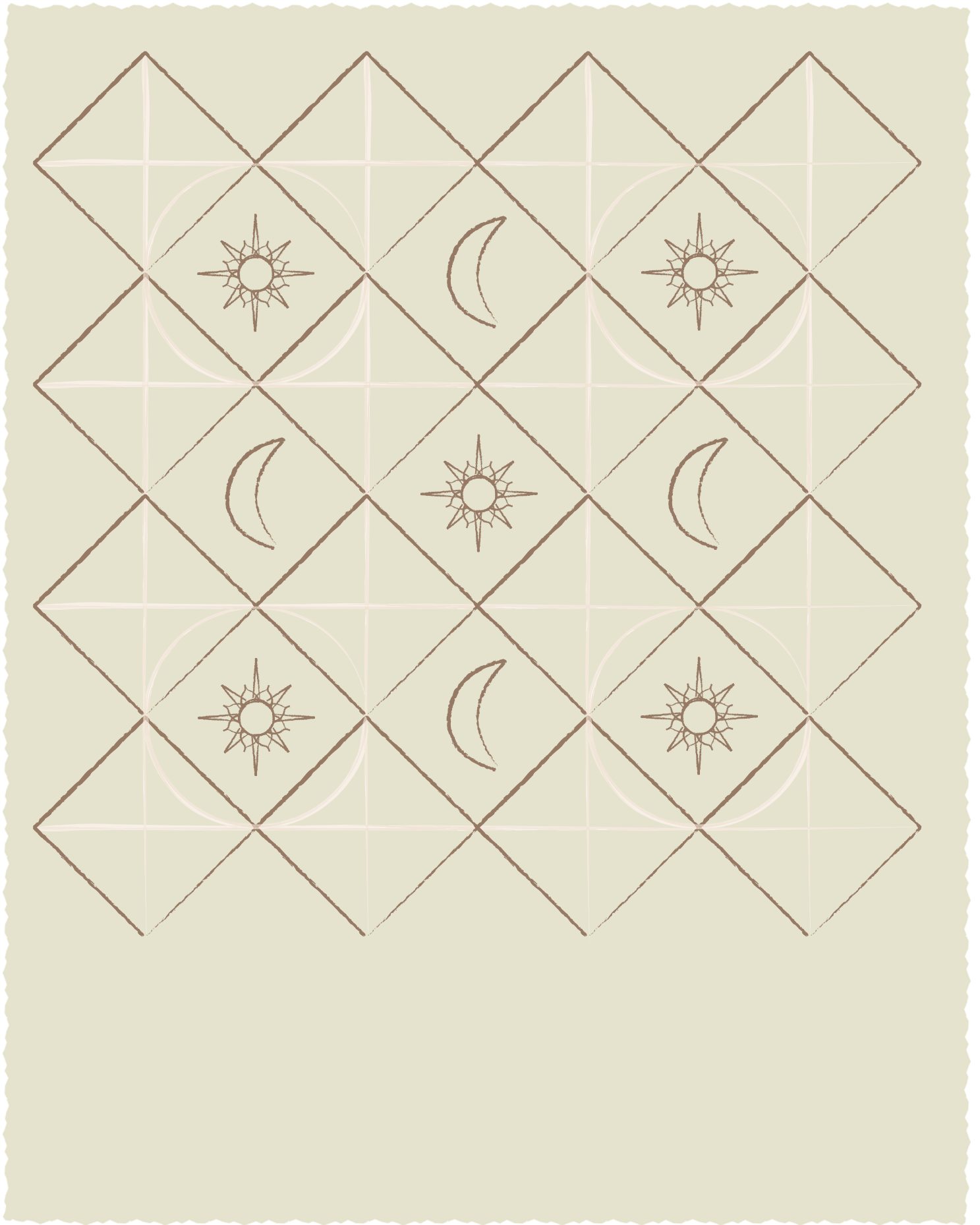
Tile Set 1

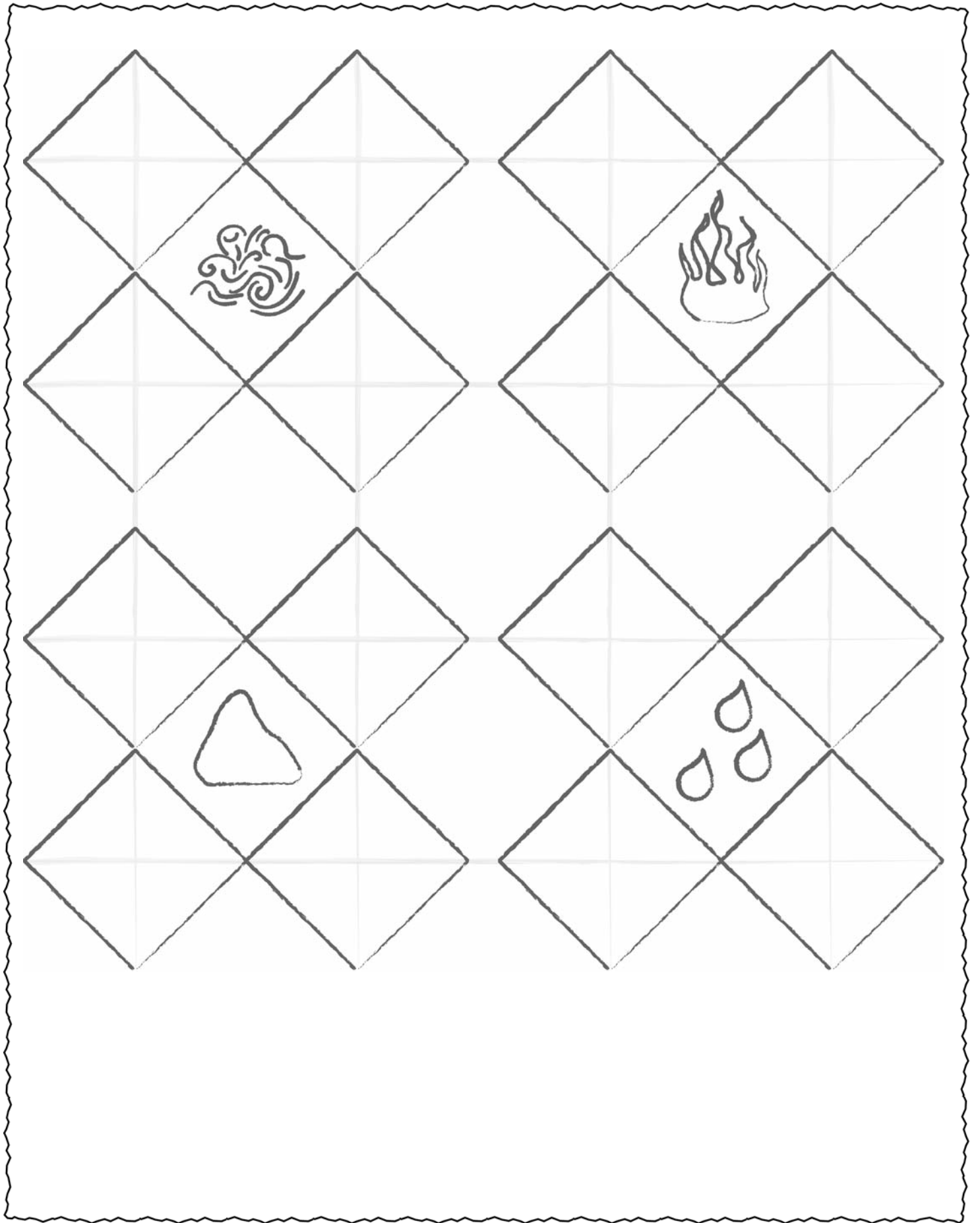
Tile Set 2

Tile Set 3

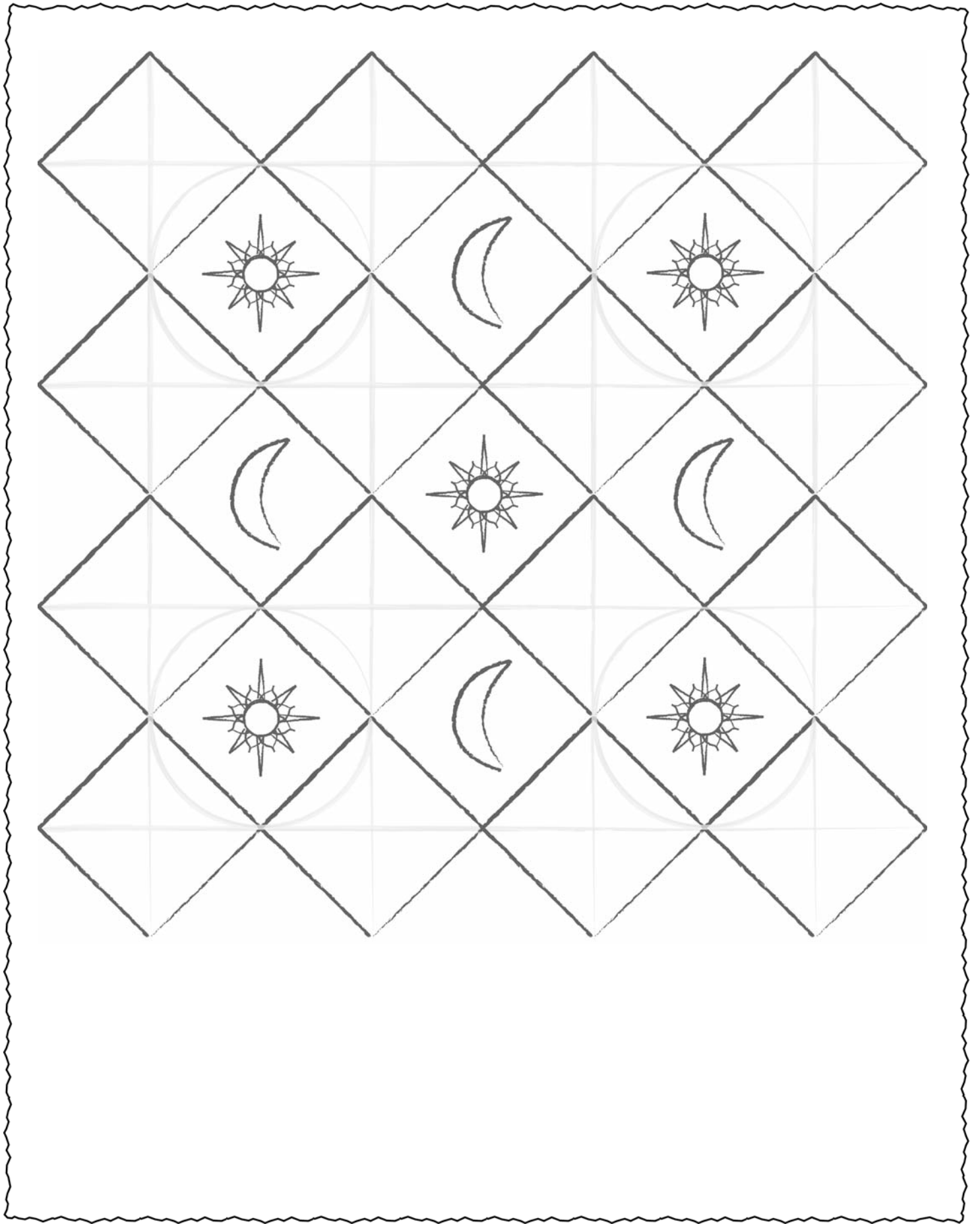












# SALVING MAGIC

BY DEMI BENSON

*"Lord Blackbar, your son will recover!" beamed Hepshebee the Body-Shaper rather too ingratiatingly, "I have palliated his mortal wounds, and he shall be the picture of health . . . for a time."*

*"For a time?" Baron Blackbar's relief gave way to fear, "The priests of Lanfoss offer their healing with no conditions . . ."*

*"You mistake me, sir. This is not some crass ploy to lighten your purse. The gods, whose radiance blesses us all, have forbidden mortals from interfering with the natural cycle of souls. The priests channel the will of the gods, whose radiance blesses us all. My order has found – shall we say – an exception to this divine mandate."*

*"You speak of souls, and matters beyond my understanding. Speak plainly, sorcerer! My son – is he healed, or no?"*

*"The fall from the horse broke his neck and skull. He was at the gates of Death. But I have mended his body fully, and while my magic holds, he will be in perfect health."*

*Blackbar let out a sigh of relief and a smile started to turn his dour countenance.*

*Hepshebee held up a hand, "But I must caution you – the shaping is tenuous. Any sudden change will undo the salving, and the wounds will return."*

Healing is the realm of the gods! The gods claim dominion over all life, forbidding mere mortals from interfering with life forces. But in settings where healing spells are off-limits to mortals, clever sorcerers might discover a loophole in the cosmic order, using these optional **GURPS** rules.

## THE LOGIC OF SALVING

Only divinely blessed or cosmically powered magic can permanently heal. Even so, wizards with the right spells (see *Injury*, below) can approximate true healing by temporarily salving a body back into its natural state, much like a cast to repair a broken arm – the arm is broken, but can still be used without pain or debility. The wizard's magic delays all symptoms and effects of injury and disease, forcing flesh together, halting the spread of illness, staving off insobriety, and blocking deadly poisons. None of these are permanent, but a hale and hearty body heals faster than one weak and febrile. Recovery from injury occurs naturally, under the best of conditions – as if in the care of a physician, but only if all wounds are clean, there is no fever or infection, and there are no poisons or parasites. Natural recovery first heals damage masked by salving spells since those are closer to their healed state, then repairs any remaining injuries. Halted diseases and suspended poisons are fought off all at the same time, usually with standard HT rolls.

However, any sudden change in the body's health may cause ongoing salving spells to fail! A salving spell must make a Spell Endurance check at the same level as it was originally cast. If it succeeds, the salving spell persists and those hidden injuries remain hidden. If it fails, the salving spell ends, and all the hidden injury or debility resurfaces. A sudden change is usually a significant injury (at least 1 HP of damage, or any blow requiring a HT check), but also includes any spell that changes the subject's shape or composition (Alter Voice/Visage/Body, Body of Stone/Water/etc., Corpulence, Gauntness, Shapeshifting, Transmogrification, and so on) and any Body Control or Necromantic spell that harms the body (Wither Limb, Steal Vitality, Pestilence, Evisceration, Rotting Death, Deathtouch, etc.). If the same wizard cast the changing spell and the salving spell, and the wizard wishes to preserve his earlier work, he may cast so as to reduce interference – the salving spell resists at +5.

Multiple salving spells can be cast to run concurrently, even after the subject has been salved back to the appearance of full health; this is a way to protect against the unexpected reappearance of injury. Casting backup salving spells requires the caster to know the injuries, diseases, or poisons being treated – it cannot be cast to absorb future damage occurring within the spell's duration. Reinforcing such spells on the same injuries does not incur penalties for multiple successful healing spells.

No salving spell can be maintained.

## INJURY

Wizards cannot learn healing spells (Minor Healing, Major Healing, Great Healing; **GURPS Magic**, p. 91). Instead, they must learn the equivalent salving spells, which are identical other than duration. Minor Salving has a duration of one day. Major Salving has a duration of one week. Great Salving has a duration of one month. Salve Bleeding Wounds works the same as Stop Bleeding (**GURPS Magic**, p. 91), but has a duration of one day; during this time, natural healing should keep a wound stanching, except for hemophiliacs and injuries to the vitals or arteries.

The subject is actually still injured, which should be tracked separately. Penalties for low HP (such as reduced Move and Dodge) are tallied against the apparent injury level, not the true injury level. If the subject's true injuries plus fresh injuries are enough to die (wounded to  $-5 \times \text{HP}$ ), he dies despite all salving magic! Then all the other salving spells fail, causing all his hidden injuries to reappear.

*Distinctive or memorable scars are often used as identifiers for heroes and villains.*

For sudden injuries, if the subject's true injury level is severe enough to penalize HT rolls (at or below  $-1 \times \text{HP}$ ), apply the same penalty to Spell Endurance.

## DISEASE

Diseases can only be halted, not cured. While salved, the subject is not contagious for that affliction, and the disease will not progress – it cannot get worse due to failed HT checks or the passage of time, and successful HT checks may reduce its severity. It won't prevent a new infection of the same type. In a scientific-paradigm setting, the disease microbes are dormant for the duration of the spell; in some cases with a long enough dormant period, this might be the equivalent of a vaccine!

Resist Disease becomes Resist New Disease, and only grants immunity to new infections. Cure Disease becomes Halt Disease, with a duration of one month. The caster must target a specific disease, although "this child's fever" or "the plague ravaging this land" is sufficient.

*Speak soft and sweet;  
sympathize with suffering and  
loss and ignorance, try your  
best to apply the salve of  
soothing words and timely  
succor.*

– Sri Sathya Sai Baba

## POISONS

The effects and symptoms of poisons – including alcohol – can be halted with two new spells (which replace Neutralize Poison and Instant Neutralize Poison; *GURPS Magic*, p. 92): Block Poison and Stop Poison. Some poisons (such as alcohol and many organic toxins) can be eliminated by the body's natural processes over time, while others (such as heavy metals) may be all but impossible to expel.

Resist Poison is replaced with Resist New Poison, and only grants immunity to new poisons.

### Block Poison

Regular

Blocks the action of a single poison already affecting the subject. The caster must know which poison he's trying to block, but this can be "the poison on this arrow" or "this snake's venom."

*Duration:* 1 day.

*Cost:* 4.

*Time to cast:* 10 seconds. One try per day.

*Prerequisites:* Either Magery 1 and Test Food, or Halt Disease (see above).

### Item

The same as for Neutralize Poison, but half energy cost.

### Stop Poison

Regular

As Block Poison, but a longer duration.

*Duration:* 1 week.

*Cost:* 6, plus 2 per additional week of duration.

*Time to cast:* 1 minute. One try per day.

*Prerequisites:* Magery 2 and Block Poison.

### Item

As Neutralize Poison.

## ALCHEMY

Alchemy is another kind of nondivine magic. Healing and Health elixirs salve wounds and diseases for the same amount of time as it takes to make them – one week and four weeks, respectively. Paut (*Thaumatology*, p. 52) does not reduce duration even though it reduces production time.

## STYLE EFFECTS

What are the consequences of this rules twist? First, dungeon delvers and brash adventurers will be a lot more cautious! While they can be patched back together by their wizards as often and as fast as they always could, the accumulated layers of salving magic has a nasty tendency to come crashing down in any real fight, leaving the front-line fighters abruptly at death's door. Smart PCs will plan defensively, using ambushes, traps, and hit-and-run tactics to reduce their risk of being wounded. This gives combat a more realistic feel, possibly nudging the game toward more social interactions and political maneuvering as the heroes have to find places to rest for several weeks after big fights.

## OPTIONAL RULES

A few optional variations can tweak this for specific settings.

### Skilled Salving

Skilled physicians can repair damaged bodies better. An appropriate skill roll is needed to analyze symptoms and effects and plan the proper body-shaping; this skill is typically Physician, but Physiology can be used for bodily damage, Poisons for poisons, and Diagnosis for either poisons or diseases.

*If the GM doesn't have a system otherwise, when a PC gets a grievous wound, the GM might want to ask the player if he wants a scar. It'll help make him more famous but more easily recognizable, too!*

Failure on the appropriate roll gives a casting penalty equal to half the margin of failure. There may also be penalties for missing knowledge (mistaking an unknown fever for another similar fever), and bonuses for common tasks (blocking alcohol in an alcohol-drinking culture).

### *Noticing Spell Failure*

When a salving spell fails, the subject might not notice since he's probably quite distracted from just being hurt! The subject gets a Per+Magery roll to realize that a salving spell has failed. Body Sense or Body Control can be used instead of Per. Add any of the following as a bonus:

- The amount of masked damage that has returned. Halve this if the subject has High Pain Threshold; double it with Low Pain Threshold.
- The worst penalties from debilitating conditions (drunkenness, crippled limbs), as a bonus.
- +5 if the subject is the caster.
- Any being with Numb gets a -10 penalty!

However, the GM should be lenient for crippling injuries; if a formerly broken leg is broken again, and an adventurer tries to walk on it, he'll notice.

### *Variable Duration*

If salving duration is random, heroes will be far more cautious; they'll never quite know when to start worrying. Instead of a duration of one day, use 2d+18 hours; instead of one week, use 2d+1 days; instead of one month, use 2d+25 days. The GM should roll secretly.

Alternatively, if high skill is rewarded, duration is increased by 10% per margin of success in the casting. Skilled body-shapers charge more since their efforts last longer.

### *Truly Permanent Healing*

Wizards can achieve truly permanent healing by using Raw Magic (*GURPS Thaumatology*, p. 227-229). One point of

Raw Magic is required per 3 HP of damage healed. Diseases can be cured permanently with 1-10 points of Raw Magic (1 point for a cold, 5 for bubonic plague, 10 for ebola). Poisons can be removed for 1 point of Raw Magic per 3d total damage the poison could do, minimum of 1.

However, the gods may not approve of mortals encroaching on their domain. If PC wizards use Raw Magic, that could qualify for a Secret. Any wizard known to deal in true healing may acquire a poor reputation among the devout, a whole religion as an Enemy, or even the enmity of a god!

### *Going Easy on the Heroes*

If these rules prove too deadly, here are a few variants to give the heroes an edge.

- Salving can be stacked: Each extra salving spell covering the same debility (injury, disease, poison) gives the whole group a +1 bonus to Spell Endurance in failure checks. For example, a wizard casts Major Salving three times on a companion to cover the same injuries; in a Spell Endurance check, all three spells have a +2 bonus.
- Automatic death is tallied against apparent injury level, not true injury level. If used with the above rule, a warrior can be injured far beyond the point of automatic death if all his previous injuries have been salved with heavy backups – powerful magic is holding his body together beyond any natural possibility!
- Salving spells never collapse due to injury or shape-change. Heroes have to worry about the severity of their true injuries, but they won't suddenly be felled by flesh wounds. Don't use this rule with either of the other options!

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Demi Benson lives in Boston, the hub of the universe. After trying her hand at rocket science, she's now a mild-mannered computer security specialist, with occasional forays into motorcycle hooliganism and writing for gaming companies.

**GURPS** Fourth Edition



# DUNGEON FANTASY 7 CLERICS

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# THE BOOK OF NULL

BY J. EDWARD TREMLETT

*Would you know of my life? Of my magic? So be it, fool. I will tell you now of a lifetime – several lifetimes – wasted in pursuit of power and secrets, each more soul-destroying than the last. I shall tell you of a thousand terrible things that I have done for the Art, and a thousand things that I have left undone because of it. I will fill your head with stories of atrocity and darkness, of horror and pain. And when I am done, you will join me in cursing the Art in all its aspects.*

*I am filth. And this is my story.*

Once upon a time, there was an evil sorcerer whose undeservedly long life was at last coming to a close. Sick and friendless, scrabbling in the dark like an insect, he looked back at his grotesque, black-hearted echo of an existence and was regretful of the many things he'd done. But rather than blame himself for his own moral failings, he blamed magic: If it hadn't been for the Art, he'd have been happily dead long ago.

His misplaced bitterness bore terrible fruit. Animated by hideous purpose, he defiled his most prized and powerful grimoire, binding his hatred and shame into it for all time. Then he gruesomely consecrated it with his life's blood – dying as horribly as he lived, ultimately tumbling face first and screaming into the oblivion he craved.

That final, total sacrifice changed the grimoire from a book of powerful magic into its exact opposite: a book that brought an end to magic, turning any who read from it into a source of anti-magic. The cursed book was retrieved from the dead sorcerer's lair by one of his greatest rivals, and when he read from it, he became the first disciple of a new, dark religion: the Null.

## WE HAVE CLOSED OUR EYES FOREVER

The Null are victims of the *Book of Null*, a cursed grimoire that causes all who read it to lose their connection to magic, changing both their physical appearance and psychological makeup. These twisted, insane parodies of humanity then seek out other victims, either to convert or kill. They hope to one day rid the world of all magic, replacing it with a dark kingdom of atrocity, horror, and pain. Their condition could possibly be

reversed, but their madness is so total that they would rather die than be cured.

The *Book of Null* is a large, thick book, bound in the scales of an evil, black dragon, with a large and flat black stone circle on the front cover. The contents are a mind-twisting and ragged collage of what was once a powerful spellbook, but is now the horrible life story of the evil sorcerer who created the book. Hidden within that story are two spells: the first keeps the reader from stopping reading on his own, and the second transforms the reader into a Null at the end.

*Those who believe in nothing are very, very jealous and angry at those who believe in something.*

– Dennis Prager

Oddly enough, the *Book of Null* is not affected by the proximity of the Null, who usually force their conversion victims to read the first page. They then need merely wait for the book to be read – which happens at blinding speed – and the change to take place. It's a loud and painful affair for the victim, and a source of much rejoicing for the Null.

The Null are hairless, with chalk-white skin shot through with small, black divots in disturbing, geometric patterns. They have a single round, flat black stone in the center of their foreheads. Their eyes are stitched shut with thick black thread, but they have no trouble seeing, thanks to the stone. Their teeth are black and twisted stumps, their voices are dark and disconcerting echoes, and they lack both fingernails and nipples.

## WATCHING THE WORLD END

The Null have a single-minded goal: to rid the world of magic by either converting or killing all who can tap magic's energy. They're ecstatically happy with either option.

*Campaign idea: It's the last age of magic. Once those who are currently magicians die, magic passes with it.*

*So the truth was established, and what they did became null.*

*– The Quran, translated by M.H. Shakir, sura 7, verse 118*

The cult is based out of a vast, underground labyrinth, which was once the lair of the sorcerer who made mistake of stealing the *Book of Null*. That thief now serves the cult as the Keeper of the Book, and his labyrinth has been savagely redecorated with the hideous, twisted remnants of the cult's earliest "crusade." Their bodies are strung up on the walls like ornaments, as a reminder of past glories.

The Keeper is the cult's oldest member, but he doesn't really command because he doesn't really have to; left to their own devices, the Null can govern themselves. He simply oversees conversion, speaks of the hidden history of the Null to those who have just joined, and sees to the safety of the grimoire.

The Null hunt in packs of three or more. They prefer to go after known quantities, so it's customary for new members to lead other Null to their now-former friends and colleagues. They like to sneak up on their quarry and surround them, thus lowering the mana in the area before they strike. They also like to soften up their quarry by killing nonmagical bystanders first, leaving their broken bodies for their true targets to find.

The eternal question is whether they convert or kill. Given that there's only one copy of the *Book of Null*, they often pick the latter out of pure expediency. That said, the most powerful magicians make the most powerful Null, so they will gladly go to the trouble of dragging an archmage back to their center of power. That he'll be unconscious, and possibly near death, for the trip is of no matter: the book heals the reader as it reshapes him.

Magical authorities are well-aware of this growing threat, but they aren't able to do much about it. Magical means of finding, following, or dealing with the Null are rendered almost useless by the Null's singular anti-magical talents. However, magical society is reluctant to turn to nonmagical authorities for assistance, as this would make them appear weak and vulnerable. If they can hold out until they find the cult's center of power, several groups of well-paid mercenaries should be able to deal with the problem once and for all.

But then, who's to say the Keeper won't run away with the book, starting it all over somewhere else?

## THE THING OF SHAPES TO COME

In *GURPS*, the Null have the advantage Mana Damper (Area Effect, 4 yards, +150%) [25], at a number of levels equal to their Magery level before they read the *Book of Null*: If they had Magery at 2, they will have Mana Damper 2 (Area Effect, 4 yards, +150%) [50] when the conversion is over. They will also have Appearance (Monstrous) [-20], Disturbing Voice [-10], Fanaticism [-15], Magic Resistance 5 [10], Sadism [-15], and Unfazeable [15].

If a PC becomes a Null during the course of play, it might be best to turn that character into an adversarial NPC, rather than having to split the narrative and create a situation where some players are trying to kill others.

The adventurers may run into their former friend as a Null, which should be a truly horrifying encounter. Whatever affection and friendship they shared is now totally gone, replaced by a grotesquely evil urge to kill all aspects of the former life.

## DOWN INTO THE DARKNESS

The Null could be used as seldom-seen boogymen, the occasional danger, or an omnipresent threat, depending on the tone of the campaign. For a GM who wants to make them a regular part of the story, here are some ideas.

*The Apprentice:* Tomas the Blue's prized apprentice, Redmane Quill, vanished three months ago and could not be found. Now Tomas' new apprentice has been found hideously murdered, along with his seneschal, his cook, his gardener, and the nearest neighbor. Alone and afraid, Tomas has sent a frantic plea for help to old friends – the heroes. Can they get there before the Null kidnap or kill Tomas? And what will they find if they fail?

*Hunting Null:* The adventurers have been employed by a college of magic to look into the problem with the Null. They have been instructed to investigate their activities, but to do so discreetly, so as not to alert normal law enforcement to the problem. The heroes will have to be careful, not only to avoid troublesome questions, but also to avoid the attention of their quarry – once the Null realize they're being hunted, they will return the favor.

*The Day of Vengeance:* The magicians' guild has at last found the center of the cult of Null, and have employed a substantial group of nonmagical mercenaries to go into the labyrinth and dispatch them, one and all. No one but the Null have ever entered there, so its layout is unknown, as is the state of any traps and dangers the previous owner may have constructed. Can the characters and their NPC companions – read "sword fodder" – persevere down there, in the darkness? Or will they be joining the decorations on its walls?

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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

# RED DIABOLISM

BY MARK GELLIS

Red Diabolism is an inherently evil kind of magic. It is possible to use it for good, but only in the sense that protecting yourself from or harming the wicked is good. Its attraction is that it is very powerful. However, using Red Diabolism can take a terrible toll on those who believe they can master it. There are always those willing to take the risk.

## MECHANICS

There are two separate ways to master Red Diabolism (which is a form of Path/Book magic; *GURPS Thaumatology*, pp. 121-165). The first is to take Ritual Magic (Red Diabolism) as a core skill, along with the Magery (Path/Book) advantage. Magery (Path/Book) is required to cast spells in low and normal mana zones if using Ritual Magic (Red Diabolism) as the core skill, but higher levels of Magery (Path/Book) provide a bonus to all castings. Considering the hideous effects of using Red Diabolism incorrectly too many times (see below), it is not surprising that this is the most common method of mastering this kind of magic.

It is, however, possible to learn Red Diabolism and cast spells even without Magery (Path/Book). This can be accomplished by learning a different core skill: Thaumatology (Red Diabolism). This is a required IQ/VH specialty of Thaumatology, not an optional IQ/H specialty. Magery is not required to cast spells if using Thaumatology (Red Diabolism) as the core skill and higher levels of Magery provide no benefit.

Within a game world, the two approaches are different ways of accessing the same mystical power. With one, rituals combined with an innate connection to mystical forces allows a person to shape magical energy himself. With the other, an understanding of certain mystic laws of the universe permits a person to employ subtly different rituals to call upon unseen forces to achieve the same effects. The two methods do not complement each other; learning both core skills provides no benefit. Both skills include knowledge of Red Diabolism's underlying mystical principles and permit research into new spells.

In game terms, using two separate core spells with Red Diabolism is simply a matter of playability and internal consistency. Because there are two different kinds of Red Diabolism (one with Magery and one without), it is less confusing if each variant has a different core skill.

As Red Diabolism is neither a faith nor a philosophy, no Religious Ritual specialty exists for this form of magic.

Red Diabolism always requires some kind of sacrifice (see *GURPS Thaumatology*, p. 246, for details regarding what modifiers are provided by specific sacrifices). It does not have to be a large sacrifice – a dog or a chicken or even an injury to the caster or a captive victim will suffice – but Red Diabolism is fueled by blood and bloodlust. Furthermore, any sacrifice tainted with cruelty provides an additional +1 modifier to the casting. Other ritual elements described in *Thaumatology* (time, ritual space, material components, etc.) can be applied to Red Diabolism, but a sacrifice is always a required element.

Red Diabolism uses the Spiritual Distortion rules from *Thaumatology* (pp. 93-94); a sufficient number of failed rolls will erode the caster's mind and soul to the point that he effectively loses his identity and becomes nothing more than a vessel for the terrible power he has tried to wield. Spirits do not lend FP in this form of magic; rather, a Will+Magery roll must be made every day a ritual is cast. Failing this roll adds one level of Spiritual Distortion; a critical failure adds three levels. Additionally, as the wielder gets more and more levels of Spiritual Distortion from Red Diabolism, he gains mental disadvantages such as Sadism and Paranoia. By the time he has reached 10 levels of Spiritual Distortion, the caster not only has an addiction to using dark magic, he is also usually a serial killer and/or a cannibal.

As it is hard to imagine how a career with Red Diabolism can possibly end well for the caster, why anyone would study this kind of magic in the first place? In worlds where it is the only kind of magic available, of course, those who wish to be mages have no choice. In worlds where other choices exist for those who desire magical power, the main attraction of Red Diabolism is its unique and powerful rituals, often combined with a degree of ignorance about exactly how dangerous they can be (possibly as a 10-point Delusion: "Other people might be destroyed by dark magic, but I can master it"). In addition, the simple fact is that most people drawn to Red Diabolism are deeply flawed in one way or another, frequently driven by some sociopathic desire for either power or revenge, although some only practice Red Diabolism to protect themselves from other practitioners.

By default, Red Diabolism uses the Effect Shaping approach to Path/Book magic. However, details for the Energy Accumulating version have been added for GMs who prefer that method.

*Campaign idea: All magical abilities are tied to items of power (rocks, wands, etc.). When you kill/defeat someone with such an item, you can take their item of power – but each person can only have one at a time.*

Red Diabolism is limited to four Book skills. Each Book offers access to a number of standard rituals and a few unique ones. (GMs are free to either add new rituals or allow players to develop their own with the *Magical Invention* rules on p. 10 of *Thaumatology*.) Suggestions for critical failures are provided for many of these rituals, but as players will be aware that they have rolled a critical failure, they may be suspicious of results that look as if nothing has gone wrong (which is the case with some of the information-gathering rituals). In these situations, the GM should feel free to substitute some other horrifying result for a critical failure. Possibilities include the caster being blinded for a day, racked with agony for several hours, or simply being convinced that something hostile and very powerful has become aware of him and his plans (which may or may not be what has actually happened). Another option is to say “Nothing happens at the moment,” and then, later on, when it is less likely to be doubted, feed the false or misleading information to the player.

The default assumption is that only a few dozen copies of each Book exists. There are a few mages who have studied from all four Books, and a couple who actually own a complete set of all four, but most have only learned rituals from one or two of them. This makes finding, negotiating for, transporting, and/or stealing a copy of one of the four Books a font of ideas for adventures.

## THE PERFECT SUFFERING OF ENEMIES

*The Perfect Suffering of Enemies* is focused on ways to inflict harm on others. It includes the Cleansing ritual only because of the possibility that an enemy might use one of these rituals against the caster. The Book contains five rituals common to other Path/Book traditions and four unique ones.

Ritual	Default	GURPS Thaumatology
Cleansing	-4	p. 157
Doom	-9	p. 152
Malaise	-5	p. 149
Night Terrors	-5	p. 142
Sterility	-2	p. 150

### A Plague of Vermin

*Effect Shaping: The Perfect Suffering of Enemies-2; 30 minutes.*

*Energy Accumulating: 6 points.*

At the earliest realistic opportunity, the target is attacked by a swarm of small animals. This will probably be rats or crows in colder climates. In warmer areas, it may be bats, insects, snakes, etc. If the victim is outside, he will be physically attacked; if he is at home, the attack may be against himself, his loved ones, or his property (e.g., termites destroying his house, rabbits devouring the garden vegetables on which he depends, etc.). The creatures are natural, except for their relentless hostility to the victim, and no more cunning than

other creatures of their kind; they can be driven off, removed, or killed by normal methods.

### Blood of the Innocent

*Effect Shaping: The Perfect Suffering of Enemies-8; 1 hour.*

*Energy Accumulating: 11 points.*

The effects of this ritual can take place over several days, during which time the victim may realize he has been cursed and seek magical relief. If the ritual is successful, the victim has trouble sleeping, suffer from nightmares, and so on. After three days of this, the victim must make a Will roll each day. If he succeeds, he resists, but is still plagued by fatigue, irritability, and nightmares. On a critical success, he does not have to make another Will roll for three days and realizes, if he has not done so before, that he is cursed and needs a Cleansing ritual. Any failed roll indicates that the victim has slipped into a delusional state of mind. He believes friends or family members are really doppelgängers (demons, robots, etc.) who have murdered the originals and now plan to kill him. He will feel compelled to attack them to protect himself; he will outwardly be normal but consumed with these thoughts. Treat this as a 15-point Delusion. The ritual, if not removed with Cleansing, ends only when the victim has killed someone close to him (or dies in the attempt).

### Corner of the Eye

*Effect Shaping: The Perfect Suffering of Enemies-1; 10 minutes.*

*Energy Accumulating: 3 points.*

This inflicts a subtle form of mental torture on the victim. The victim will spend 1d days with the strange sensation that something – something he can just barely catch for a moment out of the corner of his eye – is lurking nearby, and that it has hostile intentions. Naturally, this is a rather unnerving experience; the victim will have trouble sleeping and trouble concentrating (assume a -1 to all relevant tasks).

Perhaps the most insidious thing about this ritual is that it is often amusing, from a certain angle. No real harm is done to the victim, but he will spend days nervously looking over his shoulder, jumping at shadows or loud noises, and so on. It is a perfect spell to cast on a rival at work or in school. Casters who might have been feeling a little wary about using dark magic often start with this spell; through it, they get a taste for the cruelty and power this mystical art offers and are tempted to learn more – which is just what Red Diabolism wants.

### Rotting Death

*Effect Shaping: The Perfect Suffering of Enemies-8; 1 hour.*

*Energy Accumulating: 12 points.*

This vile curse inflicts a slow and hideous death on the victim. Within seven days of the ritual, a mark the size of a thumbnail will appear on the victim's body. The area is dry and blackened, the skin already itching and starting to crack. Every day, the affected area increases in size, roughly doubling in area.

*Find rules for designing new styles of magic – plus dozens of new perks exclusive to those who can harness arcane secrets – in GURPS Thaumatology: Magical Styles..*



The blackened skin gives off a foul odor and itches incessantly. Scratching and medicines offer only temporary relief. The victim's entire body is affected 3d+3 days after the initial appearance of the black mark. At this point, he lapses into a coma, losing one HP per hour, and will usually die within one or two days. The only treatment that can save the victim is the Cleansing ritual; if it is conducted in time to aid the victim, he will recover any lost HP normally, but will permanently lose one level of Appearance due to scarring unless it is caught early enough.

*Now one of the things you can do with man is to get him to look up and find out that he can look through the shadows and look at the shadows and find out what they are.*

– L. Ron Hubbard

## THE SHADOWED TRUTH REVEALED

*The Shadowed Truth Revealed* focuses on learning secrets, seeing the invisible, finding things that are lost or hidden, and predicting the future. It includes six common rituals and four unique ones.

Ritual	Default	GURPS Thaumatology
Aura Reading	0	p. 151
History	-4	p. 151
Know Fault	-4	p. 146
Scry	-6	p. 152
Predict Weather	-1	p. 156
Vision of Luck	-5	p. 152

### Eyes of the Servant

*Effect Shaping: The Shadowed Truth Revealed-3; 10 minutes. Energy Accumulating: 6 points.*

Casting this ritual allows the mage to see through the eyes and hear through the ears of a living, nonsapient creature for as long as he is willing to concentrate on the task (which means the practical limit is about eight hours). The caster cannot give specific commands to the animal; he is only able to see and hear what the animal can see and hear. If the animal is sleeping, the caster will see and hear nothing until the animal wakes.

On a critical success, the caster gains a permanent +4 to any future attempt to watch and listen through that particular

creature. A critical failure means the caster is permanently blocked from the mind of the target and, if he gets near the creature in the future, it will recognize him and either flee or be hostile to him. A common ruse is to cast the spell until getting a critical success on a particular creature, such as a bird, and then arrange to have the creature given to an enemy or rival as a pet. This gives the caster an excellent spy.

### Treasure

*Effect Shaping: The Shadowed Truth Revealed-5; 20 minutes. Energy Accumulating: 8 points.*

If something nearby (within five yards) is both hidden and valuable, the caster will sense it and its location. The object must be "enclosed" somehow: hidden in a hollow tree, worn under someone's clothes, buried, etc. The ritual will not work on anything that is visible; it cannot be used, for example, to determine whether or not something is actually valuable or fake. A critical failure on this ritual leads the caster to something dangerous, like a hole in the ground being used as a lair by a poisonous snake.

### What the Statue Saw

*Effect Shaping: The Shadowed Truth Revealed-3; 20 minutes. Energy Accumulating: 6 points.*

The caster may use this ritual on any piece of representative statuary. On a success, the statue opens its eyes and answers 2d questions about what it has witnessed during its existence. It has no unusual powers, but its personality is that of the being it represents. The statue offers no conclusions, it only reports what it has seen, and it volunteers no information beyond what is asked. On a critical success, double the number of questions the statue will answer. On a critical failure, the statue lies about what it has seen.

### Whispered Secrets

*Effect Shaping: The Shadowed Truth Revealed-4; 20 minutes. Energy Accumulating: 8 points.*

The caster learns one secret of the target, some piece of information that person wants to keep hidden. The GM decides which particular secret the caster learns; the better the roll, especially a critical success, the more useful the information should be (assuming the subject has any secrets that would be useful to the caster). However, the ritual will only provide knowledge – such as, "I murdered my business partner two years ago and sank his body in Lake Huron. I still have horrible dreams about it." – and does not give the caster any physical evidence that would prove what he knows is true. It may, of course, provide enough information that one could then discover such evidence, but this would be separate from the ritual. On a critical failure, the caster "learns" something that is untrue.

*It's an interesting challenge to have magicians encounter situations where their powers don't work as expected. Low-mana zones are obvious, but what about an area where all abilities are multiplied five-fold? Or all spells target 10 degrees to the left?*

## ON INVISIBLY SHAPING THE WORLD

*On Invisibly Shaping the World* focuses on affecting both the physical world and the realm of probabilities. It can inflict good or bad fortune on people in terms of what happens to them and what they perceive. Its most powerful rituals allow a magician to shape the weather and even his own body. It contains seven common rituals and four unique ones.

Ritual	Default	GURPS Thaumatology
Chaperone	-5	p. 152
Mist	-3	p. 144
Obscurity	-5	p. 141
Rockfall	-6	p. 144
Skinchange (Crow)	-8	p. 145
Skinchange (Viper)	-8	p. 145
Weatherworking	-6	p. 156

### Blight

*Effect Shaping:* On Invisibly Shaping the World-3; 20 minutes.

*Energy Accumulating:* 7 points.

This ritual visits moderate misfortune on the property of the victim. His house may catch on fire; no one will be hurt, but there will be a serious financial loss. Or a barn full of livestock may sicken and die. A critical success triples the effect (or blights three separate targets); a critical failure means the target will experience some kind of good fortune. (No one should ever accuse whatever power lies behind Red Diabolism of not having a sense of humor.)

### Change the Road

*Effect Shaping:* On Invisibly Shaping the World-2; 20 minutes.

*Energy Accumulating:* 6 points.

This ritual doubles the time it takes for the target to complete a journey. The exact reason can vary from prevailing winds to washed out bridges that require an alternate route to road work to aircraft being grounded temporarily by bad weather. The GM should feel free to inflict humorous or even humiliating delays on heroes if the ritual targets one or more of them.

### Hide in the Earth

*Effect Shaping:* On Invisibly Shaping the World-5; 10 minutes.

*Energy Accumulating:* 9 points.

The ritual allows the caster or a target to sink into the earth and remain hidden until he wishes to rise again, at which point he simply comes out of the earth. While hidden, he does not need to breathe. It can be cast on soil or rock, but not water, and the caster must not fall asleep while he is hiding or he will be buried alive and suffocate.

On a critical success, the caster may hide underground for as long as he wishes, up to a year and a day, magically able to go without sleep, food, water, and air, and he will be aware that he can do this. On a critical failure, the ritual not only fails but the caster permanently loses one level of HT.

### Treacherous Paths

*Effect Shaping:* On Invisibly Shaping the World-5; 30 minutes.

*Energy Accumulating:* 9 points.

This ritual is similar to Change the Road (above), but actually places the target in danger. A success means there will be one mishap on the journey that could lead to injury or death. The target is always given a choice (crossing a bridge, getting on an airplane, etc.), and there may be clues that his journey has been cursed, but once the choice is made, his fate may be sealed.

*There's a power in me  
to grasp and give shape to  
my world. I know that  
nothing has ever been real  
without my beholding it.*

– Rainer Maria Rilke

## THE VEILED POWER AWAKENED

*The Veiled Power Awakened* details spirit- and demon-related rituals. It contains eight common rituals and two unique ones.

Ritual	Default	GURPS Thaumatology
Banish	-4	p. 160
Bind	-3	p. 160
Curse Sanctum	0	p. 157
Dispel Ritual	-6	p. 157
Exorcize	-2	p. 161
Spirit Slave	-6	p. 162
Summon	0	p. 162
Ward	-4	p. 158

### Bring Forth a New Name

*Effect Shaping:* The Veiled Power Awakened-15; 3 hours.

*Energy Accumulating:* 36 points.

*Low-mana setting idea: Those who have tapped magic learn their souls are damned to hell. Does magical society collapse?*

This is the most difficult and time-consuming ritual in Red Diabolism, but it is also the most powerful. A successful roll creates (or, at least, awakens) what is, for all practical purposes, a god – a transcendent spirit with cosmic powers. The caster chooses the theme or focus of the god (swamps, lightning, envy, whiteness, etc.), but its powers and limitations are left to the GM. (In general, assume this is a minor god – a 500- to 1,000-point character – but the GM is free to make it more powerful.) On a regular success, the spirit is neutral to the caster. It may be mildly impressed by his power and prowess with magic, but it would never admit this. Regardless, it has its own agenda but may be willing to assist him in some way. It may or may not require some kind of worship or pact. On a critical success, the spirit is friendly to the caster and willing to do at least one favor for him.

However, these are energies that cannot be summoned without substantial risk. A failure means nothing happens, but on a critical failure some cataclysmic event occurs – and with a -15 modifier on the ritual, this is not so unusual. The caster and anyone nearby may be killed, horribly transformed, driven insane by visions no human mind can experience without being forever scarred (“She has seen the Great God Pan!”), whisked away to some strange dimension, or forced to endure some other bizarre fate. The GM should be creative.

## *The Wild Hunt*

*Effect Shaping: The Veiled Power Awakened-7; 30 minutes.*  
*Energy Accumulating: 10 points.*

This ritual summons a group of spirits or other supernatural creatures (usually one powerful one and a pack of six to 20 lesser entities) who agree to hunt a designated individual. For all practical purposes, the targeted individual gains a temporary Enemy somewhat more powerful than himself (the GM determines the exact abilities of the hunt but it should be reasonably matched to the target; a hunt should be deadly but not totally impossible to defeat).

On a success, the hunt makes one attempt on the character’s life. On a critical success, the hunt makes three attempts (assuming one side or the other is not destroyed during one of the first two tries). On a failure, nothing happens. On a critical failure, the hunt appears and attacks the caster!

## **SIMON LARK, RED DIABOLIST**

**320 points**

Simon Lark is designed for a *Cliffhangers* setting, but could easily be modified for anything from medieval fantasy or a fantastic Old West to modern urban fantasy or magic-flavored cyberpunk by changing a few of his skills and some details of his personal history.

Simon grew up in a small town in Wisconsin. He was a bright boy, and would have been a favorite with his teachers except they always sensed something faintly unpleasant about

him. He had few friends, mostly because he simply was not interested enough in other children to develop relationships with them. While he was a bit of an outsider, he was rarely bullied as a child. Although he only had an average physique, he was not afraid to fight back if someone harassed him; if someone made him angry enough to fight, he saw no reason to fight fair. After one neighborhood bully had to go to the hospital because Simon knocked him down by charging him from behind and then kicked him until three of his ribs were broken, word got around that it was best to just leave him alone.

Simon was always good with languages and won a scholarship to study at a prestigious university in New England. He greatly enjoyed those years, able to partake not only of long rambles in the woods and along the ancient wharves of the city’s seaport, but long afternoons in the college’s vast library.

What Simon did not know was that he had been selected for more than his abilities with languages. One of the professors at the college was a Red Diabolist and made a point of regularly casting Vision of Luck in order to identify potential threats or acolytes. He had known about Simon’s intellect and potential since Simon was 12 and had carefully engineered events so that the boy would eventually come to his college, where he planned to teach Simon the Great Art.

It was not long before Simon’s secret mentor initiated contact. The boy sensed immediately that the man was a kindred spirit, and they became fast friends. When Simon graduated, he took a job as a translator at a publishing company in the city where he had studied so he could remain close to his mentor. In time, Simon surpassed his teacher in occult knowledge.

Now, Simon is quite wealthy. He used magic to learn secrets of one of the owners and subtly manipulated him into letting him marry his daughter. Within a year, the owner was dead, thanks to the Simon’s mastery of dark magic; it was not too long before the daughter was dead, too, making Simon a partner and part owner of the company. He bought out the other partners soon after; rumors say he had something on each of them and was able to force them to sell at ridiculously low prices. Ironically, Simon Lark is quite capable as a publishing executive without supernatural aid; the company has prospered under his leadership.

He has not remarried but is thinking of marrying into one of the old money families. He likes being wealthy; he wants to be even wealthier. He has attended enough society parties to be disgusted with most of the frivolous girls who know so little of the businesses their parents run to keep them in luxury, and he toys with the idea of marrying one of them so he can turn her into a puppet. However, some of the girls have a native slyness, and he wonders if there might be a woman out there who could be a genuine partner, instead of simply being a means to an end. (As a campaign idea, the PCs could save a hapless damsel from a fate worse than death; alternatively, they might prevent some sleeping evil, hidden in the body of a beautiful society girl, from awakening and joining forces with Lark – a black partnership that could unleash untold horrors on the civilized world.)

Lark’s parents and two brothers are still alive, working at the family dry goods store in Wisconsin. He regularly sends them lavish presents and occasionally writes, but he doesn’t visit.

*GURPS Infinite Worlds: Collegio Januari details a cross-dimensional campaign centered on medieval world-hopping magicians. They can be a great way to introduce new types of magic from “elsewhere” in the cosmos.*

Simon Lark lives in a large and comfortable house in the city. He has two allies. One is his personal secretary, who is also an acolyte whom he is training in Red Diabolism. The other is his manservant, bodyguard, and chauffeur – a former soldier, a vicious and highly capable killer, who is more than willing to occasionally do Simon Lark’s dirty work for him.

Lark himself is not a combat-oriented character. Like many men who grew up in the Midwest, he has a basic understanding of firearms, but he was never an avid hunter. He owns one rifle (kept in a bedroom closet) and one pistol (in his office-desk drawer); both of them are kept loaded. He will only be able to shoot the pistol at the default level. One may assume the rifle is a Winchester M1894 .30-30 and the pistol is a Colt Government .45, but this can be modified for different campaigns as necessary. Both of his allies are very capable shooters.

*Only one who devotes himself to a cause with his whole strength and soul can be a true master. For this reason mastery demands all of a person.*

– Albert Einstein

Recently, Simon has become obsessed with the most powerful and dangerous of rituals in Red Diabolism. He had concocted in his rather twisted brain the idea that if he could summon a god-like being and gain its patronage, he could amass immense wealth and power. This is an extremely dangerous plan, but Simon is plunging ahead with it. Of course, to be sure the ritual works, he will need a good sacrifice. He feels confident, thanks to some obscure texts he recently acquired, that seven perfectly formed children, slaughtered like sheep, should do the trick. Now he just has to kidnap them. Of course, one rarely finds seven perfect children all together at the same time, so he will have to kidnap them one by one, and that will take at least a few weeks, perhaps even a few months. He will also have to keep them somewhere until he has them all and it is time to perform the ritual. He believes this will ultimately be worth the risks involved.

For would-be heroes, the disappearance of children would be a natural adventure seed. Besides investigating the disappearances, saving the children, and bringing them safely home, it’s essential the heroes do everything they can to make sure Simon does not somehow manage to succeed in creating and gaining the patronage of a god – once the PCs figure out what he’s really up to, of course.

**ST** 10 [0]; **DX** 11 [20]; **IQ** 13 [60]; **HT** 9 [-10].  
Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 13 [0]; Per 13 [0]; FP 9 [0].  
Basic Speed 5.00 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0]; Dodge 8; Parry 8 (unarmed).  
6’0”, 170 lbs. Black hair and piercing blue eyes.

## Social Background

TL: 6 [0].

CF: Western [0].

Languages: English (Native) [0]; Ancient Greek (Native) [4]; Arabic (Native) [4]; Dutch (Native) [4]; French (Native) [4]; German (Native) [4]; Hungarian (Accented) [2]; Italian (Accented) [2]; Latin (Native) [4]; Norwegian (Native) [4]; Polish (Accented) [2]; Russian (Accented) [2]; Spanish (Accented) [2]; Swedish (Native) [4].

## Advantages

Ally (Manservant, bodyguard, and chauffeur; Built on 75%; 15 or less) [9]; Ally (Secretary and acolyte; Built on 75%; 15 or less) [9]; Charisma 1 [5]; Language Talent [10]; Status 2 [5]\*; Wealth (Very Wealthy) [30].

Perk: Style Familiarity (Red Diabolism). [1]

## Disadvantages

Bloodlust (15) [-5]; Callous [-5]; Greed (15) [-7]; Obsession (To bring forth a new god with dark magic and gain its patronage) (12) [-10]; Selfish (15) [-2]; Spiritual Distortion 4 [0]†.

Quirks: Cruel; Mild intolerance (Dark-skinned people). [-2]

## Skills

Acting (A) IQ [2]-13; Administration (A) IQ+2 [8]-15; Area Knowledge (Boston) (E) IQ [1]-13; Connoisseur (Nonfiction Literature) (A) IQ [2]-13; Current Affairs (Business) (E) IQ [1]-13; Detect Lies (H) Per [4]-13; Driving (Automobile) (A) DX [2]-11; Expert Skill (Publishing Industry) (H) IQ+1 [8]-14; Guns (Rifle) (E) DX [1]-11; Hidden Lore (Spirit Lore) (A) IQ [2]-13; Intimidation (A) Will+1 [4]-14; Literature (H) IQ-1 [2]-12; Market Analysis (H) IQ-1 [2]-12; Merchant (A) IQ [2]-13; Occultism (A) IQ+1 [4]-14; On Invisibly Shaping the World (VH) IQ+1 [12]-14; Riding (Horse) (A) DX [2]-11; Savoir-Faire (High Society) (E) IQ [1]-13; Teaching (A) IQ [2]-13; The Perfect Suffering of Enemies (VH) IQ+2 [16]-15; The Shadowed Truth Revealed (VH) IQ+2 [16]-15; The Veiled Power Awakened IQ+2 [16]-15; Theology (Christian) (H) IQ-2 [1]-11; Thaumatology (Red Diabolism) (VH) IQ+3 [20]-16; Typing (E) DX [1]-11; Writing (A) IQ-1 [1]-12.

## Rituals

Blood of the Innocent (H) [6]-12; Bring Forth a New Name (H) [7]-7; Cleansing (H) [4]-14; Doom (H) [6]-12; Skinchange (Crow) (H) [5]-12; Treacherous Paths (H) [5]-13; Whispered Secrets (H) [4]-13.

\* Includes one level from Wealth.

† From using Red Diabolism rituals.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Mark Gellis teaches professional communication, literature, and humanities, and advises a chapter of the Delta Chi fraternity, at Kettering University. He lives in Flushing, Michigan, with his wonderful wife, Sandra (“She Who Must Be Obeyed”); their lovely and talented daughter, Elizabeth; and their beloved but criminally insane cat, Miss Spock. He squanders much of his free time playing *GURPS* and computer games such as *Harpoon*, reading pretty much anything he can get his hands on, and watching far too many old movies and far too much anime.

# RANDOM THOUGHT TABLE

## OF MUNDANE MAGIC AND MIDDLE-SCHOOL MUNCHKINRY

BY STEVEN MARSH, *PYRAMID* EDITOR

If I recall correctly, the first-ever “heavy duty” rules tinkering I did for an RPG was back in sixth grade or so, when I came up with a never-thought-of-before point-based system for magic-users in *Dungeons & Dragons*. (No *Advanced*; this was back when everything I knew about gaming came in a cardboard box with dice made out of wax candy.) I have it on good authority that just about every gaming professional also had this “never-thought-of-before” idea of revising the magic system of the granddaddy of all games; the core system just seemed to beg for it. “Want to wield unstoppable arcane powers that tap the fundamental forces of the universe? Too bad! You can make webs, instead!”

Putting myself back in the mindset of my *MacGyver*-watching middle-school self, my mental attempts at recreating the reasoning behind my desire to tweak the system boil down to two ideas:

- I wanted to be a munchkin. (The less said about this the better; but I can picture myself looking at the character sheet for my magic-user – brilliantly named Zappo Zam – and thinking, “Wouldn’t it be awesome if I could cast *lots* of fireballs a day?”)
- I wanted magic to be special.

Let’s expand that second thought.

### A SPECIAL KIND OF MAGIC

Under the basic system of that most venerable of games, you generally knew the capabilities of everyone who had a spell list, if you had a rough idea of what their level was. So this often led to mental thought processes that went along the lines of: “Okay; I’m guessing he’s about the same level as I am. That means he can probably throw at most one fireball, a few magic

missiles, and some acid. Oh, and he can probably fly or levitate, and he might have a magic shield.”

Even worse, the core system had certain features that allowed magicians to be thwarted: “Quick! If you can restrain his arms, he won’t be able to use any magic this round! And if we can make it magically silent, that should keep him from talking, which is a requirement for most spells!”

In my mind, this is antithetical to the reason many folks are drawn to magical systems in the first place. Which leads to my thesis statement for this column (a mere third of the way into its body):

*If you know exactly how it works and what its limitations are in all circumstances, it’s not magic.*

(See? It’s so important that I even italicized it!)

### MINOR MAGICAL FIXES

Now, I suspect that early developers of classic RPGs felt the same way, and they tried to reclaim the wonder of magic in different ways. A common early solution was to make up new spells; after all, if the enemy wizard replaces his omnipresent fireball with a less-damaging-but-sticky magma-ball, then suddenly the heroes can’t be quite as sure about what they’ll face when the enemy unleashes the big guns.

This can lead to an escalation of spell lists and options, but it doesn’t address the underlying issues. More spells simply means more to memorize. If you know that a wizard will either have a fireball or something comparable – which is required if you are merely swapping out the fireball spell with a similarly powered ability – then you have a baseline “worst case scenario” that you can plan around.

*Delusion idea: “I believe my cat is my familiar; he’s smart, gives me power, and can talk to me alone.” Carry on one-sided conversations with your cat! Give credit for spectacular successes to a feline power boost! Protect Mr. Whiskers!*

Without changes to the underlying system, you're really only shuffling around cosmetic differences. It's like encountering a bad guy with a handgun; once you have an idea of how powerful a handgun is, it doesn't really matter if it's a Colt .45 or Beretta 92; the "standard operating procedure" for how to deal with the guy is the same.

## A Mechanical Tech-Like Magic

In the interest of giving a sidebar to the opposite point of view, it's entirely possible that some games are better suited with magic that behaves in an entirely predictable and "rational" fashion. In this case, magic is often viewed as more of a super-science, generating results as needed. Thus, in adventures where a sense of wonder is desired, players (and the GM!) are often challenged to construct odd happenings within the known rules of magic. Such stories often resemble plots similar to Isaac Asimov's robot stories: "We know by the Magic Law of Observation that obvious magical effects can never occur within full view of a sapient mind. But the mayor seemed to be incinerated by a fireball in a commerce chamber full of witnesses. What's going on?!"

It should also be noted that systems that *seem* to have rigid, predictable magic systems – we're looking at you again, *Dungeons & Dragons* – are perfectly happy to ignore those rules when it suits the plot.

"How's this castle flying?!"

"Magic. It's owned by a magician."

"Neat! Say, I'm a magician; can I make a flying castle?"

"No."

## MAJOR MAGICAL TWEAKS

Significantly shaking up a core magical system allows for types of magic that were outside the realm of any expectations. When the wizard you tied up, gagged, and blindfolded is suddenly able to conjure a minor magical effect to escape – in violation of all the rules of magic as you know them – well, suddenly magic has become a much more interesting force. Returning to our "person with a handgun" example, what if – instead of knowing that the person you're facing has a weapon with which he can shoot you – he instead possesses a wand that might shoot a lightning bolt at you. Or make you teleport to a surface location 100 miles away. Or transform him into a leopard. Suddenly your "standard operating procedure" becomes a lot more muddied. It becomes even muddier if those abilities are inherent, and there isn't even a wand to target or avoid.

About a year ago, *GURPS Thaumatology* made its appearances on store shelves. (It had graced the virtual shelves of e23 a couple of months earlier.) The core *GURPS Magic* system already had a strong sense of wonder compared to some other games on the market, since there were a lot of options and possibilities such that it was hard to ever account for them all. Still, *Thaumatology* brought even more to the table, with new

options and possibilities that opened up the core magic system in surprising ways. With that supplement, it was possible to have a bunch of miracle workers sitting around a table, each one of them able to cock their heads to the others and say, "Whoa! You can do *that* with magic?!"

For many gaming campaigns, this is exactly as it should be.

For magic to remain a mysterious force, there need to come points where even skilled magicians scratch their heads and go, "Well, I know it's magic . . . and that's about all I can tell you."

## THE CAVEATS

Of course, even if each mana-wielder has a unique set of rules so that no two magicians look the same, from a game standpoint, it's still important for magic (and each magician) to have rules. Otherwise, it's impossible to know how to defeat someone who's using magic – or how to provide adversaries who have the possibility of defeating the magic-using heroes.

Perhaps less obviously, each magician in a game should give an impression of what his boundaries are – especially if given enough "screen time." Thus having a wizard who skulks around muttering about how magic is a powerful and untrustworthy force, only to have him turn around and unleash a fireball with no ill consequences (outside of flaming foes), doesn't seem quite fair or interesting. However, each one of the following archetypes conjures an idea of the limitations of that character:

- A smooth-talking magician who has lots of minor effects he uses frequently.
- A bookish sage who mutters about great effects he can accomplish if supplied with rare ingredients and enough time.
- A hands-on shaman who's constantly trying to acquire bits of hair, skin, and personal artifacts from others.
- A sensual sorcerer who believes in lots of physical contact, as well as repression and exhibition.

Note that all these ideas provide limitations and known quantities to *wizards* – not to magic. Magic still remains mysterious, which was our italicized point on the previous page. (It's the same way that knowing that a mathematician has limits to what he can do doesn't limit what *mathematics* is capable of.)

The urge to tinker with magic systems in RPGs is a strong one. In one sense, it's the closest real-world analog most of us will get to tinkering with real *magic* – a desire that's about as old as childhood daydreams.

## ABOUT THE EDITOR

Steven Marsh is a freelance writer and editor. He has contributed to roleplaying game releases from Green Ronin, West End Games, White Wolf, Hogshead Publishing, and others. He has been editing *Pyramid* for over nine years; during that time he has won four Origins awards. He lives in Indiana with his wife, Nikola Vrtis, and their son Sam!, who is a two-year-old force of nature entirely worthy of his exclamation mark.

# ODDS AND ENDS

## MAGIC ITEM: SPELL BOTTLE

This appears to be a normal glass bottle (or, in lower-technology realms, a clay bottle). Indeed, it has all the physical properties of one, as well. However, it also includes a special feature: Any spell cast into it is stored, captured for later use. When the bottle is broken (or, in some versions, unstopped), its spell is unleashed. Perhaps even more interestingly, neither the bottle nor its contained spell registers as “magic” using magical or mundane detection abilities – although, curiously, a spell bottle *without* a spell is detectable as magic. Since they’re not detectable, they can be very useful on covert missions.

Each spell bottle can only hold one spell at a time. Lesser bottles can only be used once (which requires the bottle be broken to unleash the magic). More powerful bottles can be used multiple times by unstopping the bottle between uses;

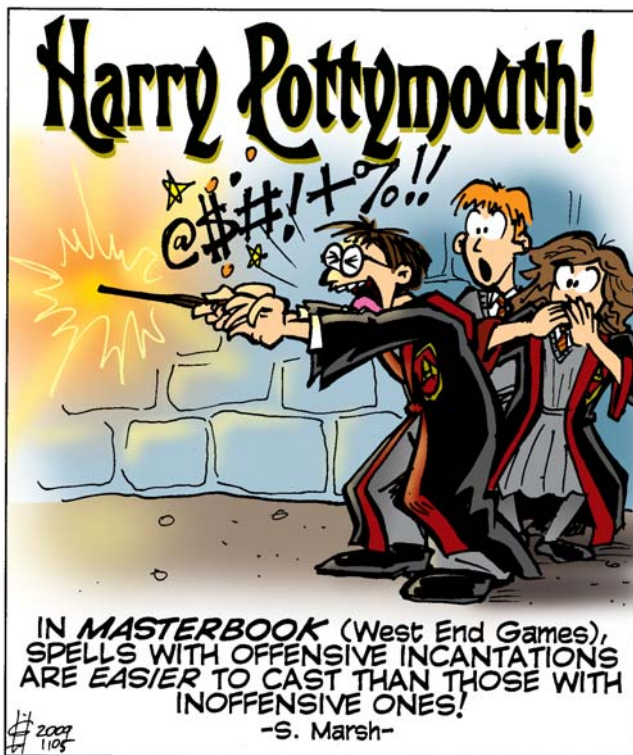
breaking such bottles also unleashes the spell, but – again – it can be used only once.

It’s up to the GM to determine whether the spells can be targeted when unleashed; if they can’t, they’re really only useful for area-affect or other grenade-style spells. If they can, they’re probably targeted by the wielder (“I break this bottle and target *you*, foul demon!”). As a possible variant, multi-use bottles might be able to target by opening the stopper and pointing the mouth; breaking them still releases their spell untargeted.

The obvious choice for these items is casting some form of lightning bolt inside one – “lightning in a bottle” is too cute to resist – but creative conjurers can come up with all sorts of uses.

## MURPHY'S RULES

BY GREG HYLAND



Got a *Murphy's Rule* of your own? Send it to [murphy@sjgames.com](mailto:murphy@sjgames.com)

## Shields Up!

The core *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy* rules keep things simple by doing away with *Damage to Shields* (p. B484). However, it’s possible some players may want to incorporate concepts from *The Mystic Knight* (pp. 16-19) into a more complex *GURPS* campaign that includes shield damage. Such gamers might find this new Defensive Imbuement useful, adding it to the rules presented in *Perfect Defense* from *Pyramid* #3/4: *Magic on the Battlefield*.

### Reinforce Shield

Shield; DX/Very Hard

*Prerequisite:* Imbue 2.

Reinforces the structure of the shield, changes it into adamant, or coats it with a force field. Whatever the effect, this makes your shield much more resilient. This gives it the Hardened enhancement (p. B47) to the shield’s DR (but not to its cover DR), divides all damage suffered by the shield, and multiplies the shield’s cover DR. The basic level provides Hardened 1, divides all the damage suffered by the shield by 2, and multiplies its cover DR by 2, but you can improve this by taking a penalty to the roll.

*Modifiers:* -2 to add Hardened 2, divide the damage suffered by the shield by 3, and multiply its cover DR by 3; -4 to add Hardened 3, divide damage suffered by the shield by 4, and multiply its cover DR by 4; -6 to add Hardened 4, divide damage suffered by the shield by 5, and multiply its cover DR by 5; -8 to add Hardened 5, divide damage suffered by the shield by 10, and multiply its cover DR by 10; -10 to add Hardened 6, divide damage suffered by the shield by 100, and multiply its cover DR by 100.

– Antoni Ten Monró

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