

PYRAMID[®]



Issue 3/76 February '15

DUNGEON FANTASY IV



PSYCHIC SWORDS AGAINST ELDER EVIL

by Sean Punch

THE MAGIC TOUCH
by Matt Riggsby

LIVING ROOMS
by David L. Pulver

DIRE AND TERRIBLE MONSTERS
by Douglas H. Cole
and Peter V. Dell'Orto

HIDDEN KNOWLEDGE
by Christopher R. Rice

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The stars have aligned and the auguries are clear: The time to return to the dungeon has arrived. This month's *Pyramid* journeys to crypt-clearing realms, with a focus on **GURPS Dungeon Fantasy**.

If using psionic abilities brings out Things, then what can you do to stop them? Take up your *Psychic Swords Against Elder Evil!* This featured add-on to **GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 14: Psi** – by mental master Sean Punch – offers a new template, two Higher Purpose variations, two psi abilities, power-ups, and a handful of creatures to defeat (complete with **GURPS** stats).

New spells are exciting. New secret spells are awesome. Frequent *Pyramid* sage Christopher R. Rice reveals *Hidden Knowledge* to **GURPS Dungeon Fantasy** spellcasters. Learn how to turn an ordinary spell into something worth questing after, including examples and a name generator. You'll also find out how to access alternate magic systems and to copy spells into manuals.

Don't settle for stone and earth; put a *Living Room* in your next dungeon and make the heroes *really* squirm! In this month's Eidetic Memory, David L. Pulver – author of **GURPS Banestorm: Abydos** – explains the features, origins, and uses of areas made of oversized flesh and bone. You'll also get **GURPS** stats for a potentially deadly resident.

Low encumbrance and empty-handed attacks are key to martial artists' combat prowess, so they eschew most physical rewards. But Matt Riggsby – author of **GURPS Fantasy-Tech 1: The Edge of Reality** – has *The Magic Touch*. Discover 11 magical items that could be just the kind of treasure that a bare-fisted fighter would want.

Surprise adventurers with extreme versions of their favorite cuddly animals. Douglas H. Cole (of **GURPS Martial Arts: Technical Grappling** fame) and Peter V. Dell'Orto (co-conjurer of **GURPS Dungeon Fantasy Monsters 1**) team up to bring you two new monstrous prefixes that will help you create *Dire and Terrible Monsters*. As a bonus, you'll get tips for using them in other genres, plus a half-dozen deadly examples with **GURPS** stats – including the Terrible Dire Bunny!

This month's Random Thought Table makes it easy to add complications to your *Dungeon Fantasy* campaigns (including existing ones!). Odds and Ends welcomes the triumphant heroes home with a *Murphy's Rules* that will put your priorities in order, plus some tips for giving heroes more information than the players.

Whether you're a hero or hellbeast, martial artist or mentalist, conjurer or critter, you're sure to find amazing new loot in this month's *Pyramid*. Heed the call to adventure, and *turn the page!*

ARTICLE COLORS

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

- Pale Blue:* In This Issue
- Brown:* In Every Issue (humor, editorial, etc.)
- Green:* Columnist
- Dark Blue:* **GURPS** Features
- Purple:* Systemless Features

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FROM THE EDITOR

CUTTING-EDGE OLD-SCHOOL ADVENTURE

Some bits of trivia about the adventure gaming hobby (as it relates to dungeon fantasy):

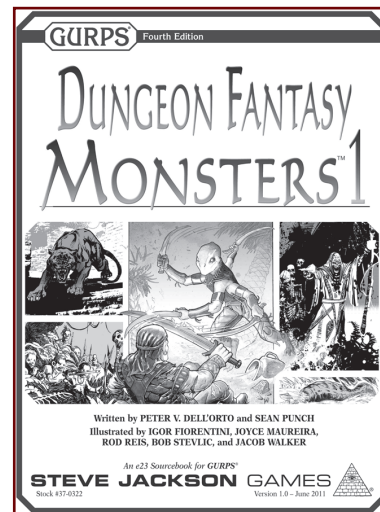
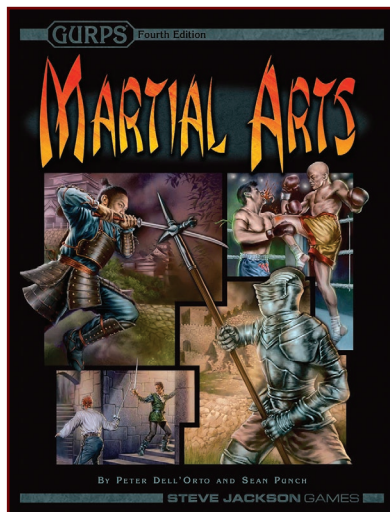
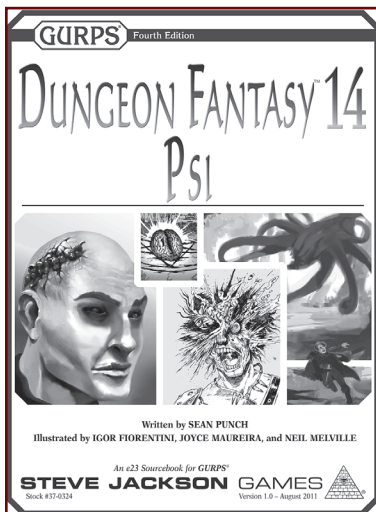
- When the first RPGs were being developed, 10-sided dice weren't assumed.
- Nor, for that matter, were 20-siders that were actually numbered 1-20; 0-9 (twice) was common, with owners expected to color their dice with crayons to indicate whether the digit should have +10 added. (The original *Dungeon Masters Guide* goes to some lengths to describe how to generate various results we take for granted nowadays.)
- Early gamers spent a fair bit of time trying to ensure that their dice were fair, with various articles and techniques used to determine their randomization prowess. (This was reasonable, since early hobby dice were made of the Worst Plastic Ever.)
- The grandfather of computer dungeon-crawl gaming – *Colossal Cave Adventure* – was less than 138,000 bytes. An early hack-and-slash computer game *Rogue* (from 1980) used

a source code of less than 366,000 bytes to generate its endless worlds. In comparison, the shareware dungeon-crawl adventure *Avadon 2* has a *system icon* that's 525,480 bytes. (The game itself is 171.2 meg.)

What's the point of this trip down memory lane? Only to briefly show how much the world has evolved while the core of dungeon-fantasy gaming has stayed the same. For those who have been part of the gaming hobby for a while, think of how much has changed since you started: downloadable character sheets, randomizing dice programs, online gaming, random-access digital music. The magazine you're reading now would have been impossible in 1980, as would the device you're using to read it (or the printing method you used to output it).

Now realize how much has stayed the same: The initial rumor that sends you to a dungeon. The first attack reminding your heroes that this is life and death. The terror of a new monster. The thrill of an unknown magic item.

We're living in magical times, and we use new and ever-evolving magic to transport ourselves to realms of imagination whose magic remains as timeless as when they were first envisioned last millennium.



Additional Material: Steve Jackson, S. John Ross, Sean Punch, and Daniel U. Thibault

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PSYCHIC SWORDS AGAINST ELDER EVIL

BY SEAN PUNCH

GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 3: The Next Level introduces a simple Psionics power for players who want their alter-egos to hurl cheesy mind blasts. *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 14: Psi* greatly elaborates on this to cook up a whole new profession: the mentalist. Both sources assume that psis are brainy types who push themselves to near-exhaustion with baleful glares and furrowed brows . . . and both warn that using psychic abilities attracts trouble. *Psi* thoughtfully spells out that “trouble” often means “Elder Things.”

But if psis are so brainy, then surely some of them have discovered a way around the drawbacks? And if they have, then wouldn't these talented few do their best to thin the monsters' ranks? The short answer to both questions is “yes.” For the long answer, read on . . .

*What is strength without a double share
Of wisdom?*

– John Milton

PSYCHIC SLAYER

250 points

You live to confront threats against which most mortals, even heroic spellcasters and warriors, have minimal defenses: Elder Things, psionic monsters, and rogue mentalists. You fight this battle using psi of your own – but rather than abuse your gifts to control minds, cheat at cards, and engage in feats prone to attracting perils from Outside Time and Space, you wield subtle-but-potent psychic weaponry. Whether your motivation is altruism, vengeance, or thrills, your willpower and purpose are almost unmatched among delvers.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 13 [60]; IQ 12 [40]; HT 13 [30].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 16 [20]; Per 12 [0]; FP 13 [0]; Basic Speed 7.00 [10]; Basic Move 7 [0].

Advantages: Higher Purpose (Slay Elder Things or Slay Evil Psis) [5]; Psientist 2 [10]; Resistant to Psionics (+3) [6];

Transdimensional Sight [13]; and Unusual Background (Psionic) [10]. • 23 points in Psychic Sword (pp. 7-8). • Another 40 points chosen from among improved Psychic Swordsmanship abilities (pp. 6-8) or ST or HT +1 to +4 [10/level], DX or IQ +1 or +2 [20 or 40], Will +1 to +8 [5/level], FP +1 to +3 [3/level], Basic Speed +1 or +2 [20 or 40], Combat Reflexes [15], Danger Sense [15], Daredevil [15], Enhanced Block 1-3 (Psychic Shield) [5/level], Enhanced Parry 1-3 (Psychic Sword) [5/level], Fearlessness [2/level] or Unfazeable [15], High Pain Threshold [10], Higher Purpose (different from first) [5], Luck or Extraordinary Luck [15 or 30], Magic Resistance [2/level], Psi Talent 1-6 [5/level], Psientist 3 or 4 [5 or 10], Resistant to Psionics (+4 to +6) [2/level], Signature Gear [Varies], or additional Psionics abilities (*Psi*, pp. 5-11), psi perks (*Psi*, p. 14), or mentalist power-ups (*Psi*, pp. 19-22) the GM permits to starting slayers.

Disadvantages: -15 points chosen from among Bloodlust [-10*], Intolerance (Anyone who negotiates with extradimensional entities) [-5], Obsession (Seek out and defeat some specific type of *powerful* monster) [-5*], Overconfidence [-5*], Selfless [-5*], Sense of Duty (Adventuring companions) [-5], Stubbornness [-5], Vow (Defeat any psionic monster encountered, or go down trying) [-10], or Vow (Use only psychic weaponry) [-5]. • Another -15 points chosen from among those traits or Bad Temper [-10*], Callous [-5], Frightens Animals [-10], Loner [-5*], No Sense of Humor [-10], Odious Personal Habits (Insane babbling; Inscrutable; Mad stare; etc.) [-5 to -15], Paranoia [-10], Phantom Voices (Annoying) [-5], or Weirdness Magnet [-15]. • A further -20 points chosen from the two previous lists or Curious [-5*], Greed [-15*], Honesty [-10*], Impulsiveness [-10*], or Wealth (Struggling or Poor) [-10 or -15].

Primary Skills: Hidden Lore (Elder Things) (A) IQ+2 [2]-14†.

• One of these three 20-point melee skills packages:

1. Force Sword (A) DX+3 [12]-16 and Shield (Force) (E) DX+3 [8]-16.
2. Force Sword (A) DX+4 [16]-17 and Shield (Force) (E) DX+2 [4]-15.
3. Force Sword (A) DX+5 [20]-18.

Secondary Skills: Hidden Lore (Psi) (A) IQ+1 [1]-13†; Mental Strength (E) Will+2 [1]-18†; and Mind Block (A) Will+1 [1]-17†.

Background Skills: *Eight* of Brawling, Crossbow, Fast-Draw (any), Innate Attack (Gaze), Shield (any), or Thrown Weapon (any), all (E) DX [1]-13; Broadsword, Climbing, Cloak, Main-Gauche, Rapier, Saber, Shortsword, Smallsword, Staff, Stealth, Throwing, or Wrestling, all (A) DX-1 [1]-12; Acrobatics or Aerobatics, both (H) DX-2 [1]-11; First Aid or Gesture, both (E) IQ [1]-12; Hidden Lore (any other), Interrogation, Leadership, or Occultism, all (A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Hypnotism or Psychology (any), both (H) IQ [1]-12†; Tactics (H) IQ-2 [1]-10; Hiking (A) HT-1 [1]-12; Intimidation (A) Will-1 [1]-15; Meditation (H) Will [1]-16†; Observation or Tracking, both (A) Per-1 [1]-11; or 1 point to raise one of those skills or any secondary skill by a level.

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

† Includes +2 for Psientist.

Customization Notes

Psychic slayers are disciplined but not organized; the overwhelming majority develop their gifts spontaneously in the face of psychic threats. Though most come to share the holy warrior's zeal for monster-hunting *and* the martial artist's dedication to meditative combat arts, few serve masters who expect faith or impose philosophical codes. This leaves so much up to the individual that it's more useful to review possible choices than to shoehorn slayers into a few categories.

First there's the question of how physical the adventurer is. Brainy slayers prefer to outthink their opponents, make extensive use of the Psionics power (despite the risks!), and hunt prey that operates in much the same way. They go for high levels of IQ, Will, Psientist, and Resistant to Psionics; a wide range of Psionics abilities, which in turn calls for Psi Talent; and skill at Occultism, Psychology, Tactics, and additional Hidden Lore specialties. Brawny ones prepare for enemies that have strong defenses against psychic powers – like many Elder Things. They hedge their bets with superior ST, DX, HT, and Basic Speed; value Combat Reflexes and High Pain Threshold; and learn a few ordinary combat skills.

Then there's the matter of fighting style. The main choice is between using Psychic Sword alone, which requires only the Force Sword skill, or spending some advantage points on Psychic Shield and skill points on Shield (Force). All slayers know the value of improved Psychic Swordsmanship capabilities, but where cerebral ones tend to boost the chosen gifts as high as Will permits – and often add extra attack modes – physical ones try not to overlook Enhanced Defenses.

Psionics abilities also admit a lot of variation. All slayers get Transdimensional Sight in order to see lurking foes.

Those undeterred by the horrors that the Psionics power tends to attract should be aware that advanced gifts require Psi Talent and possibly other prerequisites. Such a stalker of psionic evil might want Battlesense (requires Mind Reading and Psi Talent 2+), Mind Shield, or Psychic Armor for defense; Psychokinetic Lash or Pyrokinetic Bolt (both require Psi Talent 1+) for ranged offense; Levitation 2+ (requires Psi Talent 2+) for mobility; Dispel Psi (requires Psi Talent 2+) for disarming Elder Thing tech; and Psychic Sensitivity 2+ (requires Psi Talent 2+) for tracking down the Things themselves. If the GM permits psi perks and mentalist power-ups from the outset, then the Focused Resistance and Weird Dreams perks are appropriate – as are the power-ups Elder Lore (for identifying strange artifacts) and True Will, for delvers with Psi Talent 1+.

It's prudent to choose a mixture of supporting traits that suits the picture painted so far. Both Will and Psientist cost 5 points/level and aid Mental Strength, Mind Block, and Meditation, but Will helps against many psionic attacks and permits higher damage with Psychic Swordsmanship, while Psientist excels for weakness-seeking; thus, Will is best for pure warriors but Psientist is preferable for tacticians hoping to exploit Hidden Lore and Psychology. Will *also* overlaps Resistant to Psionics, but the latter is much cheaper for pure defense. Something similar goes for Psi Talent and Enhanced Defenses: a level apiece of Enhanced Block and Enhanced Parry is no better than two levels of Psi Talent for defending . . . but heroes *without* Psychic Shield or many Psionics abilities are better off with Enhanced Parry.

Don't downplay motivation! Vengeance-driven slayers typically display an Obsession with slaying the foes that wronged them – and whatever Higher Purpose encompasses that group – plus several of Bad Temper, Bloodlust, Callous, No Sense of Humor, and Stubbornness. Altruists are likely to have a Vow to defeat *all* psychic evil, Intolerance of people who condone it, and a second Higher Purpose to reflect their deep commitment to defend the world; many possess such "saintly" traits as Honesty, Selfless, Sense of Duty, and low Wealth (madhouses for Elder Thing victims depend on charity). Thrill-seekers inevitably exhibit at least one of Curious, Impulsiveness, or Overconfidence – matched with Fearlessness or Unfazeable – alongside unwise Vows and an unhealthy reliance on Daredevil or Luck.

Colorful scars are common. Psionic mishaps can cause Frightens Animals, unnatural Odious Personal Habits (such as everyone around you hearing your unpleasant thoughts about them), Phantom Voices that originate from without, and Weirdness Magnet. Scary run-ins with Elder Things can leave psychological damage in the form of Callous, Loner, No Sense of Humor, the twitchier kinds of Odious Personal Habits (like insane babbling), Paranoia, and Phantom Voices that come from *within*.

*The mind is a dangerous weapon, even to the possessor,
if he knows not discreetly how to use it.*

– Michel de Montaigne

PSYCHIC SLAYER ABILITIES

Most of the traits mandatory for psychic slayers hail from *Psi*. See p. 11 of that supplement for Transdimensional Sight; p. 14 for Resistant to Psionics and Unusual Background (Psionic); p. 15 for Hidden Lore (Elder Things), Hidden Lore (Psi), Mental Strength, and Mind Block; and p. 21 for Psientist. Psychic Swordsmanship abilities appear in the main text. Two advantages require further clarification, however.

New Advantage: Higher Purpose (Slay Elder Things)

5 points

Prerequisite: Psientist 1+.

You enjoy +1 on *all* rolls – attack, defense, damage, resistance, etc. – when you battle Elder Things, regardless of whether they're psionic. This *does* benefit your own psi use and the all-too-likely Fright Checks.

Anyone can become proficient at fighting the Things by taking the Mortal Foe power-up (*The Next Level*, p. 40

and *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 11: Power-Ups*, p. 12), which calls for great combat skill, but psychic slayers arrive here through the Psientist advantage. That Talent normally grants a reaction bonus when dealing with Elder Things, but as that doesn't suit a sworn enemy, ignore it. Instead, slayers with both traits may claim Psientist as a bonus to Fright Checks vs. the Things – that is, Higher Purpose gives +1 and Psientist adds *another* +1 per level.

New Advantage: Higher Purpose (Slay Evil Psis)

5 points

You receive +1 on *all* rolls – attack, defense, damage, resistance, etc., both mundane and psionic – to defeat psychic opponents that *aren't* members of the Elder Thing monster class. Examples include aloakasa as-Sharak, Astral Things, horrid skulls, murderous mentalists, murderous *lich* mentalists, neuroids, and odifiers. Elder Things are weird enough to require the previous Higher Purpose instead. The two never apply to the same foes.

As for quirk points, the “built-in” nature of a slayer’s powerful weaponry makes tradeoffs for gear less attractive than for most delvers. Additional capabilities for Psychic Sword and Psychic Shield are often cheap, and better investments. Resistant to Psionics is likewise inexpensive, and yet another level of Will, Psi Talent, or Psientist is always useful.

MAKING THE PSYCHIC SLAYER USEFUL

The psychic slayer is a respectable front-line fighter, with skill 16-18 even *before* Psi Talent, a high-damage “weapon” that costs no money and can't be taken away, and many routes to reliable active defenses (Combat Reflexes, Enhanced Defenses, and Psi Talent). These capabilities are rock-solid against any kind of opposition – and Psychic Sword and Transdimensional Sight extend this effectiveness to conflicts with insubstantial, invisible spirits. Meanwhile, Mental Strength (enhanced by Psientist) is wonderful for shrugging off that traditional tool of specters and bane of warriors: mind control. The bonuses that Higher Purpose and Resistant to Psionics grant against specialized monsters are icing on the cake. There's little a slayer can't battle, and the GM of the typical *Dungeon Fantasy* campaign might even need the occasional anti-psi countermeasures to keep such a hero from overshadowing martial artists in sheer “unarmed” damage output and showing up summoners in clashes with extradimensional entities.

Out of combat, the slayer isn't as well-rounded as the mentalist in the psychic abilities department, but a lot of the advice on pp. 30-36 of *Psi* still holds. Slayers can use Hidden Lore (Elder Things) to recognize the architecture, devices, and symbols of the scariest of monsters – and to ascertain

the Things' weaknesses – and roll against Hidden Lore (Psi) when it comes to psionic afflictions, artifacts, effects, and foes. They can take advantage of Mental Strength to avoid mind-warping tricks, and apply their Resistant to Psionics bonus to rolls to withstand psionic traps, such as unmarked portals. Speaking of which, Transdimensional Sight lets them peer through portals and see extradimensional trails. And thanks to Unusual Background (Psionic), they can wield certain items that non-psi cannot, recover FP more quickly in pyramids, and receive a Perception + Psi Talent roll to sense lurking psi-related dangers.

Noncombat utility does require the adventure to *feature* Elder Things, portals, psionic dangers, sinister mental influences, etc. occasionally. However, a well-roleplayed slayer will constantly be seeking out such stuff, so there's always an excuse to include it. And with the slayer on the heroes' side, the GM can do so guilt-free.

PSYCHIC SWORDSMANSHIP ABILITIES

Psychic slayers are bona fide psis, but the only standard Psionics ability they regard as indispensable is Transdimensional Sight, to avoid being ambushed by Things lurking across dimensional barriers. Otherwise, they rely on a “sub-power” known as Psychic Swordsmanship. Many prefer to use *only* these special gifts because they neither attract psionic perils nor consume FP. However, such capabilities are susceptible to effects that negate or block psi:

- Attacks are affected by the extra DR of psiphobic armor and the Psychic Armor ability, neither of which is halved against the armor-piercing thrust of Psychic Sword (pp. 7-8).

- Defenses can neither parry nor block psiphobic weapons.
- Dispel Psi can switch them off until the slayer takes one Concentrate maneuver per ability to turn them back on.

These rarely encountered drawbacks are represented by a power modifier – Psionic Swordsmanship, -5% – that *replaces* the usual Psionics, -10%. Despite this difference, Psychic Swordsmanship abilities *are* part of Psionics for the purpose of Psi Talent, and benefit normally from that advantage.

Psionic Swordsmanship abilities require a free hand – two, if using Psychic Sword *and* Psychic Shield. This isn't an extra limitation but merely a consequence of the built-in Melee Attack modifier. However, nothing prevents the slayer from *manifesting* such effects while restrained; in that situation, apply whatever penalties and inconveniences a mundane knife would face.

Finally, Psychic Swordsmanship relies on *physical* maneuvers. Blows require Attack, All-Out Attack, or Move and Attack – not Concentrate or All-Out Concentrate. Defenses are ordinary parries and blocks, and benefit from standard All-Out Defense options, not the special Mental Defense option. Boosting these attacks and defenses involves *Extra Effort in Combat* (p. B357), not *Grimace and Glare* (*Psi*, p. 33).

Psychic Sword

Variable

Prerequisites: Unusual Background (Psionic), plus Will 16+ and Psientist 2+.

You can project a blade-like psionic force that in many ways behaves like a material sword. Point cost depends on your “basic damage.” The minimum purchase is 1d+1 with “thrusts” and 2d+2 with “swings” (see below), while the maximum is found by looking up Will on the *Damage Table* (p. B16) as if it were ST – though you may always declare that you're using less damage before rolling to hit. For instance, with Will 18, you could buy anywhere from 1d+1/2d+2 to 1d+2/3d, and strike with anything from a mere 1 point to your full dice.

A Psychic Sword uses the Force Sword skill to attack and defend. Add any Psi Talent to skill when fighting with this

ability. Calculate Parry as usual for Melee Weapon skills. For example, if you have Force Sword-18 and Psi Talent 2, you fight at skill 20, making attack rolls at 20 and parries at 13 before other modifiers.

All Psychic Swords can inflict “thrust” impaling damage against *half* DR (except for DR specifically against psi) or “swing” cutting damage against *full* DR, at Reach C or 1. Some slayers have further options; see *Additional Sword Modes* (below). Psychic Sword attacks are priced as alternative abilities (*Psi*, p. 5) to one another. They cannot also be alternatives to standard Psionics abilities, as they aren't quite the same thing.

Psychic Swords act like metal ones – parrying, attacking, and possibly being blocked, dodged, or parried by enemies – with a few differences. First, they take *no* time to ready; a slayer can materialize his blade even as he attacks. In addition, they cannot be dropped, broken, or taken away; even a critical miss that leads to such a result merely forces the psi to take a Concentrate maneuver to reform the blade anew. Finally, they exist across the dimensions, allowing them to harm intangible beings (ghosts, phased-out wizards, etc.).

In fussy rules terminology, the “swing” cutting attack is:

Advantages: Cutting Attack (Affects Insubstantial, +20%; Melee Attack, Reach C, 1, -20%; Psionic Swordsmanship, -5%; Variable, +5%) [7/die].

The “thrust” impaling attack looks like this:

Advantages: Impaling Attack (Affects Insubstantial, +20%; Armor Divisor (2), +50%; Melee Attack, Reach C, 1, -20%; Psionic Swordsmanship, -5%; Variable, +5%) [12/die].

Round up partial dice costs, apply modifiers, round up again, and purchase the more expensive of the two at full price, the other as an alternative (1/5 cost, *also* rounded up). See the *Psychic Sword Table* (below) for a cost summary.

Additional Sword Modes

Some psychic slayers know other tricks. These are priced as alternatives and bought separately from the basic ability.

Psychic Sword Table

Will: Minimum Will required to buy this level of damage. If a higher damage has the same point cost, then raising Will also raises damage for free!

Basic Damage: Damage output of the basic Psychic Sword.

Basic Cost: Point cost for the basic Psychic Sword.

Pyro Damage: Damage output of the optional Pyrokinetic Blade mode.

Pyro Cost: Point cost to add Pyrokinetic Blade to a Psychic Sword that does equal or greater cutting damage.

Neuro Damage: Damage output of the optional Neurokinetic Blade mode.

Neuro Cost: Point cost to add Neurokinetic Blade to a Psychic Sword that does equal or greater impaling damage.

Will	Basic Damage	Basic Cost	Pyro Damage	Pyro Cost	Neuro Damage	Neuro Cost
16	1d+1(2) imp/2d+2 cut	23	2d+2 burn	+3	1d+1 fat	+3
17	1d+2(2) imp/3d-1 cut	24	3d-1 burn	+3	1d+2 fat	+4
18	1d+2(2) imp/3d cut	25	3d burn	+3	1d+2 fat	+4
19	2d-1(2) imp/3d+1 cut	29	3d+1 burn	+4	2d-1 fat	+4
20	2d-1(2) imp/3d+2 cut	31	3d+2 burn	+4	2d-1 fat	+4
21	2d(2) imp/4d-1 cut	31	4d-1 burn	+4	2d fat	+4
22	2d(2) imp/4d cut	33	4d burn	+4	2d fat	+4
23	2d+1(2) imp/4d+1 cut	37	4d+1 burn	+5	2d+1 fat	+5
24	2d+1(2) imp/4d+2 cut	39	4d+2 burn	+5	2d+1 fat	+5
25	2d+2(2) imp/5d-1 cut	40	5d-1 burn	+5	2d+2 fat	+6

Purchased damage can never exceed that of the attack form (impaling or cutting) replaced, but it can always be lower.

Pyrokinetic Blade: The Psychic Sword's *swing* can optionally deal *burning* damage instead of cutting damage. Declare this before attacking.

Advantages: Burning Attack (Affects Insubstantial, +20%; Melee Attack, Reach C, 1, -20%; Psionic Swordsmanship, -5%; Variable, +5%) [5/die].

Neurokinetic Blade: The Psychic Sword's *thrust* can optionally deal *fatigue* damage vs. full DR instead of impaling damage against half DR. Declare this before attacking.

Advantages: Fatigue Attack (Affects Insubstantial, +20%; Melee Attack, Reach C, 1, -20%; Psionic Swordsmanship, -5%; Variable, +5%) [10/die].

Psychic Shield

Variable

Prerequisites: Unusual Background (Psionic) and Psychic Sword (any level).

You can project a disc of psionic force that can block anything that a material buckler could block. This can also deliver a shield *bash* (though not a shield *rush*) at Reach 1; all mundane defenses work normally against this. Otherwise, treat it as a Psychic Sword that inflicts Will-based "thrust" crushing damage, uses the Shield (Force) skill at no penalty for the off hand, and enables a block instead of a parry. Thus, if you have Shield (Force)-16 and Psi Talent 2, you bash at skill 18 and have a Block of 12 before other modifiers.

Psychic Shield cannot be an alternative ability (*Psi*, p. 5). It can *always* coexist with the prerequisite Psychic Sword – it isn't a replacement in the sense of Pyrokinetic Blade or Neurokinetic Blade. Like Psychic Sword, it can't be an alternative to other Psionics abilities, either.

The main benefits of a Psychic Shield are a crushing attack that affects intangible foes and the convenience of an unbreakable shield that you cannot drop. It *doesn't* grant any Defense Bonus, though! In rules terms:

Advantages: Crushing Attack (Affects Insubstantial, +20%; Can Block, +5%*; Melee Attack, Reach 1, -25%; Psionic Swordsmanship, -5%; Variable, +5%) [5/die].

* Melee Attack normally allows a parry. Can Block changes this to a block, which is more useful against missiles (though it can't stop attacks that explicitly require a parry).

Additional Shield Modes

Like Psychic Sword, Psychic Shield can have extra options, which increase its point cost.

Psychic Shove: Double your bash's damage roll for *knockback purposes only*. For instance, if you roll 6 points of damage, treat it normally for wounding but as 12 points to assess knockback. This capability adds Double Knockback, +20%, for +1 point/die (round up).

Ringing Blow: A bash with the Psychic Shield disorients the victim! If *any* damage penetrates DR, the target must make a HT roll – at -1 per full two points of penetrating damage – or be physically stunned (roll vs. HT every second to recover).

This adds Side Effect, Stunning, +50%, for +2.5 points/die (round up).

Psychic Shield Table

Will: Minimum Will required to buy this level of damage.

Damage: Damage output of Psychic Shield.

Basic: Point cost for the basic Psychic Shield.

Shove: Point cost to add Psychic Shove to Psychic Shield.

Ringing: Point cost to add Ringing Blow to Psychic Shield.

All: Point cost to add Psychic Shove and Ringing Blow to Psychic Shield.

Will	Damage	Point Cost			
		Basic	Shove	Ringing	All
16	1d+1 cr	7	+2	+4	+5
17-18	1d+2 cr	8	+2	+4	+6
19-20	2d-1 cr	9	+2	+5	+7
21-22	2d cr	10	+2	+5	+7
23-24	2d+1 cr	12	+3	+6	+9
25	2d+2 cr	13	+3	+7	+10

The moment he appeared on a street, he wrapped a Black sight shield, a psychic shield, and protective shield around himself.

– Anne Bishop, Queen of the Darkness

THINGS TO SLAY

As their job title suggests, psychic slayers live to defeat monsters. At the top of the list are Elder Things; e.g., astral hounds (*Psi*, p. 42), Demons from Between the Stars (*GURPS Dungeon Fantasy Monsters 1*, p. 9), eyes of death (*Monsters 1*, p. 14), flying squid monsters (*Psi*, p. 43), mindwarper (*GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 2: Dungeons*, p. 25), spheres of madness (*Monsters 1*, p. 28), and watchers at the edge of time (*Monsters 1*, p. 34). Other choice targets are largely or entirely immaterial entities that torment mortals with near-impunity, notably Astral Things (*Psi*, p. 42), ghosts (*GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 9: Summoners*, pp. 22-23), neuroids (*Psi*, p. 44), odifiers (*Psi*, p. 44), and the worst kinds of void elementals (*Summoners*, p. 30). Finally, there are entirely material threats that wield psionic capabilities, like aloakasa as-Sharak (*Psi*, p. 41), horrid skulls (*Monsters 1*, p. 19), evil mentalists, and fellow slayers gone bad.

But countless other horrors await . . .

Psychics and spirits attract each other. If he saw them, they could see him, too. We were afraid he'd be attacked or possessed.

– Yayoi, *Moon Phase* #1.22

Fear Seekers

Fear seekers are astral vermin that most often lurk across the dimensional barrier from locales where mortals suffer regular Fright Checks: graveyards, torture chambers, lairs of creatures with the Terror advantage, tax offices, etc. They're attracted by psionic activity, too, sometimes appearing in place of astral piranha (*Psi*, p. 37) or psionic parasites (*Psi*, p. 39). Finally, they're common wandering monsters in Elder Thing dungeons.

If seekers are present, then *any* botched Fright Check or failure to resist supernatural fear (including psionic Fear, terrifying uses of bardic Entrhralment skills, and spells such as Fear, Nightmare, Panic, and Terror) provokes them. They school around their prey to feed off his dread. To facilitate this, they introduce an "emotional anticoagulant" which prevents the psyche from recovering. Though not psionic, these ministrations affect only conscious, sapient minds; in desperate straits, knocking out the victim may be necessary.

Treat fear seekers as a *swarm* (p. B461) that flies at Move 6 and is dispersed by 12 HP, with some special rules:

- The seekers attack fear victims only. If several people qualify, choose randomly. If multiple swarms are present (1d swarms are common), only one can attack each target at a time – but the rest *will* lurk nearby to take the place of their dispersed fellows.

- Instead of inflicting injury, the swarm worsens fear: durations become *indefinite*, any fear-related penalties are doubled, and the victim loses 1 FP/second. This continues until the swarm is dispersed or its target gets a dose of expunge (*Psi*, p. 25), falls unconscious, or dies. For instance, someone hit by a Panic spell (usual duration one minute) or stunned by a Fright Check would flee or stand stunned, losing 1 FP/second, until unconscious. There's no active defense or resistance roll against this beyond not succumbing to fear, so Mental Strength, Mind Shield, Resistant, etc. are of no value. Psionic DR (Psychic Armor or a psiphobic helmet) doesn't protect, either.

- Only damaging effects that affect the insubstantial, like Psychic Sword and weapons bearing the Affect Spirits spell, can disperse the swarm. This normally requires an attack roll at the -4 for attacking an invisible foe whose exact location is known (p. B394), with misses having a 9 or less chance of hitting the victim. An attacker with Transdimensional Sight, the Astral Vision spell, or an equivalent ability need not roll to hit.

Either way, the swarm never defends. Each successful blow inflicts a mere 1 HP if impaling or piercing, or 2 HP otherwise, regardless of its damage roll.

Class: Spirit (Extradimensional).

Notes: Seekers are functionally brainless and mindless, and unaffected by most Psionics abilities (e.g., Battlesense, Fear, Madness, Mind Blast, Mind Control, and Mind Stab), pslay (*Psi*, p. 25), psychic poison (*Psi*, p. 27), and all Animal and Mind Control spells. However, they cannot enter or remain in an area clouded by Fear bloque (*Psi*, p. 25) or protected by the Astral Block spell.

Intruder

Countless things (and Things) from other dimensions are casually termed "intruders," but slayers save the term for a strain of Elder Things that appears to have been created to meddle in mortal affairs. Squid Cults revere these entities as divine emissaries . . . but of course the "gods" they represent don't reward worship. Delvers rarely encounter these monsters until *after* they've demolished a cult's ranks. The Intruders are the ones at the rear, ordering the suicide charge while the high priests complete some foul ritual.

Intruders can pass as elves, humans, orcs, and similar humanoids in insufficient light, but the resemblance is superficial. Their skin drips with unwholesome slime, their eyes are black orbs, and they never speak aloud. They possess a powerful array of telepathic attacks that let them sow madness and dominate minds, and they *do* lash out with these in combat. As fanatical servitors, they're willing to fight to the death with their jagged two-handed swords, which resemble fused humanoid backbones forged from unnatural metal.

ST: 14	HP: 28	Speed: 6.25
DX: 12	Will: 12	Move: 6
IQ: 12	Per: 12	
HT: 13	FP: 13	SM: 0

Dodge: 9 **Parry:** 11 (Sword) **DR:** 5 (Tough Skin)

Fear (16): Fear (*Psi*, p. 6), with effective Will 16. Range 10. Costs 1 FP/use.

Madness (16): Madness 2 (*Psi*, p. 7), with effective Will 16. Takes speed/range modifiers. Costs 1 FP/use.

Mind Control (16): Mind Control 2 (*Psi*, pp. 7-8), with effective Will 16. Takes speed/range modifiers. Costs 1 FP/use.

Spiny Ripsword (16): 2d+3 cutting (Reach 1, 2) or 1d+3 impaling (Reach 2). Any injury means 2 HP of blood loss *next* turn, unless the target has No Blood; assess this on the Intruder's turn.

Traits: Doesn't Breathe; Doesn't Eat or Drink; Doesn't Sleep; Double-Jointed; Elder Gift 4; Extreme Fanaticism; Frightens Animals; High Pain Threshold; Immunity to Metabolic Hazards; Indomitable; Injury Tolerance (Homogenous, No Blood); Night Vision 5; Pressure Support 3; Psi Talent 4; Psychic Terror (*Psi*, p. 14); Slippery 5; Telesend (*Psi*, p. 11); Temperature Tolerance 5 (-20° to 100°); Unfazeable; Unusual Background (Psionic).

Skills: Climbing-17; Escape-22; Hidden Lore (Elder Things)-16; Hidden Lore (Psi)-16; Intimidation-12; Leadership-12; Occultism-16; Tactics-12; Two-Handed Sword-16.

Class: Elder Thing.

Notes: Double-Jointed and Slippery combine for +10 on attempts to break free; Extreme Fanaticism gives +3 to Will-based resistance in most run-ins with adventurers; Injury Tolerance limits impaling and piercing attacks (p. B380), and gives No Brain and No Vitals; and many effects are totally ineffective: fear (Unfazeable), poison (Immunity), shock (High Pain Threshold), strangulation (Doesn't Breathe), etc. Intruders are good tacticians, and strive to fight in areas where their opponents suffer from troubles they don't, most often darkness (up to -5). The spiny ripsword is a thrusting greatsword; its special effect *will* work for non-Intruders. Unwilling to negotiate. Truly evil.

a psychic slayer wielding a similar weapon. Otherwise, the pscorpion fights much as one would expect, grappling with pincers whenever possible, using its fearsome psionic weapon to kill trapped prey, and then eating the remains.

ST: 13 **HP:** 13 **Speed:** 7.00
DX: 15 **Will:** 16 **Move:** 8
IQ: 5 **Per:** 12
HT: 13 **FP:** 13 **SM:** 0
Dodge: 11 **Parry:** 12 (Pstinger) **DR:** 5

Chelicerae (17): 1d cutting. Can only bite a grappled victim. Reach C.

Pincers (17): 1d+2 cutting. Any hit counts as a grapple, even if it doesn't penetrate DR. Roll damage against a trapped victim as a free action on later turns! Treat as a weapon (Striker), not as a body part. Reach C, 1.

Pstinger (17): 2d+2 cutting or 1d+1(2) impaling. Reach C, 1.

Traits: 360° Vision; Combat Reflexes; Extra Attack 1; Extra Legs (Eight Legs); High Pain Threshold; Horizontal; Infravision; Injury Tolerance (No Neck); No Fine Manipulators; Temperature Tolerance 4 (-8° to 99°); Unusual Background (Psionic); Wild Animal.

Skills: Brawling-17; Force Sword-17; Stealth-15; Wrestling-17.
Class: Dire Animal.

Notes: Effective ST is 15 when grappling, thanks to Wrestling. There *are* pyro-pscorpions with Pyrokinetic Blade (change cutting attack to 2d+2 burning), sleep-pscorpions with Neurokinetic Blade (change impaling attack to 1d+1 fatigue), and two-tailed pscorpions with a different pstinger on each tail. Long-lived pscorpions may have Will 17+ and correspondingly higher pstinger damage.

PSYCHIC SLAYER POWER-UPS

Like all delvers, psychic slayers can spend earned points on everything in their template. Other power-ups include:

- Higher Purpose (Slay Elder Things or Slay Evil Psis) up to 3 [5/level].
- Mentalist power-ups (*Psi*, pp. 19-22) off the following list: Acute ESP, Blind Viewing, Death Possession, Defense Stunts, Elder Lore, Residue Sense, Second Nature, Speed of Thought, and True Will.
- Psi perks (*Psi*, p. 14), to a maximum of one perk per full 10 points in Psi Talent, Psionics and Psychic Swordsmanship abilities, and psi-related skills (any skill that benefits from Psientist).
 - Psientist up to 6 [5/level].
 - Psionics abilities (*Psi*, pp. 5-11) *other than* direct telepathic attacks – that is, anything but Fear, Madness, Mind Blast, Mind Control, or Mind Stab – as explained in *Adding and Improving Psi Abilities* (*Psi*, p. 20).
 - Psychic Swordsmanship abilities (pp. 6-8).
 - Ridiculous Luck [60].
 - Will up to 25 *before* racial modifiers [5/level].

The GM decides whether these are available to starting characters or must be purchased in play.

Psi-Beasts

Elder Things and their minions regularly experiment on ordinary creatures in an effort to come up with new monsters with which to terrorize mortals. Psi-beasts are basic-yet-successful examples. These are otherwise mundane predators with psiphilic (*Psi*, p. 24) prostheses in place of their natural claws and teeth. Large carnivores (such as tigers and sharks) and cooperative hunters (like lions and wolves) are preferred.

The special metal body parts can easily penetrate armor . . . to deliver a psionic attack. This uses the *creator's* psi abilities but drains the *beast's* FP. It discharges the first time the animal injures its victim and then takes 10 minutes to recharge, so it affects only the first wound – but often, that's enough! A side effect of Elder Thing experimentation is that the creature goes mad and is willing to attack even well-armed parties.

To turn any regular beast into a psi-beast:

1. Add armor divisor (2) to all tooth and claw attacks. Spotting the unusual teeth calls for a *Per*-based Naturalist roll at -5.

Pscorpion

This monstrosity would be just another giant scorpion if it had a sting at the end of its tail – but it has a Psychic Sword (pp. 7-8) instead! This “pstinger” is extremely agile, and capable of stabbing, slashing, and parrying in all directions like

2. Choose between Psychokinetic Lash or Pyrokinetic Bolt (which add their damage to the injury), or Fear, Madness, Mind Blast, or Mind Stab (which work normally but with no range penalties).

3. Choose a level. Psychokinetic Lash and Pyrokinetic Bolt typically inflict 3d, but anything from 1d to 6d is possible. Most resisted abilities work at effective Will 16, or the GM can roll 1d+12.

4. Add Bad Temper (9) and Berserk (9). If the trait is already present, a self-control number of 15 or 12 becomes 9, 9 becomes 6, and 6 becomes "N/A" (meaning the beast is *always* enraged and vicious).

5. Change monster type from Animal to Dire Animal.

An example follows. The GM can have lots of fun with horror-howlers (wolves with Fear), shatter-bears (grizzly bears with Psychokinetic Lash and Bad Temper (6)), etc.

Pyro-Tiger

A psi-beast based on a mundane tiger (p. B456) imbued with Pyrokinetic Bolt.

ST: 17 **HP:** 17 **Speed:** 6.00
DX: 13 **Will:** 11 **Move:** 10
IQ: 4 **Per:** 12
HT: 11 **FP:** 11 **SM:** +1
Dodge: 10 **Parry:** N/A **DR:** 1 (Tough Skin)

Bite (15): 1d+2(2) cutting. If berserk, this is All-Out for +4 to hit (usually to the neck at net skill 14) *or* +2 to damage (1d+4(2)).

Front Claw (15): 1d+2(2) cutting. If berserk, see notes for bite.

Hind Claw (13): 1d+3(2) cutting. If berserk, this is All-Out for +4 to hit (usually to the vitals at net skill 14) *or* +2 to damage (1d+5(2)).

Pyrokinetic Bolt: The *first* bite or claw that injures a target (at least 1 HP) adds another 3d burning to the wound. This is *inside* DR, which has no effect. Costs 1 FP.

Traits: Bad Temper (9); Berserk (9); Combat Reflexes; Night Vision 5; Quadruped; Temperature Tolerance 1 (24° to 90°); Wild Animal.

Skills: Brawling-15; Stealth-13; Swimming-13.

Class: Dire Animal.

Notes: Owing to its special attack, the pyro-tiger often cooks prey from within. Thus, it finds the smell of cooking meat attractive and is liable to be drawn to it. A *tebutje* (tooth-edged club) made from its teeth loses the standard (0.5) divisor – that is, DR affects it normally – and is psiphilic for wielders with the Pyrokinetic Bolt ability.

*Let us train our minds
to desire what the situation
demands.*

– Seneca

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sean “Dr. Kromm” Punch set out to become a particle physicist in 1985, ended up the **GURPS** Line Editor in 1995, and has engineered rules for almost every **GURPS** product since. He developed, edited, or wrote dozens of **GURPS Third Edition** projects between 1995 and 2002. In 2004, he produced the **GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition** with David Pulver. Since then, he has created **GURPS Powers** (with Phil Masters), **GURPS Martial Arts** (with Peter Dell’Orto), **GURPS Zombies**, and the **GURPS Action, GURPS Dungeon Fantasy, and GURPS Power-Ups** series . . . among other things. Sean has been a gamer since 1979. His non-gaming interests include cinema, mixology, and Argentine tango.

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HIDDEN KNOWLEDGE

BY CHRISTOPHER R. RICE

For *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy* casters, what's better than new spells? New *secret* spells – forbidden or esoteric knowledge known only to a few. By their very nature, secret spells are more effective, plus they often have cool-sounding names. Fireball is *ordinary*, but Pharrick's Pyroclastic Sphere sounds *awesome*.

This article offers options for “secret spells” in *Dungeon Fantasy*, expanded rules for spellbooks and grimoires, plus guidelines for introducing entirely *new* magical systems into their existing games. Familiarity with the *Dungeon Fantasy* line is assumed. *GURPS*

Magic is recommended, because many spells are variations on ones that appear in that volume. Knowledge of *GURPS Thaumatology* is helpful but not required.

There is no friend as loyal as a book.

– Ernest Hemingway

SECRET SPELLS

Depending on the nature of the campaign, secret spells can serve as a reward for a completed quest, the goal of an adventure, or something to accidentally stumble across. Though the GM is welcome to invent entirely new spells for casters to discover, it might be easier (and quicker!) to simply modify an existing spell and make it *better*.

FROM ORDINARY TO AWESOME

In addition to any other prerequisites they may have, all secret spells are IQ/Very Hard. Because they are powerful, they are harder to learn than “normal” spells. For a version based on a spell that's normally IQ/Hard, the GM should add *two* of the following options to the base effects – or only one if the spell was already Very Hard to begin with. The GM may also decide that “advanced secret” spells exist; in such cases, he chooses *four* options from the list instead of two.

Additionally, the GM may design a spell with up to two “drawbacks” (use the following suggestions, just in reverse). Each drawback permits inclusion of another modifier.

Once you have chosen additional effects, write the spell up with its modifications added in. Note that all of these effects stack with high skill!

Spell Options

- *Easy to Learn*: The spell is as easy to learn as any other! Reduce the difficulty to IQ/Hard instead of IQ/Very Hard. When added a second time, the modifier reduces the difficulty by a *further* level, making it (at minimum) an IQ/Average spell.

Optionally, this removes either *all* non-spell prerequisites or *all* specific-spell prerequisites. In any case, the Secret Spell power-up (p. 13) is still required to learn it.

- *Energy Efficient*: The spell is particularly economic with magical energy. Reduce both the initial cost *and* the cost to maintain the spell by 1 or by 10% (whichever is better). If this is taken twice, its effects stack, but it cannot reduce the spell's cost below 1 to cast or maintain. This also affects the energy costs associated with creating a magic item with the spell. Spells without a cost (like Recover Energy) cannot take this option.

- *Enhanced Damage*: Increase the damage the spell does by +1 or +1 per two full dice. This option may be included a second time to increase the damage by +2 or +1 per die.

- *Lasting*: The spell lasts for longer than normal. Increase duration by the following: If measured in seconds, it's now measured in minutes; minutes become hours; and hours become days. Enhancement beyond days is not possible! For that, simply maintain the spell. Note that if the caster goes to sleep or falls unconscious, the spell ends. Optionally, if added twice, that side effect may be waived for this one particular spell (e.g., you could cast a spell on yourself that continues even if you go to sleep or fall unconscious).

- *Mass'tery*: This spell turns a regular spell into a “Mass” effect spell. All parameters of the spell remain the same, but it becomes an Area spell with a Base Cost equal to *half* the cost of the spell. If included twice, its Base Cost becomes one *quarter* Base Cost. Spells without a cost (like Recover Energy) cannot take this option.

- *Quick*: The spell is faster than normal. Reduce the casting time by half. If taken twice, a “double quick” spell *quarters* the base casting time. Casting time is always at least one second.

- *Rules-Breaker*: The spell breaks some of the rules of its “normal” counterpart. The GM will have to be careful about what he allows this to do. For example, permitting a spell to exceed a listed limit (an Accuracy spell that offers bonuses higher than +3) or simply be better in some small way (a Recover Energy spell that gives the bonuses for skill 15 at skill 10) is probably balanced.

- *Unique Effect*: The spell has another effect. Perhaps it adds a modifier or creates the effects of a closely related spell. This also increases the energy cost by 1 or 10% (whichever is greater) per +10% of modifiers added. Treat an added spell that is closely related as a +50% enhancement, or add 80% of its cost to the spell, whichever is *higher*. This is also used when an added effect doesn’t fit anywhere else (see the Dwarvish Reinforcement spell, below). Treat this as +50% for most effects, but some particularly powerful effects might be +100% or more.

GETTING SECRET SPELLS

The following new power-up is available to casters who want secret spells.

Secret Spell

1 or 5 points

You have a spell that is not common knowledge! Describe how you gained access to it. Perhaps you are a part of a guild or secret brotherhood, or you earned the trust of an entire magical race that disclosed to you one of their secrets. For a PC starting out with this ability, the player may offer input for what he wants the spell to do, but the GM designs the specifics. The GM may allow a version of this power-up for advanced secret spells (see p. 12).

Perk level: Secret Spell (Specific spell). 1 point.

Advantage level: Unusual Background (Specific advanced secret spell). 5 points.

*There are no secrets except
the secrets that keep themselves.*
– George Bernard Shaw

EXAMPLE SECRET SPELLS

The following new spells have been modified from those found in the *Basic Set* or *Magic* using the above rules. All of these spells require Secret Spell (above) or a Tome of Power (p. 17) that contains the spell.

Archmagi’s Recuperation (VH)

Special

Your ability to recover Fatigue Points is amazing. This spell is similar to Recover Energy (*Magic*, p. 89), but allows a mage to regain 1 FP per 2 minutes if he knows it at 15 or

higher. A mage that knows this spell at 20 or higher recovers 1 FP per *minute*, and one who knows it at 25 or higher recovers 1 FP per *second*.

Cost: None.

Prerequisites: IQ 14+, Magery 4, Lend Energy, and Secret Spell (Archmagi’s Recuperation).

Item

As per the Recover Energy spell (*Magic*, p. 89).

Designer’s Notes: This spell was built using Recover Energy with two optional drawbacks. These increase the prerequisites from Magery 1 to Magery 4 and require an IQ of 14 or higher. It allows the recovery of FP as fast as Recover Energy (albeit at lower skill levels) and adds a higher tier of recovery. These are both Rules-Breaker Effects that cost two option slots each.

Balor’s Eye Fire (VH)

Regular

Similar to the Breathe Fire spell (*Magic*, p. 76) except that the spell treats the flammability class (*Making Things Burn*, p. B433) of the subject as two steps higher than it actually is and the attack emanates from the user’s eyes instead of his mouth.

Duration: 1 second.

Cost: 8 per 1d+1 of burning damage (up to 4d+4). Cannot be maintained.

Time to cast: 2 seconds

Prerequisites: Magery 1, Flame Jet, Resist Fire, and either Secret Spell (Balor’s Eye Fire) or Tome of Power (Balor’s Treatise, p. 18).

Item

As per the Breathe Fire spell.

Designer’s Notes: This spell was built using Breathe Fire and adding the following enhancements: Cosmic, Higher Incendiary Level (+50%), and Incendiary 2 (+20%). Changing the point of emanation from the mouth to the eyes is a +0% effect.

Dwarvish Reinforcement (VH)

Enchantment

As per the Fortify spell (*Magic*, p. 66), but any enchanted armor or shield automatically repairs itself, healing 1 HP per day (it may also be repaired normally). Items that have been enchanted with this spell never need maintenance, don’t rust, remain sharp without being sharpened, etc. and receive a bonus to their HT equal to their bonus to DR. This spell is usually only cast on metal or stone items.

Cost: See the table below.

DR Bonus	HT Bonus	Cost
+1	+1	100
+2	+2	400
+3	+3	1,600
+4	+4	6,000
+5	+5	16,000

Prerequisites: Enchant and Secret Spell (Dwarvish Reinforcement)

A SPELL BY ANY OTHER NAME HURTS JUST THE SAME

A GM who wants to improvise spell names on the fly might find the following table useful. First, determine if the spell has a prefix, suffix, or both; if using both, then also decide whether the original spell is included in the name of the spell. The GM can use a specific caster's name as either the prefix or suffix for a spell. Finally, either pick

something appropriate or modify the base spell name as suggested by the roll, adjusting the terms as need to sound "awesome." For example, a secret spell based on Death Touch that *also* causes the target to make a HT roll with a penalty equal to the damage rolled or suffer a heart attack might be called "Brutal Death Touch."

Spell Prefix

Roll (1d, 1d)	Result	Possible Secret Spell Options
1, 1-2	Archmagi's	Efficient Energy, Rules-Breaker, Unique Effect
1, 3-4	Brutal/Deadly/etc.	Enhanced Damage, Unique Effect (for adding enhancements like Side Effect, Symptoms, etc.)
1, 5-6	Caster occupation (Cleric's, Wizard's, etc.)	Easy to Learn
2, 1-2	Celestial/Hallowed/Blessed	Efficient Energy, Unique Effect
2, 3-4	Infernal/Unhallowed/Cursed	Enhanced Damage, Unique Effect
2, 5-6	Eldritch	Any
3, 1-2	Wondrous/Magnificent	Rules-Breaker, Unique Effect
3, 3-4	Racial (Elvish, Dwarvish, etc.)	Any
3, 5-6	Masterful	Easy to Learn, Energy Efficient,
4, 1-2	Rapid/Speedy/etc.	Quick
4, 3-4	Shimmering	Energy Efficient, Lasting
4, 5-6	Unearthly	Lasting, Unique Effect
5, 1-2	Northern/Southern/etc.	Any
5, 3-4	Noncaster occupation (Barbarian's, Scout's, etc.)	Easy to Learn, Unique Effect
5, 5-6	Dragon's	Any
6, 1-2	Reaper's	Enhanced Damage, Unique Effect
6, 3-4	Monster's name (as-Sharak's, Peshkali's, etc.)	Any
6, 5-6	Specific material (iron, jade, etc.)	Any

Spell Suffix

Roll (1d, 1d)	Result	Possible Secret Spell Options
1, 1-2	Wrath	Enhanced Damage, Unique Effect
1, 3-4	Transcendence	Efficient Energy, Rule-Breaker
1, 5-6	Sorcery	Any
2, 1-2	Protection	Unique Effect
2, 3-4	Might/Strength	Enhanced Damage, Unique Effect
2, 5-6	Mutilation/Butchery/etc.	Enhanced Damage
3, 1-2	Effortlessness/Facility	Easy to Learn, Efficient Energy
3, 3-4	Alacrity/Speed/etc.	Quick
3, 5-6	(of the) Master/Apprentice/etc.	Easy to Learn
4, 1-2	Power/Fortitude/etc.	Efficient Energy, Lasting
4, 3-4	Defense/Warding/etc.	Unique Effect
4, 5-6	Everlasting/Enduring/etc.	Efficient Energy, Lasting
5, 1-2	(of the) Archmagi	Efficient Energy, Rules-Breaker, Unique Effect
5, 3-4	(of the) Noncaster occupation (Barbarian, Scout, etc.)	Easy to Learn, Unique Effect
5, 5-6	(of the) Dragon	Any
6, 1-2	Pain/Torture/etc.	Unique Effect (for adding enhancements like Side Effect, Symptoms, etc.)
6, 3-4	(of the) Monster's name (as-Sharak, Peshkali, etc.)	Any
6, 5-6	(of) Specific material (iron, jade, etc.)	Any

Designer's Notes: This spell was built using Fortify and has two Unique Effect elements. The first is that the target heals itself, as if it were a living being. The second is the bonus to the item's HT. Both effects together double the energy's cost. Despite casters not being able to take enchantment spells, this one is presented as a new option available for those with the Dwarven Gear perk (*GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 3: The Next Level*, p. 6) and might require purchasing a Secret Item perk for those without it or in addition to Dwarven Gear.

Elvish Grace (VH)

Regular

Like the Grace spell (*Magic*, p. 37), but *better*.

Duration: 1 minute.

Cost: 4 for every point of DX increase (maximum of 10). 3 per point of increase to maintain.

Prerequisites: Clumsiness and Secret Spell (Elvish Grace).

Item

As per the Grace spell.

Designer's Notes: This spell was built on Grace and has both Energy Efficient and Rules-Breaker.

Impart Skill (VH)

Enchantment

This skill enchants an object so that it gives a bonus to a specific skill or set of skills *or* gives a skill at a specific level. This bestows all the normal benefits of high skill in the latter case and acts much like a Talent (p. B91) for the former. If multiple items are worn that grant a bonus to the same skill only the *highest* bonus functions; you cannot stack four items that bestow +1 to Stealth to get +4 to skill.

The enchanter either must have the skill(s) imparted *or* have access to someone who does to help him with the enchantment. For skills that have a static level, the final level cannot exceed the enchanter's skill in this spell *or* his actual skill level (or his helpers).

Cost: See tables below.

Skill Bonus	Cost	Skill Bonus	Cost
+1	50	+4	400
+2	100	+5	800
+3	200		

Double the cost for each additional point. May be recast at a higher level, as per Accuracy (*Magic*, p. 65). If this bonus is to a specific group of skills add a multiple to the final cost: for

2 to 6 skills, ×5; for 7 to 12 skills, ×10; and 13 or more skills, ×15 cost.

Skill Level	Cost	Skill Level	Cost
10	15	14	540
11	45	15	1,620
12	90	16	4,860
13	270		

Continue the progression (×3 then ×2) indefinitely (as long as the enchanter's skill allows).

Alternatively, you can give a bonus *or* a static skill level (using the better of the two), in such a case use the energy cost of the higher of the two and then add an additional cost equal to one-fifth of the other.

Prerequisites: Magery 3, Enchant, Lend Skill, Wisdom, Secret Spell (Impart Skill), *and* five Communication and Empathy spells.

Designer's Notes: This spell was built on Lend Skill and requires two Unique Effect "slots" to allow an enchantment to enhance or bestow skill levels. Despite casters not being able to take enchantment spells, this one is presented as a new option available for delvers to find in long lost tombs or as a gift from the enchanter's guild. It might require purchasing a "Secret Item" perk to obtain such gear.

Mass Coolness, Mass Shade

Area

This isn't one spell but a set of spells that protect multiple subjects in an area while counting as a single spell "on." This is otherwise as for Coolness (*Magic*, p. 187) or Shade (*Magic*, p. 169), but may affect the people in the area at the moment of casting *or* the area itself (affecting all who enter it).

Duration: 1 hour.

Base Cost: 1/2 to cast for Mass Coolness (minimum 2 yards), 1/4 to cast for Mass Shade (minimum 4 yards). Half to maintain.

Time to cast: 10 seconds.

Prerequisites: IQ 12+ and *either* Coolness and Secret Spell (Mass Coolness) (for Mass Coolness) *or* Shade and Secret Spell (Mass Shade) (for Mass Shade).

Item

(a) Staff, wand, or jewelry. *Energy to create:* 200 × maximum area. (b) An area, container, tent, or similar item may be permanently cooled or shaded. *Energy to create:* 100 × maximum area it affects.

She'd practiced long and hard and only managed the ability to transform metal into this one object.

– Shirley Hailstock, The Magic Shoppe

Designer's Notes: This spell was built on Mass Coolness or Mass Shade, and has two levels of Mass'tery – one to turn it into an Area spell, halving the cost, and another to halve the cost again.

Self-Repairing

Regular

Causes an object to repair itself at a rate of 1 HP/hour (modified by its HP).

Duration: Until all HP is lost from the time of casting.

Cost: 3 per 10 lbs. of subject's weight. Minimum cost 6 for objects with moving parts or that are of cheap quality. Double cost if the object regains 1 HP/second or *triple* it if it regains 10 HP/second.

Time to cast: 1 second per pound (minimum 10).

Prerequisites: Magery 2, Repair, and Secret Spell (Self-Repairing).

Item

Any item can be made permanently self-repairing. *Energy to create:* 100 × cost to cast the spell on the object.

Designer's Notes: This spell was built on Repair and has Unique Effect twice – once so the spell can be permanently

enchanted on an object, and another for the “regenerating” effect.

Transfigure Object (VH)

Regular; Special Resistance

As for Transform Object (*Magic*, p. 120), except with a longer duration.

Duration: 1 day.

Prerequisites: Magery 3, Transform Object, and Secret Spell (Transfigure Object).

Item

(a) Staff, wand, or jewelry. *Energy to create:* 1,200. (b) Any object can be enchanted to transform upon command into another object. If the object has multiple forms use the highest weight to determine the energy cost. Additionally, add a fixed cash cost equal to least costly form × 0.5; if it has multiple forms this cost becomes additive. *Energy to create:* 50 × (number of forms - 1) × cost to cast the spell.

Designer's Notes: This spell was based on the Transform Object spell. It adds both Lasting to increase the duration and a Unique effect that adds an additional enchantment option.

SECRET MAGIC

In some campaigns, where the GM feels comfortable working with the potential complications, it might be appropriate for delvers to learn entirely new types of magic. Learning a new system should be the result of a long or difficult adventure, and players should *not* be able to start with them (unless the GM decides otherwise). Additionally, adventurers should be aware that unless they want to pay full price for the Magery advantage of their new magic type, they cannot become more proficient in the alternate system than with their original one.

It's also suggested that a new magical system's method(s) of enchantment be *ignored*. Delvers don't make items – they *find* them.

New Magic System

Variable

You've learned how to cast magic in an unusual way. This allows you to surprise your enemies and allies alike, as you perform feats of power that are unknown to them.

Advantage: Magery (Other magical system) [10/level] as an alternative ability, for 2 points/level; Unusual Background (Student of multiple types of magic) [10]. This alternate Magery cannot exceed your base Magery.

EXAMPLE MAGICAL SYSTEM

The Ritual Path magic system, especially the version that appears in *GURPS Thaumatology: Ritual Path Magic*, is a flexible, versatile system that can do nearly anything and thus

makes an excellent “secret” magic system for casters to learn. Because Ritual Path magic and the standard system are *radically* different, the following changes should be made.

- Bonuses granted to Thaumatology by standard Magery are *ignored* for determining the cap for Path skills or refilling your mana reserve (see below).
- Mana Reserve granted by Magery (Ritual Path) can only be used for Ritual Path magic spells.
- Use Thaumatology instead of Path of Magic for refilling your mana reserve.
- Multiply the number of conditional spells any caster has by 2. For example, if a caster has Thaumatology 12 and Magery 3 (Ritual Path), he has 30 slots, not 15.
- The GM should disallow Ritual Adept (or allow it as a power-up after character creation). Thus, all rituals cast should take the form of conditional spells, charms, or elixirs. He may also allow a new form of conditional spell: scrolls (see p. 18)
- The GM shouldn't permit those with access to Ritual Path magic to do anything that a normal caster couldn't do (e.g., no healing spells for wizardly casters and no teleportation spells for *anyone*). The GM *should* allow most damaging spells to inflict up to 6d of damage before becoming a Greater effect so that Ritual Path mages can compete with their *Magic*-based brethren.
- Use the values for TL4 when purchasing Ritual Path magic gear for a *Dungeon Fantasy* campaign. The GM should also allow “portable” versions of workspace kits, alchemy labs, etc. These weigh and cost half as much as their Basic versions, but impose -2 on skill rolls to use them.

KNOWING YOUR LETTERS

GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 1: Adventurers discusses the use of books, scrolls, and tomes by delvers, while *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 4: Sages* presents a new template, the sage, who uses them. But what else could be done with books? Better yet, what sort of knowledge might hidden or esoteric volumes provide?

Dungeon Fantasy casters don't need spellbooks to cast their spells, but they have their uses (see *Sages*, pp. 13-14). Books can aid in casting spells, and they can help a caster learn new spells without a teacher. These new guidelines expand on those basic possibilities.

SPELLBOOK POWER-UP

If the GM would like to keep spellbooks rare, or provide graduates of schools of study a bonus, use this power-up.

Tome of Power

Variable

You've acquired a book of forgotten lore (however quaint and curious), giving you access to knowledge that lesser casters can only dream of. Many such books contain secret spells (see pp. 12-16) or rare or obscure knowledge.

Advantage: Unusual Background (Artifact) [Varies] (see *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 11: Power-Ups*, p. 6), though base cost rarely exceeds 30 points, even for the rarest of the rare. The GM might give out Signature Gear instead, if it would make sense for the item to enjoy "plot protection"; such goods often have strange origins (temples, the Wizards' Guild, ancient vending machines of power, etc.). Tomes that contain secret spells do not force you to buy a separate secret spell perk; instead add one point to the cost of this power-up per five such spells detailed within (rounded up).

COPYING SPELLS

Casters may be permitted to copy spells from other sources into a spellbook (or prayer book) if they have space, allowing them to study the magical formulae later. This is especially useful if a spell is inscribed on a surface they couldn't bring with them or that they do not own.

A spellbook has a number of slots equal to the number of spells it would contain if it were a grimoire (*Sages*, p. 13). Such books may have empty slots for the regular price so that a mage can put new spells in his book as he finds them.

Putting new spells into your grimoire takes a number of hours equal to the *minimum* energy cost to cast the spell (do not include any reduction for high skill!) *plus* 1d-3 (minimum of one hour). Supplies for the ink, quills, etc. cost \$10 per hour it took to scribe the spell into the book. Optionally, the GM may also require special ingredients for particular spells.

At the end of this period, make an IQ + Magery roll. Success means you've copied the spell successfully, and it occupies an empty slot. A critical success means you've copied the spell into your spellbook, but it doesn't take up a slot! Failure means you've wasted your time and supplies, but you

can try again. Critical failure results in the spell going off as if it was cast.

Example: A wizard tries to put the Explosive Fireball in his spellbook. It takes three to six hours (the two-hour minimum for the spell, plus 1d-3 hours) and costs \$10 to \$60 in supplies.

The GM may permit access to this option to anyone with the following power-up.

Spell Scribe

7/18 points for levels 1-2

Prerequisites: IQ 11+, one language at Accented or better, and Bardic Talent, Deathliness, Demonic Attunement, Elemental Influence, Magery, Power Investiture (any), or Wild Talent (No Advantage Requirements) at 1+.

You've learned the secrets of maintaining and creating a spellbook! Level 1 allows you to copy new spells into a manual you own (see above). Level 2 allows a caster to copy a new spell into his spellbook quickly, reading days as hours and hours as minutes.

Advantage: Unusual Background (Access to Scroll spell) [5].
Perks: One-Task Wonder (Scroll spell defaults to IQ for the purpose copying spells into spellbook) [1]; Unusual Training (Spell scribing) [1]. Level 2 adds Efficient (Copying Spells) [1] and Unique Technique (Speed Copying) [1].

Techniques: Level 1 has no techniques. Level 2 adds Speed Copying (H) Skill-2 [9].

You've acquired a book of forgotten lore.

NEW MANUAL MODIFIERS

The following new modifiers are available for texts.

Compact. The grimoire is made of lighter and/or more expensive components, better paper, supple leather, etc. *Halve* weight. +4 CF.

Enchanted. The spells in the manual can function as scrolls (see *Sages*, pp. 14-17) in an emergency. This isn't necessarily a good thing, because the spell disappears from your grimoire exactly as it would on an object bearing the Scroll enchantment. Furthermore, copying spells into your book takes *much* longer than normal (but cost the same); read hours as *days*. See above for more information on copying new spells into a book. Optionally, you may add either the Charged Scroll or Universal Scroll (or both!) options to your spellbook, increasing its utility *and* its cost. This costs the normal amount; weight is unchanged. +3 CF *plus* the cost of the spells as if they were scrolls (see *Sages*, p. 15). Optionally, if the GM allows, for +19 CF, the spell doesn't disappear when cast but cannot be used again for a number of days equal to how long it would take to scribe it back into the book.

SORCEROUS SCRIBBLE

The magical scroll is a staple of *Dungeon Fantasy* wizards (see *Sages*, pp. 14-17), and those with access to Ritual Path magic (see p. 16) have their own versions. Creating a scroll is functionally identical to a charm except in the following ways:

- Only characters with access to Ritual Path magic can read Ritual Path scrolls.
- When making your final Path skill roll for the scroll, roll against the *higher* of your Symbol Drawing (Ritual Path) and your Path skill.
- Scrolls use a scribal, not a workspace kit. The statistics are identical to a workspace kit and count as improvised gear when making potions or charms (*GURPS Thaumatology: Ritual Path Magic*, pp. 26, 28). The writer *can* make use of grimoires to give a bonus (you're basically copying notes for a spell).
- In addition to any *Traditional Trappings* modifiers (*Ritual Path Magic*, p. 19), a caster can write the scroll

in another language, with exotic languages granting a larger reduction. For example, he could scribe his scroll in Elvish, for a reduction of -5%, Celestial for -10%, or Dragon for -15%. The GM decides which languages are "closer" to the "true language" of magic for his *Dungeon Fantasy* campaign.

- To trigger the ritual stored within the scroll, it must be held with two hands and be read aloud clearly and in the correct language. This requires a Concentrate maneuver; once done, the ink disappears from the scroll. The GM could allow scrolls to be written in other forms of media (*Sages*, pp. 15-16) to make them more durable.

- The total number of active scrolls an adventurer can have at the same time is limited by the *higher* of his Symbol Drawing (Ritual Path) or Thaumatology. This allows characters with high Symbol Drawing skill levels to have more scrolls than they otherwise could if the spells were in charms.

Fortified. The manual – due to its nature (materials, binding, etc.) or through magic – has been hardened to resist the traditional foils to books: fire, water and moisture, insects, and other such damage. When resisting these or similar effects add the listed bonus. Multiply weight by 1.25 for +3, and 1.5 for +8. +1 CF for +3 or +2 CF for +8.

Instructive: The manual is written in such a way that it lends itself well to learning the skills or traits presented within. Either halve the time for studying (seven weeks instead of 15 weeks) or double the amount of points you can put into a skill. Multiply weight by 1.5. +9 CF.

EXAMPLE SPELLBOOK

The following is an example of a spellbook using these rules.

Balor's Treatise

The one-eyed archmagus Balor was known best for his fiery attitude (and suspected to have a faerie-lineage by some), although his mastery of magic was a very close second. Though he did not specialize in just fire magic, he was known for his fondness of it. The volume details several of his favorite spells and a few of his own invention. Several copies of Balor's Treatise are known to be in existence.

The following skills may be learned (and allow the normal default for textbooks): Alchemy, Breath Control, Hidden Lore (Elementals, Magic Items, or Magical Writings), Innate Attack (any), and Thaumatology. Finally, it can also teach the Draconic language.

For wizardly casters, the following spells are described within: Archmagi's Recuperation (p. 13), Balor's Eye Fire (p. 13), Lend Energy, Recover Energy, Share Energy, and *all* spells from the Fire College (see *Magic*, p. 72)

Additionally, its secret writings describe methods of contacting elemental beings and asking them for boons.

Casters with this book can purchase a Secret Knowledge perk that allows them to buy any one Fire or General Element Attunement advantage (see *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 9: Summoners*, p. 10). For example, a caster could purchase Secret Knowledge (Burning Attack) [1], which allows him to purchase that ability normally. Other elemental power-ups are *not* available when using the tome in this way, however.

Statistics: Balor's Treatise is a Thesis that can teach a total of 53 points worth of spells, perks, skills, or languages (\$1,325, 12 lbs.). It contains both obscure knowledge (+1 CF) and magical spells (+3 CF) and has the following qualities: Compact (+4 CF and half weight), Faerie (+14 CF and 1/6 normal weight), Fortified +3 (+1 CF and multiply weight by 1.25), Instructive (+9 CF and multiply weight by 1.5), and Very Fine (+17 CF and double weight). Additionally, it is Enchanted. Any spell read from its pages doesn't need to be rescribed – it comes back after an inactive period. All scrolls have a Power of 20; use the listed duration (maintaining them costs the caster energy) and the Universal and Charged Scroll options. Their total cost is \$27,300. Finally, the volume has been bound in a dragon's hide. This is functionally identical to the armor modifier (*Adventurers*, p. 27), giving the book +4 to its DR, but doubling its weight. Total cost after all modifiers is \$202,200 and total weight is 7.5 lbs. As a Tome of Power power-up (p. 17), this costs 31 points.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Christopher R. Rice has multiple tomes of power – mostly role-playing books. From Portsmouth, Virginia, he dreams of being able to write full time, or at least eke out a living doing it. He wishes to thank L.A., his own personal muse, as well as the rest of his gaming group; Antoni Ten Monrós; Beth "Archangel" McCoy, the "Sith Editrix"; and Tim "Humabout" Ponce, for being most excellent sounding boards.

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EIDETIC MEMORY

LIVING ROOMS

BY DAVID L. PULVER

A “living room” is a portion of a dungeon constructed out of living flesh. The first time I recall encountering this idea within a gaming context was in *Dragon* magazine, in Tom Wham’s gonzo board game *Snit’s Revenge* (later republished by Steve Jackson Games). Since then, living rooms have become a common trope of video games (sometimes called “womb levels”). They remain suitable for enlivening tabletop dungeon adventures as well.

DUNGEONS OF FLESH

The simplest living room is a sessile carpet of living skin or meat that grows over the floor and often walls and ceilings of one or more rooms or tunnels. The chamber may be coated with raw, pink flesh, often warm to the touch and sometimes gently pulsing. Some are also bioluminescent, giving off a soft green glow. This sessile type is often dubbed a “flesh carpet” or “meat moss.” Each square yard of interior is usually covered by about a foot of flesh, with HP 30-40 (HT 14 and DR 0, if it matters). A cubic foot of edible meat can be carved away before reducing the covering to 0 HP; unless all the flesh is gone, a given section regrows at 1 HP/day. This makes meat moss a suitable food item for dungeon dwellers, who may even cultivate them! Some meat moss may require special nutrients (e.g., occasional “watering” of fresh blood); none of it grows in sunlight.

This suggests a prosaic origin for a living room complex: a naturally evolved or alchemically created food source that exists to help support a large population of subterranean monsters. In the latter instance, perhaps they were originally confined to alchemical vats, but spilled out of them and, over time, expanded into the rest of the dungeon! An initial embryo might eventually grow to fill a natural cave complex, or like a tree root, it could spread in all directions through the soil. If they are natural beings, they may also merge with a dungeon when construction crews accidentally tunnel their way into such a creature’s body, or when part of such a flesh monster breaks through into a tunnel or cavern space.

Beyond simple flesh carpets is the living room *complex*. This is a huge bodily mound of tissue, often massing thousands of tons, that has some individual hollows, orifices, and

chambers through which adventures and other denizens can travel. These may contain differentiated organs. Individual rooms or the entire mass may or may not be intelligent.

Living rooms of flesh may form in various ways. If they are natural creatures, they may be more highly developed cousins to the predatory oozes that infest many complexes. They could have a mythological origin, such as being chunks of flesh that fell or were flayed from the giant body of a wounded god. They could be the insides of a huge whale-sized or larger leviathan with habitable internal pockets. They might be a magical construct, a projection of another dimension, the lair of a Thing Man Was Not Meant To Know, or the zombie version of any of the above. See *Origins* (pp. 23-24) for further ideas.

SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS

Living rooms may have a variety of different features.

Rotting

This occurs if the meat moss is infected or if its support system is lost. The foul stench of rotting meat is enough to require HT rolls for anyone exposed to it. Rotting meat moss is not safe for humans to eat, though creatures with appropriate dietary advantages could consume it. It may contain deadly toxins. Often it has a greenish tint, with mold growing on it. Of course, dungeon molds may be monsters in their own right! A more extreme version of this would be a zombie living room, with all the usual characteristics of the undead, and possibly various additional occult powers such as draining life or transforming victims.

Sphincters

Access into a living room is typically via puckered sphincters or valves formed of muscle tissue, similar to an animal’s natural orifices. They may serve as mouths, ducts, or channels for waste relief, food intake, etc. Some may be one-way, dilating to allow easy access but being difficult to escape from the other side, requiring a ST roll to force open. (Typically they will have ST 15-25, DR 0-2, and HP of twice their ST.)

Such one-way doors also have a disturbing habit of vanishing completely into the surrounding flesh.

Sphincters vary in size, with many being small enough that they require an Escape roll to squeeze through. One difficulty for adventurers is that it may not be clear where such an orifice leads. Some may open up into chambers or passages, but others might lead into a meat monster's stomach!

Bones, Ribs and Spines

Some living rooms (e.g., heart or lung chambers) may have embedded ribs or columns of bone that serve as structural supports. These may have twice as many HP as the surrounding tissue.

Pulsing

The flesh or organs in some living rooms or corridors may regularly pulse, expanding and contracting like a beating heart. This may require anyone who is standing up to make DX rolls each second to avoid falling. This is a good time to have the party members attacked by a foe that is immune to that hazard – for example, tentacle-like cilia that emerge from the walls, or flying creatures zooming out of high ducts or ledges!

Walls That Bleed, Rivers of Gunk

Flesh walls are much easier to damage than stone. This may encourage adventurers to try cutting their way through them. Some flesh walls are backed up by stone or earth; in others, tunneling through several yards of flesh may be a valid way to make a new route through a dungeon. However, the GM may limit this by mapping out additional connections between living rooms in the form of a network of primary arteries, tubes, or veins (usually a foot or so across). Some flesh walls are magically kept alive, but others may be fed by arteries located behind them that connect to other living rooms or organs.

If such tubes are punctured or severed by an unwary adventurer's blade it could unleash a sudden high-pressure spray or fountain of blood, acidic digestive fluid (1d-1 or more corrosion damage), or stinking fecal gunk mixed with chunks of partially digested food (monsters or adventurers); for more on gunk – which tends to fill living rooms – see **GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 2: Dungeons**, p. 21. The GM should feel free to threaten to knock adventurers off their feet (on a failed ST roll) or flood whatever tunnel or chamber they carved out. A necessity to make First Aid rolls to tie off a giant artery before the party drown in a geyser of blood or fecal matter can add tension; so can an attack by wandering monsters while they are waist deep in digestive soup. Such battles pose a special hazard to any character that passes out – his friends may need to grab him to prevent drowning. In the case of sewage lines (such as penetrating some monstrous colon or intestinal tract), an additional danger may lie in HT rolls to avoid being nauseated (or retching, if the roll failed by 5+) and a risk of infection if the foul sewage gets into any wounds.

Some major tubes could serve as corridors, perhaps only partially filled with digestive fluid, sewage, or blood. These vessels are large enough to wade, swim, or even boat through, perhaps even widening into the interior of some huge organ, colon, or stomach. Naturally, all manner of amphibious monsters or bizarre parasites might be found living amid such an

environment. Island-like fleshy growths – organs or tumors – might rise out of the liquid, forming platforms separated by several feet that agile PCs or monsters could leap between. In larger organ-pools, webs of tissue or fronds of cilia might hang down from the ceiling.

Organs and Viscera

While some living rooms may organs in themselves, others might *contain* them. Imagine a room with one or more giant hearts, brains, kidneys, or even eyes or mouths growing out from fleshy pedestals, dangling from the ceiling, emerging from walls, or levitating disembodied in mid-air. Some may just be just furnishings, but most should have some special ability or vulnerability. They could be a source of exotic secretions (see p. 22), be reproductive organs that breed symbiotic monsters or buds that can be used to create other living rooms, or even mana organs that give the room or creature particular magical abilities. They may also be a vital point that can destroy or cripple the entire complex (perhaps with some other reaction, e.g., causing all rooms to quiver like an earthquake – a flesh quake); similarly, injury to a brain organ might madden or paralyze any symbiotic servants. In any case, assign them SM, HT, HP, and possibly DR, and consider writing them up as if they were sessile monsters in their own right (e.g., a giant brain or eye might be treated as a creature with psychic abilities).

*Once inside, the Snits
proceed from organ to organ,
via the canals and channels,
kicking the life out of
the hapless Snorgs.*

*– Tom Wham,
Snit's Revenge*

HUNGRY ROOM

This is a typical monstrous living room. Its interior is all billowing mounds of pink flesh, but the flesh is vibration-sensitive, and it's hungry for prey! The creature is essentially a mass of fleshy mollusk-like giant muscle coating the inside of the room to a depth of a few feet. Its thick tissue provides DR that is most effective against crushing damage. When the creature attacks, it extends a pair of eyestalks (from the ceiling) and four tentacles (one out of each corner of the room). The tentacles can strike, grab, or spray digestive fluid.

There are two entrances. One entrance is a pit shaft on an upper level that turns into a slippery pink tube, sliding unwary adventurers down from the ceiling and depositing them in the yielding mass of flesh below. Due to its slick sides, the tube is very difficult to climb back out of (-5 to Climbing rolls).

The second way in – and likely the only exit – is a sphincter-like valve located at ground level. Forcing the valve open requires winning a Quick Contest of ST (against its ST 20); it is normally used by the creature to expel waste products and indigestible. (Indeed, the other end of the valve opens into a cavern containing a reeking dung heap mixed with possible treasure such as coins, metal blades or armor, arrow heads, belt and shoe buckles, and so on). For added challenge, the dung heap can serve as a lair for creatures such as giant beetles or flesh-eating grubs. It's possible that the only way into the cavern is past the living room creature.

ST: 25 **HP:** 100 **Speed:** 6.50
DX: 12 **Will:** 10 **Move:** 0
IQ: 4 **Per:** 9
HT: 14 **FP:** 14 **SM:** +5
Dodge: N/A **Parry:** N/A **DR:** 5 (vs. crushing only)

Digestive Spray (N/A): 1d-1 corrosion. The acidic mist fills a 4-yard-radius area around the tentacle and lingers for 10 seconds. Usable once per day.

Tentacles (12): 2d+1 crushing (or grapple with ST 25).

Traits: 360° Vision (Easy to Hit); Doesn't Breathe (Oxygen Absorption); Doesn't Sleep; Extra Arms 2; Extra Attack 3; Immunity to Metabolic Hazards; Indomitable; Injury Tolerance (No Head; No Neck; Homogenous); Longevity; No Fine Manipulators; No Legs (Sessile); Regrowth; Slow Eater; Unfzable; Universal Digestion; Vibration Sense.

Skills: Brawling-12.

Class: Elder Thing.

Notes: The creature prefers to release its digestive fluids slowly as part of its eating process once victims are dead or unconscious, but it will unleash it as a flood once a day if particularly threatened. Digestive acid glands can be removed and used to make 2d acid grenades (\$10 each). Flesh is tasty when cooked, generating about 500 lbs. of edible meat.

LIVING ROOMS AS TRAPS

A nonintelligent but still dangerous living room may be better described as a trap (written up using the usual *Dungeons* guidelines; see pp. 8-9) rather than a monster, probably

triggered by vibration, noise, body heat, or simple damage to its flesh. It could have constricting walls, spike-like teeth, a flood of digestive acid, gunk, or foul gas. A *Per*-based Naturalist or Smell roll may be needed to detect it. The trap's lure is the remnants of prior victims (if any) and whatever (indigestible) treasure they were carrying. Depending on how the creature kills, this may leave behind crushed or acid-washed bones mixed with coins, blades, metal armor, and so on.

POPULATING FLESH DUNGEONS

A living room complex can be inhabited by any sort of monsters. Some may be casual residents, who consider the living room just another lair or possible food source.

Living room complexes could house various symbiotic creatures that exist in a mutually beneficial relationship with their host (even if the host is not consciously aware of their existence). Usually the room provides the symbiotic creatures with shelter and possibly nourishment and protection or some sort of additional benefit such as natural secretions that supply useful potions – or that function as additive drugs!

In exchange, the creatures provide some other service. For example, a symbiotic creature might function as an “anti-body” to protect against intruders (such as adventurers) or it might help keep the complex clean by sweeping up indigestible things (much as if it were cleaning plaque out of arteries). Various mostly mindless creatures from *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy Monsters 1* are especially appropriate for this role (especially slugbeasts and erupting slimes), but there's no reason why other creatures, sapient or otherwise, could not serve in that role. If a living room is sapient, the residents may even be actual henchmen. After all, some living rooms are carnivorous, but what if food never shows up? If servants lure or trick food into walking into the living room, the room may in turn provide some form of advantage – the right to stay unmolested or to access to something it has (such as its flesh, excretions, or just any indigestible treasure). In some living room complexes, *adventurers* might actually fulfill that symbiotic role, albeit inadvertently. If piles of gold or swords or the like are essentially indigestible junk from the living room's perspective, it might be perfectly happy to encourage them to remove it.

SECRETIONS

Flesh or organs inside living rooms may contain glands with swollen ducts, nipples, spigots, or tear ducts, perhaps identifiable by dubious secretions that drip slowly from them. These secretions could be urine, tears, reproductive fluid, or milk; in the latter case, symbiotic monsters or parasites may even be nursing from them. More interestingly, secretions could amount to potion fountains with a set number of doses (which renew after a few hours or days). For instance, secretions from a duct found in a living room analogous to a kidney might have the property of neutralizing any poison. Others secretions could be strange hormones or serums that permit permanent or temporary acquisition of an exotic advantage such as Growth (p. B58).

Fluids from other internal organs – tears from an internal eye, blood squeezed from a beating heart, or fluid from a brain – may all have occult properties. These could be more metaphorical or allegorical than physiological – for instance, the blood from a living room's heart could serve as a powerful love potion or render a person who bathed in it temporarily Unkillable or grant Longevity; the tears from a huge subterranean eye might grant an advantage such as Dark Vision or Intuition.

Diseased, infected, or evil organs may have more sinister effects resulting in disadvantages (e.g., Blindness) or cursed transformations (such as vampirism). They may also be useful for creating exotic and deadly poisons or cursed magic items.

The living room may have its own biological defense system analogous to white blood cells. It may be able to spawn its own mobile creatures that patrol the complex and respond to threats; often these are simple automatons with Slave Mentality. These usually are able to sense damage to the living room complex and quickly respond. This could take the form of a sharing a Mind Link or Special Rapport with the living room. Or it could just represent a Discriminatory Smell, such as the ability to smell the blood or another chemical that is released when the living room's structure is injured. Some antibodies might be automatons that will ignore anything not damaging the complex. Others are not so discriminating – anything they encounter will be attacked! A variation on this is a living room that has mind-controlling abilities (often biochemical in nature) that allows it to enslave minions and force them to serve, protect, and feed it.

Of course, other occupants of a living room dungeon complex may be the people who created the living room, or their heirs, successors, or minions. They may see the living room as a valuable resource, a charge to be protected, a god, or even a monster that needs to be kept sealed. See *Origins* (below).

A final category of occupants of a living room might be captives! Perhaps the room intends to digest or absorb them later when it's hungry, or maybe it's just lonely . . .

*While vaguely concerned about you,
I am much more interested in how this
will effect Moya.*

– Pilot, *Farscape* #2.4

Fetusoid

These are typical symbiotic entities for a living room, probably emerging from some hideous birthing chamber. They resemble terrifying 7'-tall human, elf, or orc babies – they have giant heads, big eyes, and hands with razor-sharp fingernails. A 30'-long umbilical cord connects them to a navel located in the walls or floor of a living room, perhaps one containing a brain or other major organ.

ST: 15	HP: 15	Speed: 6.00
DX: 12	Will: 20	Move: 6
IQ: 6	Per: 10	
HT: 12	FP: 12	SM: +0
Dodge: 9	Parry: N/A	DR: 2 (vs. crushing only)

Strike (13): 2d-1 cutting.

Traits: Bloodlust; Resistant to Metabolic Hazards (+8); Mind Link; Slave Mentality; Unfazeable; Universal Digestion. (Alternatively, they may be Puppets controlled by a thing's Compartmentalized Mind + Possession (Telecontrol).)

Skills: Brawling-13.

Notes: The umbilical cord can be attacked (-2 to hit, DR 1, HP 10). The cord won't defend itself. It is severed if reduced to 0 HP or less. If the umbilical cord is severed the fetusoid

must make an immediate HT-3 roll. If successful it is old enough to survive on its own. On the next turn, its torso and limbs (but not its head) begin to bloat up like a balloon, growing to the same scale as its head. Double its ST and HP and add 1 to its DX and combat skills. If the roll fails, it was not ready. Roll 1d. On a 1-3 it bloats up as above, but on the following turn it shrieks and *bursts*, causing a messy 2d crushing explosion. On a 4-6, blood sprays out of the severed cord, and it loses 1d HP every second until dead.

ORIGINS

What forces or circumstances would conspire to create a living dungeon? Besides the aforementioned possibility of it being a natural creature, here are some further ideas.

Leviathans

Another type of natural living room is a vast mobile beast as large as or larger than the largest whale. It may be aquatic (like a floating island), a flying creature, or even some colossal land beast. Due to the creature's strange metabolism – or it being undead or plagued by burrowing parasites – its body is riddled with hollow arteries, channels, and chambers traversable by

human-sized creatures. Perhaps there is an entire ecosystem inside the creature – this may be symbiotic (e.g., an immune system) or parasitic (e.g., opportunistic monsters or brigands who lair inside it).

If the leviathan is an active menace, such as a gargantuan city-destroying monster, getting inside is an adventure in itself. The monster may attack crowds that approach it (but lone individuals may be too small for it notice). Boarding a giant horror, especially one that swims or flies, could require special techniques (grappling hooks, flying mounts, teleportation, etc.). Once in, the goal may be to find a way to kill it from the inside, e.g., by seeking out its brain or heart.

Other leviathans are hibernating or undead but quiescent. They are essentially the same as a sessile meat complex, with the potential to awaken into a mobile leviathan! They might even be overgrown by grass or coral, appearing as hills or island. If the party explores a sleeping leviathan the GM should decide if damage or other actions could wake it up ("quiet in the ear canal!" or "don't tickle its heart!").

An awakening might be catastrophic for any nearby civilization. It could also be bad for the adventurers if a dormant creature with a slowed metabolism suddenly has its heart, lungs, etc. start working at full capacity, resulting in blood flowing through its corridors to drown those inside, digestive acids filling its stomach, or a sneeze blasting adventurers out its nose! Or perhaps *that* is the party's quest: to wake a dormant leviathan who is a legendary demigod or guardian of the realm, as the only counter to some existential threat. Maybe they must deliver a key (such as its missing heart-stone, a potion, the kiss of a virgin) or perform a ritual in the right chamber in its body. Perhaps one faction strives to awaken the leviathan, while others seek to destroy it, resulting in rival adventuring parties clashing inside the creature's body.

Alchemical and Magical Constructs

Perhaps the living room is the fruit of a wizard or alchemist engaged in Frankenstein-like experiments into the origin of life. The origin could have been the creation of homunculi or flesh golems, and this was the next stage. Or the rooms might be a form of bio-reactor intended to mass produce a particular potion, unnaturally extend the mage's life, generate a powerful spell through the creation of a huge living mana organ, or support a giant living womb to gestate a legion of monsters!

Such a complex may be adjacent to ordinary rooms containing its creator's laboratory. These may also house a library of annotated or encrypted texts on biology, magic, or alchemy. Perusing them might reveal indications of the creator's fate, or vital clues to the nature or vulnerabilities of the living rooms to be encountered deeper in the dungeon. The notes may be treasures in themselves, if they reveal the design of the living rooms in a way usable by rival alchemists or mages.

The original creator may be still present in the complex – perhaps employing raiding monsters or minions to gather food for his living room “child.” Or he may have been devoured by his own out-of-control creation. Maybe he even *became* the experiment – he transformed himself into the living room to expand his consciousness, perhaps existing now as a giant disembodied brain or a face embedded in a living wall. The transformed magus may have been driven mad, or in a moment of lucidity, may even regret his horrific metamorphosis and beg the adventurers to end it. Or he may still be engaged in some ongoing scheme. Perhaps the living rooms will soon start birthing an army of monsters, or fleshy tunnels are spreading from the dungeon to the nearby town!

The Temple of Flesh

A living-room complex may be a church or an avatar of a god or demon. A temple of living flesh would be especially appropriate for an entity associated with life, fertility, carnal pleasure, a slime demon, or a Lovecraftian “elder thing.” Such a temple is a simple way to incorporate a relatively small living-room complex as a part of a normal dungeon.

The living room would have its own worshipers who protect and serve it, perhaps even providing the room with food by capturing sacrifices and bringing them to the temple's stomach or maw to be devoured. Such acolytes could be human or inhuman – ghouls, dark elves, chaos mutants, or the like are especially appropriate. Maybe the temple is slowly growing, or houses a womb that is soon to give birth to a divine servitor or demigod. Either way, rumors of the cult may have spread to other creatures on upper dungeon levels; the party may hear

stories about them and the name of the god they serve, without realizing the literal existence of the complex.

A temple of flesh might also exist within a leviathan (p. 23). In this case, the leviathan is often worshipped as a god. It may or may not be aware of its worshipers!

Alien Bioship

The idea of a starship serving as a place of mystery for adventurers to explore is not foreign to the dungeon-fantasy genre (with early expression in Gary Gygax's *Expedition to the Barrier Peaks*). However, mixing lasers with swords and sorcery can destroy the mood of a campaign. In contrast, a high bio-tech culture with a “techno-organic” bioship is both a common trope of science fiction, and one whose look-and-feel better fits many fantasy worlds. A living spaceship – damaged and crash landed, perhaps – could easily serve as a form of “living room” dungeon, filled with exotic aliens and bizarre treasures. An alternative to a space invasion – and perhaps a better fit to a fantasy world – is the idea of a high bio-tech undersea civilization, or a living worm-chariot from some subterranean hollow Earth.

The ship's alien crew – a new species of monster – may be armed with bio-tech devices, e.g., acid shooters, web shooters, bone blades, chemical (potion) sprays, symbiotic armor made of living flesh or extruded resins, and so on, all not very different from magic items in function if not description. The aliens may also have monsters from their own world as servants. They may be raiding local villages in search of specimens, slaves, food, or some element needed to repair the ship, which also provides additional loot or victims the party can liberate. Should the adventurers either come to terms with the aliens or be captured by them, this could lead to a sequel voyage to wherever the bioship came from. See *GURPS Bio-Tech* (especially pp. 96-101) for rules on creating living vehicles and bio-gadgets.

ABOUT THE COLUMNIST

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

Horrors! You have been swallowed by a huge whale!
– *King's Quest IV: The Perils Of Rosella*

THE MAGIC TOUCH

BY MATT RIGGSBY

Everyone loves magical items. Almost everyone, anyway. With their need for low encumbrance and reliance on empty-hand attacks, martial artists in *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy* don't get as much use out of . . . well, items. Heavy armor often slows them down too much, and they don't have the skills to use the fanciest weapons. Here, though, are a few treasures that are good for kung-fu fighters.

BLOODY SHARDS

Bloody shards are found in the form of a glass bottle containing a thick, clear potion. The user smashes the bottle with his bare fists, taking 1d-3 damage (minimum 1 point). If he ends up taking damage after DR, the potion allows the fragments of glass to stick securely in the user's skin without doing further damage, though the initial damage he takes cannot be healed until after the fragments of glass have been removed; removing shards takes five minutes of painstaking plucking. While the shards are embedded in the user's skin, he does cutting (rather than crushing) damage with bare-hand attacks.

The wearer may not cover his hands with gloves. Given the care that must be taken with shards of glass sticking out of his hands, he temporarily gains Ham-Fisted 1 (2 if he is already Ham-Fisted).

Particularly hardcore users may also apply bloody shards to elbows, knees, feet, or even head to enhance elbow strikes, head butts, etc. However, each location requires the use of an additional bottle and taking additional damage from smashing each one.

A bottle of bloody shards is \$600, 1 lb.

CONCUSSION AMULET

This powerful item – a red jade triangle on a copper necklace – allows a martial artist to convert his bare-handed and bare-foot attacks into explosive force. Any unarmed strikes do crushing explosion damage (see p. B269). If the user strikes a surface of gravel, tile, or something else relatively brittle, the blow also does fragmentation damage equal to half that rolled for the main attack in a radius of five yards.

A concussion amulet is \$40,000, negligible weight.

DEFENSIVE OIL

This magical oil provides short-lived Damage Resistance to the bare-handed (and, frequently, bare-skinned) fighter.

A flask of the oil is massaged into the skin, taking about a minute to cover the whole body. A single application provides a point of semi-ablative DR; multiple applications provide additional benefit to a maximum DR of 3.

However, the oil's protection is somewhat fragile. The main drawback is that the oil is rubbed off and absorbed into clothing, and the heavier the garments, the faster it wears off. If worn under clothes that do not provide DR (not including enchantments), the oil's DR is reduced by 1 every hour. If worn under any kind of armor, the oil's DR is reduced by the outfit's DR every *half* hour. It also washes off easily, losing 1 DR per minute if the wearer is immersed in water.

A flask of defensive oil is \$1,050, 1 lb.

Never act incautiously when confronted by a little bald wrinkly smiling man!

– Terry Pratchett,
Thief of Time

FIST POISON

Particularly vicious martial artists take a blend of venoms that builds up in their bodies and renders their very touch toxic. The user must ingest one dose a day for three days before it takes effect, then a daily dose thereafter to maintain the effect. Each dose requires a roll against HT to avoid taking 1d-2 damage, minimum 1 point. When consumed long enough, the user develops a 1d-2 toxic follow-up attack to any attack made with bare skin. He also suffers from Lifebane and gets -3 to provide First Aid or any other kind of medical treatments while the toxin is in effect (his medical knowledge is unaffected, but his toxic touch can counteract any good he can do).

A dose of fist poison is \$800, 1 lb.

FLAMING BANDS

These appear to be a simple pair of cloth or thin leather strips, often wrapped around the hands by martial artists in order to provide a modicum of protection without interfering with the wearer's actions. However, when activated, requiring a turn of Concentration but no die roll, they burst into flame.

The flame does not harm either the wearer or the bands, but it does an additional point of burning damage to targets. The user does not need to expend any FP, and the flame may be kept burning as long as the bands are worn, or extinguished and reactivated at will. They are also extinguished if submerged, but they can be reignited. The bands will heat or burn any object (depending on flammability; see p. B433) they come in contact with while activated. Thus, they cannot be combined with gloves or flammable fist loads. An improved version allows the user to extend the flame, letting him cast the Flame Jet spell (*GURPS Magic*, p. 73). This use requires that the user expend his own FP to fuel the spell.

Flaming bands are \$3,000, 0.5 lb.; improved flaming bands are \$19,000, 0.5 lb.

GRAPPLING SLEEVES

Despite the name, this is actually a loose shirt rather than a set of sleeves, though the magical effect is in the sleeves themselves. The user may command them to extend beyond the tips of his fingers, allowing him to launch grappling attacks with Reach 3, using his own skill, ST, and other traits. The sleeves lack the weight to parry, but they may dodge if attacked. The wearer could conceivably use the sleeves to grasp and manipulate objects, but they provide very poor control; they act as if they had No Fine Manipulators.

Grappling sleeves are \$7,000, 1 lb.

GODLIKE PITCH

This sticky, black substance is applied to the skin, though it doesn't work under clothing and armor. It also gets stuck to itself if applied outside of clothing and armor.

Godlike pitch makes the wearer very sticky. Natural oils on skin and most other living surfaces usually make this a mere annoyance, but any weapon that strikes the wearer will become stuck as though it were a swung impaling weapon (see p. B405); however, pulling it free does no additional damage.

It usually takes four hours for the layer of pitch to become covered in dust and lose its extreme stickiness. However, clever opponents may find other ways of neutralizing it, such as covering the user with a cloak or hitting him with Sand Jet.

A pot of pitch is \$1,200, 1 lb.

IRON NAILS

This set of artificial, rune-inscribed fingernails is made of thin sheets of metal. Placed over one's own nails (they stick on magically), they may be directed at enemies, pelting them with a flurry of sharp metal. They but may be removed at will; getting them on and off takes one second per finger.

Treat the metal released from the nails as shuriken for purposes of skill, damage, and range, but nails may be fired at will, without any Ready maneuvers. The metal may be flung out one at a time, or in groups of five or 10 with a corresponding RoF and Rcl -1.

A set of iron nails is \$6,000, 0.5 lb.

LEAPING GAITERS

This set of heavy strips of linen has a design of fast-running animals woven into them with dark-colored thread. When wrapped around the legs, these provide +5 to Jumping skill and +5 to ST for figuring jumping distance.

A set of leaping gaiter is \$2,800, 0.5 lb.

MEDITATION INCENSE

This tiny cone of incense provides remarkable powers of focus when burned during meditation. If breathed for one minute, it gives +2 to Meditation or any skill that takes Meditation as a prerequisite. The effect lasts for the following hour. The incense also reduces the number of turns of Concentration maneuvers required to use any nonspell skill by half during that time. The smell does linger, though; scent-based trackers are at +4 to follow the user's trail for the next day.

A cone of meditation incense is \$400, negligible weight.

RESILIENT RICE

This rice, a favorite of wrestlers, is sticky, tasty, nourishing, and magical. A steady diet of the grain makes the consumer gain weight rapidly, putting on 1 lb. per meal. If the eater reaches the point of being Overweight (p. B19), he gains +1 Damage Resistance (Flexible) and +1 to effective HP for the purpose of calculating damage from Slam attacks. If he reaches Fat, the bonus increases to +3, and to +5 if he becomes Very Fat.

However, the magic is fleeting. For each meal of resilient rice he misses, a user loses a pound until he starts eating it again or reaches the weight he was at before he started consuming it. Consuming Resilient Rice does not limit HT.

Meals made with resilient rice cost 5 times as much as regular rations.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Matt Riggsby is fast as lightning. In fact, he is a little bit frightening, but he does it with expert timing. He lives with his wife who is chopping men up, his son who is chopping men down, and several funky dogs from the funky dog pound.

Take this card . . . It will aid you in your quest to meet your destiny.

— Rose, in Street Fighter IV



**ALL HAIL
KING TORG!**



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DIRE AND TERRIBLE MONSTERS

BY DOUGLAS H. COLE AND PETER V. DELL'ORTO

When is an animal not just an animal? When it's a *dire* animal!

Perhaps riffing off the (real-life) dire wolf, game supplements over the past decade (or three) have used "dire" to describe any amped-up, extra-dangerous, and generally hostile version of a normally mundane animal. Generally, at least *potentially* dangerous animals get this designation - boars, apes, bears, badgers, and wolverines to name a few.

What if *everything* has a dire version lurking out there in forgotten ruins, waiting for unsuspecting adventurers to underestimate it to their great discomfort? This article provides the means to more easily create just such monsters.

The listed examples in this article *are* silly, but the prefixes are seriously lethal. They can be applied to less-silly examples to escalate the challenge of what would otherwise be a routine encounter. Such surprising abilities out of an otherwise normal creatures are the realm of "terrible" monsters and animals. These are normal *looking*, but have a nasty trap for the unwary.

Viking: It's not that terrible.

Announcer: No, I meant terribly violent.

- Monty Python's Flying Circus #3.1

NEW PREFIXES

The following two new prefixes can be attached to animals (for example, from the *Basic Set* or *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 5: Allies*), monsters (such as those in *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 2: Dungeons* or *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy Monsters 1*), or even NPCs.

Dire monsters are generally larger, nastier, and tougher than their normal counterparts. They are all-around more monstrous than the baseline creature, even if that baseline creature is already a horrid monster.

Terrible monsters are not notably different in their physical form, but they have additional firepower beyond their appearance. They always pack heat in the form of some unusual attack that is unexpected, ludicrously overpowered, unusually lethal, or all three.

Monsters do not need the Dire prefix to be Terrible, or vice versa . . . but on occasion, a GM might combine them against PCs who are feeling uppity or to create a particularly challenging - albeit strange - monstrosity.

Creatures with either the Dire or the Terrible prefix are treated as the normal version upon which they were based for spell-casting purposes. However, the GM may declare that a given prefix (or combination of them) changes which spells affect these monsters.

Dire

A ridiculously up-gunned version of an normally mundane creature, Dire versions of creatures are bigger, nastier, more lethal, and more aggressive than the "normal" species. They

also tend to expand their native environment to include "lurking in dungeons" and "wherever mad wizards are found."

Although typically only animals are referred to as "dire," this prefix can be used with *any* sort of creature. Dire Siege Beasts, Dire Trolls, and Dire Erupting Slime are just a few examples of non-animal Dire creatures. This prefix *can*

be added to creatures with "Dire" in their name already, to make Dire Dire Apes or Dire Dire Wolves. To avoid tripping over the name, simply refer to them as "Very Dire."

It's common for dire creatures to also have additional prefixes. Determined, Ravenous, and Berserker (see *Dungeon Fantasy Monsters 1*, pp. 36-38) are especially appropriate!

The following additions are a suggested minimum. When making a Dire version of a normal creature, strongly consider first scaling it up to human sized (at least) and then add the listed Dire abilities.

Statistics: Raise SM by 1. Increase ST and HP each by 5, or +50%, whichever is higher. Increase DX by 2, Per by 2, and HT by 2; derived skills also increase by the same amount – make sure you add it in! Add Bad Temper (12) (or make the self-control rating of Bad Temper one step worse), Bloodlust (9) (or make the self-control rating of Bloodlust one step worse), and Odious Racial Habit (Man-eater or Man-killer). Increase DR by 30% (or +3, whichever is higher).

Terrible

While terrible creatures are not *necessarily* bigger – although if they are *also* dire, they will be! – they are *much* more lethal than normal. They are quicker, have a much greater attack range, and typically have some sort of surprising attack. This prefix *supersedes* the Ravenous prefix (see *Dungeon Fantasy Monsters 1*, p. 38); do not use both on the same creature.

Statistics: A monster that has no standard bite or crushing bite attack acquires Sharp Teeth (thrust-1 cutting). One with a cutting or large piercing bite gains Fangs, making the bite impaling. Strongly consider making the bite venomous. In all cases, add Striking ST (One Attack Only, Bite) sufficient to double the ST (including Striking ST) of the creature's bite attack. In addition, Terrible creatures gain a movement-based trait to enhance their ability to close the gap and strike, *plus* they receive the Run and Hit power-up (see *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 11: Power-Ups*, p. 12).

The movement trait depends on the creature's principle movement mode, as follows.

Flight: Add Enhanced Move 1 (Air) (or raise it by 1, if it already has Enhanced Move) and Aerobatics at DX+2 (or raise Aerobatics by 1, whichever is higher.)

Jumping: Add Super Jump 1 (or raise it by 1, if it already has Super Jump) and Jumping at DX+2 (or raise Jumping by 1, whichever is higher.)

Running: Add Enhanced Move 1 (Ground) (or raise it by 1, if it already has Enhanced Move) and Running (Sprinting) at HT+2 (or raise Running by 1, whichever is higher.)

Swimming: Add Enhanced Move 1 (Water) (or raise it by 1, if it already has Enhanced Move) and Swimming at HT+2 (or raise Swimming by 1, whichever is higher.)

For example, a flying creature may get Enhanced Move 1 (Flight), a rabbit might get Super Jump 1, or an ape might get Enhanced Move 1 (Ground) for faster charges.

In addition, *all* Terrible creatures get at least one Terrible ability (see below) – more if the GM needs an “Ultra-Terrible” beast.

TERRIBLE ABILITIES

Each of these powers should primarily be used to take a group of delvers by surprise. Many Terrible creatures can still be laid low by a solid blow with a sword or a simple spell, so their use in adventures will be mostly as dangerous scenery or a pointed warning that all is not right. Still, these abilities are in no way balanced or fair, even by *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy* standards. They are there to spring on unwary or sanctimoniously cocky adventurers. Of course, *all* bets are off for Terrible *Dire* Creatures . . .

A Farewell to Arms

The attacker is a fiend with dismemberment. Its favorite trick is to leap on to a foe and then perform a grappling attack to yank off a limb.

Statistics: Treat this as Extra Attack, only for a follow-up after a successful grappling attack on a limb (*including* bites.) Treat the attack as Wrench (Limb), which, despite the name, may be used against legs or even the head. This attack is added to monsters with enough swing damage to be a threat, as the limb is only removed if the attack does more than HP damage in one yank for arms and legs, or kills the delver for the head.

Appropriate for: Terrible Apes, Terrible Monkeys, Terrible Crocodiles, Terrible Walking Carpets – anything with a grappling attack as a primary combat mode!

Jazz: You want a piece of me?!

Megatron: No. I want . . .

TWO!”

– Transformers (2007)

Death Ray

The monster projects a sickly beam of unearthly and lethal power, usually from its eyes or forehead, but any thematically appropriate appendage or location works fine.

Statistics: The creature can shoot a death ray (Range 10). The attack causes a Heart Attack (p. B429); resisted by HT-2. Add Innate Attack at DX+2.

Appropriate for: Terrible Sunflower, Terrible Insects. Any monster or animal that is usually fairly harmless, cute, or beautiful makes a good candidate.

It Stings, It Burns

Out of an appropriate appendage or orifice, this creature oozes a deadly corrosive poison. Capable of burning in seconds through metal armor, it is *also* a contact poison!

Statistics: The creature gains Follow-Up (2d Corrosion) and Follow-Up (2d Toxic, Contact Agent, Resisted by HT-2, success reduces damage to 1d). Both are Cyclic (100 cycles, 1 second.) Critical success (or immersion in water) will end the cycles.

Appropriate for: Terrible Butterfly, Terrible Foliage, Terrible Insects, Terrible Snail.

Jockey!

This ability is almost too evil to include, which is why it's here. The creature leaps at the torso and then grapples the head. Once this has been accomplished, the creature attempts to drive the victim Berserk (p. B124). If during the course of a subsequent All-Out Attack, the Berserk character gets knocked down, he'll get up again. You're never going to keep him down.

Statistics: The creature gains Affliction 3 (HT-2; Disadvantage, Berserk (N/A); Only while grappling target); the victim must roll HT-2 every turn to avoid going Berserk with no self-control rating. To *break* the mind control, the victim must win a Quick Contest of the creature's Will vs. the defender's Will-4, and may attempt such each turn. A critical success causes the creature to leap off and find another victim. Critical *failure* means that the only way to end the effect is to remove the creature by breaking the head grapple.

Appropriate for: Terrible Zombies. Any specialized pouncing creature might qualify for this ability, and it's more appropriate for monsters and constructs than animals.

In Other Genres

The creatures described here also work with little modification in some kinds of science-fiction post-apocalypse games. Of course, no one calls them *Dire* whatever in the nuked wastelands; they call them *Mutant* whatever. Stats are unchanged, unless the GM chooses to add radioactive or super-science powers!

Nasty Pointy Teeth

This creature, after a bite, strike, or grapple of the neck, delivers a hilariously (er, we mean *hideously*) lethal cutting attack, capable of severing the neck of a strong man.

Statistics: On top of its normal biting damage (*after* adjustment for Terrible), the creature gains an additional +3d cutting. *All* of its biting damage also gains Armor Divisor (5). Damage is amplified as usual by Brawling or Karate damage bonuses. In addition, the bite counts as a weapon for purposes of being injured on a parry. Commonly combined with Slayer Training (Bite/Neck).

Appropriate for: Terrible Bunnies, Terrible Koala, Terrible Dire Shrubbery.

Not Cleaning That Up

The creature, in combat, will suddenly release . . . something . . . all over the place. It is nasty, slick, odoriferous and probably a sickly blend of all sorts of colors that shouldn't go together. The creature is, of course, immune to these effects, for maximum unfairness.

Statistics: The area affected is a two yard radius, or a radius in yards equal to the twice creature's Size Modifier (SM) + 1, whichever is *bigger*. For example, a SM+2 creature would affect a radius of 6 yards! Treat the ground as Bad Footing, per *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 16: Wilderness Adventures*, p. 38 (movement costs are +1 per yard, DX and attack rolls are at -2, defenses are at -1, etc.) Crampons or other spiky footwear will negate this effect. Additionally, the vapor released from the mess can cause victims to become Nauseated (see p. B428). Rolls to resist are made at HT-4. Casting Purify Air will give a brief respite (1d seconds), but the only way to truly avoid the effects is to remove the source of the vapor. Air spells can be used to direct the cloud elsewhere.

Appropriate for: Terrible Elephants, Terrible My Little Equines, Terrible Yip Dogs.

Now You See Me . . .

The creature is incredibly hard to perceive. When not moving, a monster with Now You See Me is nearly impossible to detect. It uses this ability to wait until likely prey is in range, and then relies on its stealth to execute a backstabbing attack (see *Dungeons*, pp. 11-12). A creature with this ability will often have Super Jump as a movement mode. It will remain invisible and still, until it can attack from total surprise. This is usually a Move and Attack (often with Heroic Charge, from p. 131 of *GURPS Martial Arts*), first attacking and then jumping away (and becoming motionless if it was unseen).

Statistics: Grants Invisibility and Stealth-20 (which includes +9 for being invisible) when not moving. In order to qualify for Invisibility, the monster must start and end the turn without moving; otherwise, noticing or attacking the creature is at -4.

Appropriate for: Terrible Bugbear, Terrible Ciuaclá, Terrible Demon, Terrible Undead. Pretty much any critter with IQ 8 or higher would make a nasty stalking threat.

Ridiculously Lethal

No matter what the creature's default attack mode is, it gets worse. A *lot* worse. For bite attacks, *Nasty Pointy Teeth* (above) is a more appropriate choice.

Statistics: Increase the damage of a chosen attack mode by +3d (or double it, if that's worse). Particularly malicious specimens would also add Armor Divisor (2), because you need to get through to the creamy center of those DR 14 knights.

Appropriate for: Any. All. Go ahead and combine this with any other Terrible ability as well, just to make things more challenging.

DIRE AND TERRIBLE CREATURES

This starter list describes some sample creatures that are Dire and some that are Terrible.

Dire Hart (With a Vengeance)

To all appearances, this is a normal mature male deer. Although a primary target for hunters, the Dire Hart does not exhibit normal prey behavior. If it succeeds in a Per roll against a stalking hunter – and it is fully capable of discriminating between hunters and travelers – it will attack instantly and with great ferocity. It will try to gore with horns and strike with hooves. The Dire Hart will leverage slams and unarmed Sweeps to knock down his foe and ram its horns into the fallen target, gaining the double-damage bonus for striking a hard target!

Rapunzel's prince: A thicket's no trick. Is it thick?
Cinderella's prince: It's the thickest.
Rapunzel's prince: The quickest is pick it apart with a stick –
Cinderella's prince: Yes, but even one prick . . . It's my thing about blood.

– *Into the Woods*

Despite all of this, the Dire Hart is not a man-eater. He's just ornery, vicious, and reacts with instant violence to things that try and eat him. Can't blame him, can you?

ST: 18 **HP:** 18 **Speed:** 7.25
DX: 15 **Will:** 10 **Move:** 9
IQ: 3 **Per:** 12
HT: 14 **FP:** 12 **SM:** +2 (2 hexes); 500 lbs.
Dodge: 10 **Parry:** 10 **DR:** 3

Hooves (14): 1d+2 crushing. Reach 1. Treat as a body part.
Antler Thrust (14): 1d+2 impaling. Reach C. Treat as a weapon (Striker), not a body part.
Antler Slam (14): 2d impaling. Reach C.

Traits: Bad Temper (12); Bloodlust (9); Odious Racial Habit (Man-killer); Quadruped; Wild Animal.

Skills: Brawling-14; Running-13.

Class: Dire Animal.

Notes: Animal-related skills and spells affect them normally. Not intelligent enough to negotiate. Horns are worth \$1d×200 each.

Dire Frog

Normal frogs can get pretty big, but not like this. Dire frogs are omnivorous, which basically means “eats *all kinds* of delvers.” They attack by snapping out their long tongues to snag their prey and then pull them back to smash with their toothless jaws. If in water (they usually are), they will dunk their victim under water to drown them.

ST: 18 **HP:** 18 **Speed:** 6.00
DX: 12 **Will:** 10 **Move:** 6
IQ: 2 **Per:** 12
HT: 12 **FP:** 12 **SM:** +1
Dodge: 9 **Parry:** N/A **DR:** 3 (tough skin)

Bite (14): 1d+1 crushing *plus* follow-up Grinding Jaws; Reach C.

Grinding Jaws (N/A): Roll a Quick Contest between the frog's modified ST 20 and the victim's ST or HT, whichever is better; victim takes that many HP of damage. DR protects normally. This is a free action.

Sticky Tongue (14): Treat as Binding 12 (with Range 3), but only one target can be bound at a time.

Traits: Amphibious; Bad Temper (12); Bloodlust (9); Dependency (Water; Very Common; Hourly); Odious Racial Habit (Man-eater); Quadruped; Wild Animal.

Skills: Brawling-14; Jumping-14; Stealth-14; Wrestling-14.

Class: Dire Animal.

Notes: Animal-related skills and spells affect them normally. Bite counts as a grapple on opponents of SM 0 or smaller. Effective ST 20 due to Wrestling skill. A tongue-grappled victim must engage in a Quick Contest of ST each turn; losing means he's dragged one yard closer to the frog's deadly mouth. Occasionally, it swallows treasure, but it's a messy search – it takes 5 minutes and a successful Survival (Swampland) or Naturalist to cut open its guts well enough to ensure you didn't miss anything in there.

Terrible Terrier

The Terrible Terrier appears as a large, somewhat mangy, hungry-looking canine. It's got some bad habits though, and it's not remotely housebroken. In combat, if ever surrounded or attacked by more than one foe in proximity, it gets excited and cuts loose – Not Cleaning That Up.

The Terrible Terrier is motivated by hunger more than anything else, and it might be distracted by a good meal.

ST: 9 **HP:** 9 **Speed:** 6.00
DX: 11 **Will:** 10 **Move:** 10
IQ: 4 **Per:** 12
HT: 12 **FP:** 12 **SM:** 0
Dodge: 9 **Parry:** N/A **DR:** 0

Bite (14): 1d+1 cutting *plus* may grapple (see Notes). Reach C.

Traits: Chummy; Discriminatory Smell; Not Cleaning That Up; Quadruped; Striking ST 9 (One Attack Only, Bite); Super Jump 1.

Skills: Brawling-14; Tracking-15.

Class: Terrible Animal.

Notes: Animal-related skills and spells affect them normally. Bite counts as a grapple on opponents of SM -1 or smaller. Bite ST is effectively 18 due to powerful jaws, and the Terrible Terrier will bite and worry (automatic hit that inflicts 1d+1 cutting each turn unless the hold is broken). The dog may jump vertically up to over 8', with a standing jump of 11 yards and a running jump of 22 yards!

Terrible Foliage

The slickest trick for the thickest thicket is to pick it apart with a stick! Oh, except you can't . . . because it's a Terrible Hedge, which is currently strangling you to death. Or perhaps what you thought was a normal, everyday *Salix babylonica* is actually a *whipping* willow instead of a *weeping* willow. In either case, you'll never trust shrubbery again.

Terrible Hedge

The Terrible Hedge is usually placed among other normal hedges, frequently by mad gardeners, insane wizards, or insanely mad gardening wizards. It waits patiently (how else can a plant wait, really?) until it senses the vibration of a passing adventuring party. At that point, it lashes out with a spindly vine, which naturally is all of corrosive, poisonous, and insanely tenacious.

It can be any size, but the most common variants are SM 0 (about man-high, as with a hedge maze) and SM -2. The waist-high version prefers to attack the torso and legs; the man-high Terrible Hedge has a fondness for grappling the neck. It will neither dodge nor parry, instead All-Out Attacking each turn – Determined (for a +2 to hit) when attempting to grapple, and Strong when attempting to pull off limbs.

ST: 16 **HP:** 16 **Speed:** 6.00
DX: 12 **Will:** 10 **Move:** 0
IQ: 0 **Per:** 12
HT: 12 **FP:** 12 **SM:** 0
Dodge: N/A **Parry:** N/A **DR:** 2

It Stings, It Burns (N/A): Grappled victims suffer 2d Corrosion (Cyclic, 100 cycles, 1 second) and 2d Toxic (Contact Agent, Resisted by HT-2, success reduces damage to 1d). Toxic cycles end with a critical success on the resistance roll; both end with immersion in water (a pint or wineskin won't do).

Terrible Grabbing Vines (14): Grapple with ST 18.

No damage, however, successfully grappled foes suffer from It Stings, It Burns. If it grapples a limb or neck, it *also* uses A Farewell to Arms. Reach 1-4.

A Farewell to Arms (N/A): Roll a Quick Contest of the hedge's effective ST 18 vs. the victim's ST or HT. If it succeeds, it does 3d+3 crushing damage to the affected limb or neck; this includes +1 per die for All-Out Attack (Strong.)

Traits: Bloodlust (6); A Farewell to Arms; Extra Arms (see Notes); Indomitable; Injury Tolerance (Diffuse); It Stings, It Burns; Sessile; Weakness (Takes 2d from Shape Plant); Unfazeable.

Skills: Wrestling-14.

Class: Terrible Plant.

Notes: ST for grappling is 18 due to Wrestling skill.

Has one vine per yard of hedge, regardless of its height. Plant spells affect it normally. Smaller versions are SM -2 and only have Reach 2 on their grapple, but other statistics are unchanged. Will not attack ninja: They're a hedge. Move along.

Terrible Whipping Willow

The whipping willow is your run-of-the-mill carnivorous plant that, unlike its wimpy cousin the Venus flytrap, will not deign to have its meals land stupidly in its mouth. It will drag food kicking and screaming home for dinner.

ST: 35 **HP:** 50 **Speed:** 6.00
DX: 12 **Will:** 10 **Move:** 0
IQ: 0 **Per:** 12
HT: 12 **FP:** 12 **SM:** +6
Dodge: 9 **Parry:** N/A **DR:**

Whipping Branches (14): 6d cutting; Reach 1-9. Strikes at random targets.

Grab and Drag (14): Reach 1-9. Grapples at ST 37.

It Stings, It Burns (N/A): Grappled victims suffer 2d Corrosion (Cyclic, 100 cycles, 1 second), and 2d Toxic (Contact Agent, Resisted by HT-2, success reduces damage to 1d). Toxic cycles end with a critical success on the resistance roll; both end with immersion in water (a pint or wineskin won't do.)

A Farewell to Arms (N/A): Roll a Quick Contest of the hedge's effective ST 37 vs. the victim's ST or HT. If it succeeds, it does 7d+6 crushing damage to the affected limb or neck; this includes +1 per die for All-Out Attack (Strong.)

Traits: Bloodlust (6); A Farewell to Arms; Extra Arms 4; Indomitable; Injury Tolerance (Homogenous); It Stings, It Burns; Sessile; Weakness (Takes 2d from Shape Plant); Unfazeable.

Skills: Brawling-14; Wrestling-14.

Class: Terrible Construct.

Notes: May either strike, randomly lashing out with steely limbs, or grapple the target. It must bring the victim to its central trunk in order to use It Stings, It Burns – it feeds by dissolving prey and absorbing it through the roots. To drag prey closer, it must win a Quick Contest of ST – if it does, the victim is dragged one yard closer to the central trunk for every multiple of the victim's ST/2 by which it wins the contest!

*He's got huge sharp . . . He can
leap about . . . Look at the bones!
– Tim the Enchanter,
Monty Python
and the Holy Grail*

Terrible Dire Bunny

This adorable creature appears harmless, but look at the bones! It's a killer. It is usually found either as a solitary guardian of some important quest location, or with others on a field of bones. They do not collect treasure, but little survives to make off with the belongings of its past victims . . . which can be found strewn among the bones.

ST: 2 **HP:** 2 **Speed:** 6.00
DX: 12 **Will:** 18 **Move:** 6
IQ: 4 **Per:** 18
HT: 12 **FP:** 12 **SM:** -4
Dodge: 13 **Parry:** N/A **DR:** 0

Terrible Teeth (24): 4d-1(5) cutting; Reach C. Can target the neck at only -2.

Traits: Altered Time Rate 1; Attractive; Bad Temper (6); Bloodlust (6); Combat Reflexes; Enhanced Dodge 3; Pitable; Run and Hit (Brawling); Quadruped; Slayer Training (Bite/Neck); Striking ST 2 (Bite Only); Super Jump 1 (6 yards); Wild Animal.

Skills: Brawling-24; Jumping-14.

Class: Terrible Dire Animal.

Notes: Altered Time Rate gives it *two* turns, while Run and Hit lets it attack at the end of a full move for a +1 damage (total 4d(5)). It usually attacks the neck *twice* at 16 (using Rapid Strike) *or* once with Deceptive Attack -3, also at 16. Animal spells don't work, because it's a dire mutant creature. Will not negotiate. It is very cute, however.

Terribly Dire Wolverine

Listen, bub. Wolverines (*GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 5: Allies*, p. 11) are pretty good, but terribly dire wolverines are the *best* at what they do. They're tough, too. Delvers will adamantly swear their iron-hard bones are unbreakable, and they don't say nice things about their extra-long talons either. They have the usual mutated wolverine traits – bad temper, regeneration, foul musk, bad attitude, love of beer (especially polar beer, *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 10: Taverns*, p. 31), and more.

ST: 16	HP: 20	Speed: 6.50
DX: 14	Will: 13	Move: 6
IQ: 4	Per: 14	
HT: 16	FP: 16	SM: 0
Dodge: 13	Parry: N/A	DR: 3

Bite (18): 1d+1 cutting; Reach C.

Claws (x2) (18): 4d+1(5) cutting *or* impaling; Reach C, 1.

Traits: Bad Temper (9); Bloodlust (9); Burrower, Combat Reflexes; Discriminatory Smell; Enhanced Dodge 3; Flexibility; High Pain Threshold; Not Cleaning That Up; Night Vision 4; Peripheral Vision; Regeneration (Extreme; 20 HP/second); Semi-Upright; Temperate Tolerance 2; Terrain Adaptation (Snow); Wild Animal.

Skills: Brawling-18; Stealth-16; Tracking-17.

Class: Terrible Dire Animal.

Notes: Animal spells don't work, because it's a dire mutant creature. Will not negotiate. Especially hates ninjas.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Douglas H. Cole is a sometimes writer and oft-times blogger, where he tries to spread the *GURPS*pel at Gaming Ballistic (gamingballistic.blogspot.com). He has been role-playing since 1981, and playing *GURPS* since 1988. He has been an active playtester for both Third Edition and Fourth Edition, and acted as lead playtester for *GURPS High Tech* and *GURPS Tactical Shooting*. His gripping release, *GURPS Martial Arts: Technical Grappling*, is finally out. Douglas trained in *Hwa Rang Do* from 2002-2011, until sidelined by injury. He has earned two doctorates: A real one, in materials science and engineering, from Northwestern University, and a cool one, in *GURPS* Ballistics, from Illuminati Online University. He is an R&D manager for a major hard-drive company. He lives with his wife and two daughters in Minnesota, where many are cold, but few are frozen.

Peter V. Dell'Orto of New Jersey started gaming with *Dungeons & Dragons* in 1981 and has played *GURPS* since *Man to Man*. He has been writing, editing, and playtesting *GURPS* books since 1996. Peter is the author of numerous *GURPS* articles for *Pyramid* magazine; author or co-author of several electronic items (including *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 12: Ninja*; *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy Monsters 1* and *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 15: Henchmen*, both with Sean Punch; and *GURPS Martial Arts: Gladiators*, with Volker Bach); and a co-author of *GURPS Martial Arts* and *GURPS Low-Tech*. He is also an enthusiastic martial artist; he has competed both in Japan in amateur MMA and in the United States in submission grappling. He holds a *shodan* rank in Kendo. His other interests include fitness, reading, painting miniatures, and studying Japanese. Peter currently runs a *Dungeon Fantasy* campaign (detailed on his blog, *Dungeon Fantastic*, dungeonfantastic.blogspot.com) for his long time victims, err, players. There, he tests out his many rule and monster ideas . . .



The fear has grown . . .

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STEVE JACKSON GAMES

RANDOM THOUGHT TABLE

COMPLICATIONS MADE SIMPLE

BY STEVEN MARSH, *PYRAMID* EDITOR

The earliest days of *Dungeons & Dragons* posited a multiverse with four elemental planes corresponding to the classical elements: earth, air, fire, and water. The classic *Deities & Demigods* cyclopedia posited the existence of four para-elemental planes that exist between the four classic elements – for example, the Plane of Ice exists where Air and Water meet. In *Dragon* #73, Gary Gygax added eight new planes in between the four elemental ones and the Positive and Negative Planes; the Mineral plane exists at the intersection of the Positive and Earth planes, the Ash plane dwells where Negative meets Fire, etc.

Yes, it's crazy. It's complicated. But it's also awesome.

GET CRAZY

I've talked before about letting loose crazy concepts in dungeon-fantasy games (see "The Joy of Hex" from *Pyramid* #3/36: *Dungeon Fantasy*). However, I didn't go into much detail there about why you'd want to do so.

Arguably one of the strongest appeals of a dungeon-fantasy campaign is that it delicately balances two slightly incongruous concepts:

1. The world is a mesmerizing place with unending, interesting areas to explore and new wonders to behold.
2. Any threats you face along the way can be killed.

This dichotomy is perhaps most tightly distilled in computer roleplaying games, where it's not uncommon to feel the rush of both in short order: "Whoa; this new zone looks awesome. *What the heck is that attacking me?! Kill it kill it kill it!* <click-click-click-click . . .>" But even in a tabletop environment, both itches are generally scratched in short order. Whether the heroes are exploring a gothic castle, an island that only exists every 100 years, or a "tower" that's actually a frozen teardrop of a long-dead god, the players can be reasonably assured that their touristic awe won't dissuade or distract them from righteous combat.

Why is wonder and awe important? Because it helps differentiate a genre that – distilled down to its basics – doesn't provide much variety from encounter to encounter. Yes, the

orcs in the tower are evil, they need to be stopped, and the heroes are the only ones who can do it. Even so, two back-to-back orc-tower adventures are wildly different if the orcs in the first tower are menacing a nearby village, and the orcs in the second tower are trying to complete a ritual that will open a conduit to the Hellscape Realms, threatening to turn the entire region into a blighted wasteland. The details matter. (For more words of my wisdom on the topic of minor variations making a big difference, see "The Decagoblin Dungeon" from *Pyramid* #3/60: *Dungeon Fantasy III*.)

So, wonder and awe are important. How does that tie into complications and world-building?

IT'S COMPLICATED

By adding complications, you're increasing the opportunities to differentiate otherwise similar encounters. An adversarial fire mage will differ from an ice mage, ash mage, or mineral mage. Sure, all those mages are likely to share similarities – ranged spells, some kind of defensive ability, a trick or two – but it still sparks a sense of the novel.

Ideally, these complications should emerge from what's been established about the world. It doesn't work to just wave your arms and say, "These goblins are immune to sword blows but not maces; there's no good reason why." Instead, you can extend the possibilities of the game world to accomplish the same thing. Perhaps there's a new demigod that's trying to amass power and is offering a bargain: Sell your soul to him and you'll be immune to all edged weapons, but you'll die and your soul will become his in five years. Or perhaps these goblins are not born as normal mortal creatures, but are forged from a vile ichorous protoplasm (similar to the Uruks from the *Lord of the Rings* movies series). Either complication adds new possibilities to the campaign world: Do the heroes try to sell their *own* souls in exchange for a half-decade of edged-weapon immunity? Can the protoplasm be used to mold larger, stronger creatures (who coincidentally become a threat as the heroes become more powerful themselves)?

So if you're going to harness the power of complications, where can you start looking?

ZOOM OUT OR IN

The universe of the real world has proven itself more than willing to provide new avenues of contemplation and understanding in all directions. “The smallest bits of the universe” has zoomed in from atoms to quarks to strings, and “the biggest bits of creation” has zoomed out from the world to the galaxy to theoretical alternate multiverses. An obvious way to provide new complications is to look closer in or further out at different aspects.

Thus, maybe it’s revealed that “mana” in the world is actually a form of ultra-fine omnipresent particulate matter (not dissimilar to – say – radon), and “magic” is just a matter of harnessing and manipulating this mass. This might allow “magic” to be accumulated and stored, or for mana-mitigation methods to be developed.

Or maybe there are elements that are farther out. Yes, there are Things Man Was Not Meant To Know, but perhaps – beyond them – there might be Things That *Things Man Was Not Meant To Know* Were Not Meant To Know. The heroes might become aware of these greater threats when they’re contacted by terrified (but still evil) Elder Things, who need to enlist the heroes’ help in doing something that’s crazy even by their unfathomable standards.

LOOK BETWEEN THE LINES

In the same way that Gygax looked between the established four elemental planes to generate new possibilities, it’s also inspirational to see where existing elements of the campaign line up and see if there’s any new complexity that can be divined from the barriers. If there are Chaos warriors and avatars of Law, perhaps there are fierce cosmic defenders of pure Neutrality (see the classic computer game *Ultima VII Part Two: Serpent Isle* for inspiration).

Or perhaps the boundaries between the worlds of the living and dead are more complicated than previously understood. While the heroes are well aware of the blurred boundaries between life and the death in their continued battles against the undead, perhaps that same blurred line exists between the living world and the realms of the eternal paradise, leading to rare uncelestials – beings that are neither of the living world nor heaven, but something in between. And perhaps there are even rarer beings whose souls have no tie to either Heaven or Hell, who upon death become trapped in a nether realm between the physical world and utter nonexistence. Unlike the undead, the near-existent can break down the heroes’ reality with a touch . . .

LOOK FOR THE SILENCE

Often it’s possible to add complications by looking to what *hasn’t* been established before. This is a common technique on sitcoms: “Oh, you mean I’ve never mentioned that I’ve had a German pen pal for 17 years? Well, he’s visiting today . . .”

In this method, see what you can add without disrupting what’s already been established (see below). Perhaps after every 100 kills in the service of the clan, a ninja (and his friends) is entitled to visit Grandmaster Island, for relaxation, testing, and intrigue. No, it’s never been mentioned before now, but the GM reckons the PC ninja is at 91 kills and

climbing, and he’s discussed the idea with the player beforehand (see p. 36).

Or perhaps the laws of the Kingdom require that succession be established within the royal bloodline, lest the realm fall into supernaturally induced chaos. Normally this isn’t too urgent an issue – since extended royal families are large; however, it’s brought into sharp focus when a concerted assassination campaign against the 47 known successors to the throne leaves the King alone as the sole surviving stopgap against a crumbled kingdom. Protecting him (or spiring him away to an unassailable realm) has just become the most important thing the heroes can do, second only to finding him a new bride and having heirs.

This Changes Everything! (Okay; Not Really)

Usually, changes added via complications don’t fundamentally alter the universe as the heroes (and players) have understood it so far. In the same way the discovery of the Laws of Relativity didn’t negate Newtonian calculations, which are good enough for 99.999% of practical applications, the addition of new levels of complexity to the campaign shouldn’t radically alter the understanding of past or (most) future adventures . . . unless the campaign is more inspired by Japanese CRPGs. Those can get pretty weird. (“You all wake up and discover you’re virtual-reality avatars in a planet-sized bio-organic computer entitled Eden . . .”)

MAKING INTRODUCTIONS

Often in fantasy and science-fiction shows, there’s a scene where someone provides an expository monologue for the edification of the audience: “Scientists have postulated the existence of ‘mirror’ universes” or “I’ve heard of this brand of magic before, but I never thought I’d live to see it . . .” If adding new complications after the fact – as Gygax did when he created the quasi-elemental planes for *Dungeons & Dragons* – then it’s quite possible that some of the *heroes* should have this info, even if the *players* don’t. In this case, strongly consider giving the knowledgeable hero a moment in the spotlight by letting them provide the info-dump: “Hmm; forces that tap the quasi-elemental planes are *rare*, but not unheard of . . .”

Pop over to Odds and Ends (p. 36) for more ideas on providing *heroes* with details that their *players* hadn’t heard about yet.

ABOUT THE EDITOR

Steven Marsh is a freelance writer and editor. He has contributed to roleplaying game releases from Green Ronin, West End Games, White Wolf, Hogshead Publishing, and others. He has been editing *Pyramid* for over 10 years; during that time, he has won four Origins awards. He lives in Indiana with his wife, Nikola Vrtis, and their son.

ODDS AND ENDS

I'VE HEARD OF THIS

Many fantasy and science-fiction shows use the addition of complications to add new plot and story possibilities (such as those suggested on pp. 34-35).

There are two good techniques to allow players to do so:

- *At the time of the revelation.* The first time the heroes encounter something odd that one of the other heroes ought to know about (that the player doesn't), pull the player out of the room and give them the quick overview on the topic: "That looks to be a protoplasm goblin; they differ from regular goblins by . . ."

- *Prior to the adventure, perhaps obfuscated.* If the GM were introducing a plot that hinged on one of the para-elemental planes, he might provide the player with the treatise that explains the expanded cosmology beforehand (perhaps several adventures earlier). That way the player wouldn't know *which* new plane would be important or when.

Regardless, once the player has heard or read the information, the GM can make sure the player reiterates all appropriate details, so that the group isn't punished because the player misheard a quick out-of-room tutelage on a new topic.

If there is more than one hero who might know a bit of newly introduced esoterica, you can either pick one randomly (or whichever player has gotten the least screen time lately), see which

It's what you learn after you know it all that counts.

— John Wooden

player rolls best using the appropriate Know Stuff skill, or pull *all* players whose heroes have a skill at a certain

level or roll well enough . . . then let them decide how/when they want to share the info.

MURPHY'S RULES

BY GREG HYLAND

Zombie THEN Ghoul!
ALWAYS ALWAYS ALWAYS!



IN THE CASTLE RAVENLOFT BOARDGAME (Wizards of the Coast), IF A DRAGONBORN FIGHTER WANTS TO CLEAVE A GHOUL AND A ZOMBIE, HE HAS AN 80% CHANCE OF KILLING THEM BOTH IF HE ATTACKS THE ZOMBIE *FIRST*. IF HE ATTACKS THE GHOUL FIRST, HE HAS A 45% CHANCE OF NOT HITTING EITHER.

Got a *Murphy's Rule* of your own? Send it to murphy@sjgames.com

ABOUT *GURPS*

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of *GURPS* players. Our address is SJ Games, P.O. Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! We can also be reached by email: info@sjgames.com. Resources include:

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Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata pages for all *GURPS* releases, including this book, are available on our website – see above.

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