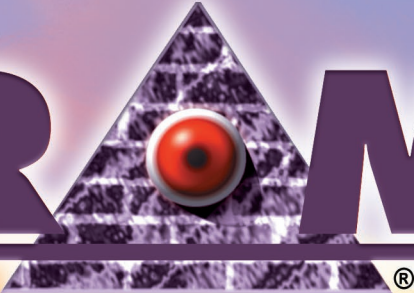


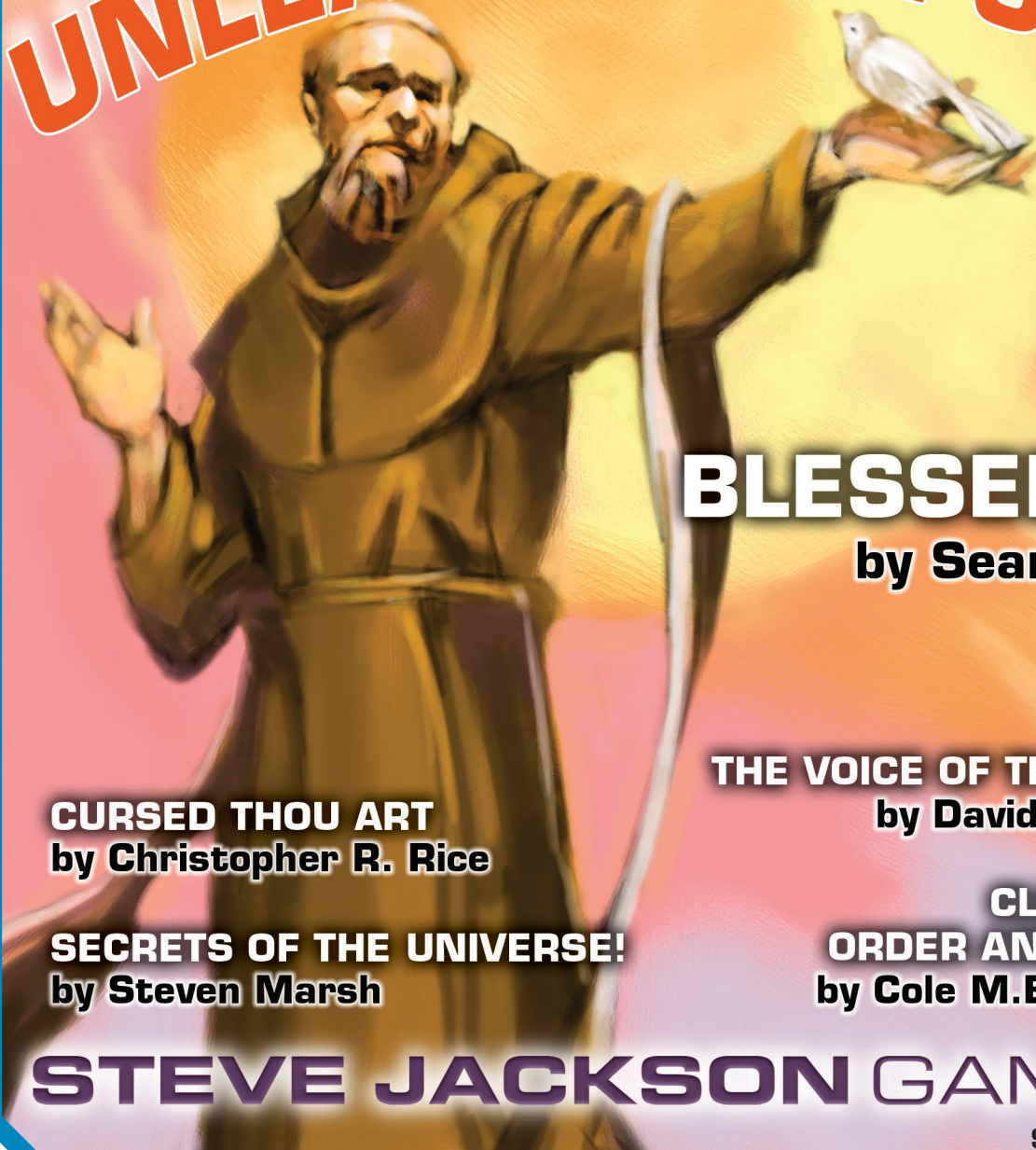
PYRAMID[®]



Issue 3/78 April '15



UNLEASH YOUR SOUL



BLESSED BE
by Sean Punch

CURSED THOU ART
by Christopher R. Rice

SECRETS OF THE UNIVERSE!
by Steven Marsh

THE VOICE OF THE MOON
by David L. Pulver

**CLERICS OF
ORDER AND CHAOS**
by Cole M.B. Jenkins

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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We've got spirit; yes we do! We've got spirit . . . and powers, too! This issue of *Pyramid* looks at the intersection of faith and power, and those who use it for good or ill.

Sean Punch – all-knowing co-author of *GURPS Basic Set* – helps inspire GMs with an in-depth examination of the Blessed advantage. After breaking down various forms of Blessed, the guidelines offer numerous building blocks, alternate options, and premade examples to help the GM determine a fair cost for new versions of Blessed. May *Blessed Be* your go-to divine advantage!

Get your *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy* faith back to the basics with *Clerics of Order and Chaos*. Learn about the benefits of being a priest or holy warrior of primal forces, plus get two new lenses for divine servitors, two new divine elements, and a new aura.

What if the Man in the Moon is real? Some witches, past and present, certainly think so, because they can hear *The Voice of the Moon*. In this month's Eidetic Memory, David L. Pulver – author of best-selling supplements such as *GURPS Spaceships 7: Divergent and Paranormal Tech* – reveals the secrets of a 17th-century cult and its modern reconstruction . . . which is also spookily suitable for PCs to be members of. What will you do to get to the moon?

Know, mere mortal, just what's going to happen when *Cursed Thou Art*. Long-time *Pyramid* contributor Christopher R. Rice delves into the inner workings of curses with a meaty mini-supplement that includes tips for pricing (with eight examples), suggestions for related disadvantages, using the Mitigator limitation, cursing as an ability or as magic, and more.

Open your mind and learn the *Secrets of the Universe!* With the religious organization detailed herein (suitable for past, present, or future eras), you'll discover how you can acquire *GURPS* psionic abilities simply by attending a few retreats . . . and donating all your money.

The latest Random Thought Table explores different options for explaining how certain fantastic divine abilities never seem to have an effect on everyday life, while Odds and Ends has a new tradition that lets you wear your faith on your sleeve (or body!) and offers a Murphy's Rule that's not for the weak. That palpitation in your chest is your soul, eager to experience this month's *Pyramid*; unleash its power and sate your spirit!

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

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FROM THE EDITOR

YOU GOTTA HAVE FAITH

There are two things I love about matters of faith and spirituality in roleplaying games. First off, it's underutilized as a plot element. Let's say that you have a game with a bunch of bounty hunters as quasi-recurring characters; they're not interesting enough to get full write-ups, but you'd like to differentiate them in some way. "Devout Unitarian Universalist Bounty Hunter" is certainly different from "Atheistic Nihilist Bounty Hunter" . . . and both can have an easy-to-remember hook that differentiates them from "Agnostic Shoot-You-in-the-Kneecaps Bounty Hunter."

Second, it's an interesting part of the human experience that can be realistically inserted into just about any campaign setting – past, present, or future. The Church was a significant element in Renaissance Florence, religion continues to shape the modern geopolitical and social landscape, and matters of faith will almost certainly influence us at least in the near term as we work our way off this mudball. (There's a "Religion in Space" page on Wikipedia that's interesting – if brief

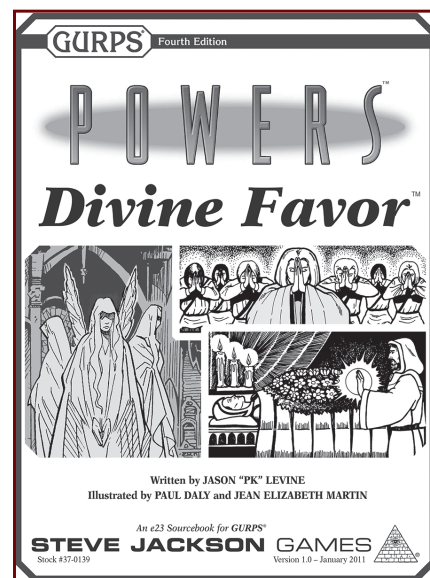
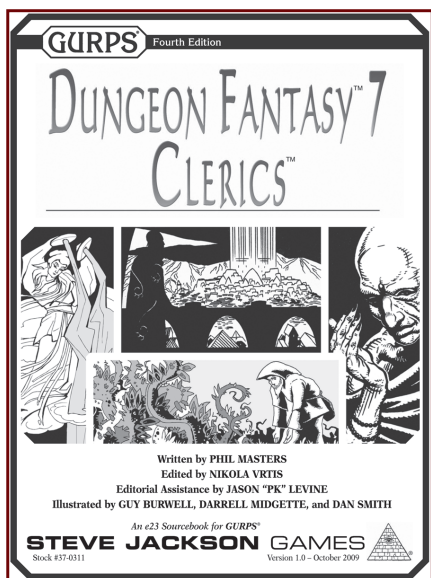
– rabbit hole to fall down.) "The High Priest of the God of War needs you to investigate a forgotten cathedral . . ." is certainly a different hook than "the King sends you to a dungeon."

If you add divinely powered elements of faith to the mix – and it's *GURPS*; why wouldn't you?! – the possible plot and gaming elements explode. "Devout Unitarian Universalist Bounty Hunting Crusader of Light" (p. 10) is not only an awesome character concept, but it's also a phrase that has yet to appear on Google. Err . . . until the preview of this issue is uploaded. But I digress.

So if your campaign is feeling a bit generic and you're looking for something cool and nifty to add, please consider a faith lift . . . courtesy of this issue.

WRITE HERE, WRITE NOW

Your comments are heavenly music to our ears. Were we touched by angels? Or touched by madness? Let us know via private feedback at pyramid@sjgames.com, or join the public discussion online at forums.sjgames.com.



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BLESSED BE

BY SEAN PUNCH

The Blessed (pp. B40-41) advantage is a catchall for gifts conferred upon holy folk by The Powers That Be. It gives the GM – in his role as the campaign’s *highest* Power – the option of declaring that some divine endowment *just works*, instead of building it as a complex **GURPS Powers**-style ability. Like Divine Curse (p. B132), it’s clearly meant to be defined by fiat . . . but with so few examples, it’s tricky to price without exploring some “builds.”

DECONSTRUCTING BLESSED

The published examples provide the only available insight into Blessed, so let’s take them apart and estimate the price of the components – even if that means a little **Powers**-style math!

Divine Guidance

The first example is the generic divinatory version of Blessed [10] – improvable to Very Blessed [20] – from the **Basic Set**. We’ll dub this trait Blessed (Divine Guidance). It enables the user to receive wisdom from his deity by taking an hour, spending 10 FP, and rolling against IQ. That is, it allows him to cast a Divination spell (**GURPS Magic**, pp. 108-109) without prerequisite spells, and sans Magery or Power Investiture. This breaks down as:

1. Dispensation to cast one specific spell without prerequisites. **GURPS Power-Ups 2: Perks** calls this a “Charm” perk; **GURPS Thaumatology: Magical Styles**, a “Shortcut to Power” perk. Spells enabled by these perks require Magery 0 except when associated with holy magic. Fortunately, Blessed is holy by definition! 1 point.

2. Divination at IQ or IQ+5. Divination (H) IQ-2 [1] improved by +2 or +7 for just 1 point/level would cost less than Divination (H) IQ [4] or IQ+5 [24], if we could justify it – and we can. A bonus to a *single spell* is found by taking Magery or Power Investiture and adding One-Spell Magery, -80% (from **GURPS Thaumatology**) to reduce cost from 10 points/level to 2 points/level. However, Blessed specifies no reduction in energy cost, casting time, or rituals for high skill, which is at least as limiting as Extravagant Rituals, -10%. This looks like a reasonable place to invoke divine fiat and call upon *Below the Minimum* (**GURPS Power-Ups 8: Limitations**, p. 7) to allow -90%, giving 1 point per +1. 3 points for IQ; 8 points for IQ+5.

Blessed (Divine Guidance) has two *further* benefits hidden within:

3. Holy support that allows Exorcism (p. B193) without -4 to skill. **GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 9: Summoners** deems this a perk: “Licensed Exorcist.” 1 point.

4. A reaction bonus from a deity’s followers, who can somehow sense Blessed. That’s Social Regard [5/level] (pp. B86-87) with the benefit that the faithful *just know* – it works despite disguises, language barriers, etc. – and the drawback that *only* worshipers care, not all of society. The former doubles point value when applied to Social Stigma (Excommunicated) (p. B155), which is the precise opposite of Social Regard, while the latter halves cost for a large class of people affected when used on Reputation (p. B27). The effects cancel out. 5 points for +1 reactions; 10 points for +2.

The Divine Guidance form of Blessed therefore costs $1 + 3 + 1 + 5 = 10$ points, while Very Blessed comes to $1 + 8 + 1 + 10 = 20$ points.

Heroic Feats

The next example is Blessed (Heroic Feats) [10]. The player can invoke this once per game session for +1d to his character’s ST, DX, or HT, lasting 3d seconds. To see what’s going on, let’s first list the assumed limitations:

- One use per game session gets tricky. The Game Time modifier from **Powers** and **GURPS Power-Ups 4: Enhancements** converts one use per game session to anywhere between a use per week and a use per day, depending on the campaign’s action level. Limited Use, 1/day, -40% is easy – but no price exists for 1/week. However, Limited Use worsens by *about* -10% per full halving in daily uses, so one use per two or three days ought to be -50%, and one use per four to seven days should be -60%. Blessed has the same price in *all* campaigns, so let’s split the difference: -50%.

- One “use” normally lasts a minute. Here, duration is 3d seconds, which averages 10.5 seconds – about 1/6 normal. **GURPS Psionic Powers** calls this Reduced Duration, 1/6, -15%.

- “You will lose this advantage if you fail to act in accordance with your deity’s rules and values” is what **Powers** calls Divine (-10%) – a fancy version of Pact (p. B113). As there’s nothing inherently sacred about an attribute bonus, we must make this explicit. (This drawback is left implicit in Divine Guidance, as both holy magic and Licensed Exorcist come with a built-in need to keep the faith, while the deity conveying Social Regard can withdraw it as surely as it can inflict the corresponding Social Stigma.)

That totals -75%, making the price of the modified traits 1/4 normal, rounded up.

Now let’s examine what’s being modified. An attribute bonus rolled on 1d averages +3.5. For ST or HT, at 10 points/level, that’s worth 35 points. For DX, at 20 points/level, it comes to 70 points. Thus, the “fair” cost is 1/4 as much: 9 points for ST or HT, or 18 points for DX.

Nothing in the Exorcism skill write-up suggests that Heroic Feats won't wipe the -4 to skill every bit as well as Divine Guidance, so we should add that. This brings the cost to 10 points for ST or HT, 19 points for DX. That last point cost is a bit of a puzzle: the **Basic Set** doesn't make Blessed more expensive when it grants DX. To finesse this, see *Attribute Bonuses* (pp. 6-7).

Blessed Art Thou

GURPS Powers: Divine Favor defines three *further* forms of Blessed: Last Rites, Font, and Ghost Weapon. Once again, we'll dissect.

Autopsy of Last Rites

Last Rites [5] empowers the blessed person to pray for one minute over a dead body, making occasional contact, to prevent the material remains from rising as undead and to immunize the associated spirit against summoning. It can't prevent resurrection – and if the subject *wants* to return, possesses resuscitating advantages, or has already turned, the blessing likewise fails. The benefits of peaceful rest automatically apply to the ability's user upon at his death. The elements are thus:

1. The standard Licensed Exorcist perk implied by Blessed. *1 point.*

2. A second perk – **Power-Ups 2: Perks** calls it “Covenant of Rest” – which ensures that the possessor won't be reanimated, summoned, etc. *1 point.*

3. The ability to confer a limited version of Covenant of Rest upon the dead. In most settings, clergy can do this with a simple Religious Ritual roll. Thus, it could be thought of as what **Perks** calls a One-Task Wonder perk – here, OTW (Religious Ritual defaults to full IQ for funerary rites) – with *two* varieties of Cosmic: “Lingering effect, +100%” (only another extraordinary ability can reverse it) and “No die roll required, +100%” (no actual need to roll IQ or Religious Ritual). That triples cost. *3 points.*

Final cost is $1 + 1 + 3 = 5$ points.

Font of Ideas

Font [10] makes the blessed one's body the equivalent of holy water, with exposure proportional to the extent of the contact: a brief touch or a punch counts as a sprinkling; a grapple, as immersion of the grappled body part. Moreover, it gives the user the ability to transmute up to a pint of water at a time into actual holy water, which he can sprinkle onto or hurl at unholy enemies. Let's examine the parts:

1. The standard Licensed Exorcist perk implied by Blessed. *1 point.*

2. The ability to count as holy water on touch is a powerful one that harms numerous supernatural entities. A reasonable construction would be Burning Attack 1 point (Aura, +80%; Cosmic, Irresistible attack, +300%; Divine, -10%; Melee Attack, Reach C, -30%; No Wounding, -50%) [8]. It's burning because holy water *sizzles*. Damage is just 1 point with No Wounding because it causes no injury *in itself* – all the harm comes from others' disadvantages. Aura, Cosmic, and Melee Attack conspire to ensure that a touch by either party, however brief and whatever armor might be in the way, counts as

contact. Divine is present to make the touch holy, and because this attack fails if the gods disapprove. *8 points.*

3. Being able to transform water into holy water is simply a “power perk” that fits the previous ability. Alternatively, it could be regarded as an Accessory perk, since in many settings, holy water amounts to everyday gear. *1 point.*

Final cost is $1 + 8 + 1 = 10$ points.

Chasing Ghosts

Ghost Weapon [15] grants the user's weapons – perhaps even vehicular ones – the Affects Insubstantial (p. B102) enhancement against malevolent, supernatural beings. The breakdown:

1. The standard Licensed Exorcist perk implied by Blessed. *1 point.*

2. The capacity to add the enhancement works much like an imparted form of Static (**Powers**, p. 98): Static (Affects Others (Accessibility, Weapons, -30%), +35%; Cosmic, Evil supernatural powers, +100%; Divine, -10%; Not for Wielder, -100%; One Ability, Insubstantiality, -80%) [14]. Affects Others, restricted to weapons, lets the user protect what he's touching as long as it's a weapon, while Not for Wielder subtracts away all protection for his person (whence -100%). The new variety of Cosmic doesn't let Static ignore *unrestricted* powers – that would be worth +300%, and encompass superscience tech and the gods' own defenses – but does cover all *evil, supernatural* ones. One Ability, borrowed from Neutralize, restricts the effect to one advantage. *14 points.*

Final cost is $1 + 14 = 15$ points.

The excellence of a gift lies in its appropriateness rather than in its value.

– Charles Dudley Warner

BLESSED BUILDING BLOCKS

This reduction has revealed several components to use when building other forms of Blessed.

Perks

Blessed might include the benefits of almost any perk. These properties are *built-in*, and not subject to the campaign's limits on the number of perks allowed. Some fitting choices, at the standard 1 point apiece:

Accessory (p. B100 and **Power-Ups 2: Perks**, p. 10), if the chosen one can count an ordinary article as one particular kind of commonplace holy item one *while holding it*. Examples include turning a pint of water into holy water, or a store-bought holy symbol into a blessed one. By contrast with a standard Accessory, the perk doesn't provide the object – only the holiness. Each category of thing calls for a separate perk, and no such artifact can gain extraordinary powers more in keeping with pricier Blessed abilities.

Charm (*Perks*, p. 19) to grant access to a holy magic spell. The spell itself costs extra, and a *wizardly* spell still needs Magery 0.

Covenant of Rest (*Perks*, p. 19), if the blessed one has insurance against becoming undead or having his spirit summoned unwillingly.

Dramatic Death (*Perks*, p. 19) to ensure that if the holy person dies in the cause, he gets 1d+1 seconds of dying actions to lecture his executioners, smite his murderers, or whatever.

Good with the Faithful (*Perks*, p. 13), granting *all* the benefits of Sensitive (p. B51) when dealing with people loyal to the same deity.

Licensed Exorcist (*Dungeon Fantasy 9: Summoners*, p. 5) is customary for most varieties of Blessed. It's the bare minimum "I count as a holy person" element, and in a sense the most trivial form of Blessed.

Pet (*Perks*, p. 18), for a small, unremarkable animal or swarm – e.g., a white dove or a cloud of flies – that follows the holy person, symbolizing his god. This isn't a familiar or combatant (that's an Ally). It serves as a herald or a creepy special effect: +1 to rolls be noticed or Intimidation, or *per-haps* to spot foes.

Rest in Pieces (*Perks*, p. 19) to keep enemies slain by a blessed crusader from being resurrected, reanimated, or summoned. This doesn't negate innate abilities – it merely blocks external influences, like Zombie spells.

Special Exercises or **Unusual Training** (*Perks*, p. 21), if Blessed acts as an Unusual Background permitting access to skills or advantages that are otherwise off-limits; e.g., it might make Enthralment skills (pp. B191-192) available for preaching the word of one's god. Each trait (or *narrow* category, like those Enthralment skills) calls for its own perk, and the gift only works in service to the deity.

Cosmic Perks

Perks aren't supposed to take enhancements, but the gods can break the rules – and so can the GM! The following Cosmic enhancements are worth +100% apiece; thus, each adds 1 point to perk cost:

Lingering effect. The perk creates a holy effect that cannot be reversed by mundane ritual or vulgar magic. Canceling it calls for a deity to act directly or through an agent.

No die roll required. Whatever roll the perk requires is waived – the perk *just works* provided that effective skill would be at least 3.

Universal truth. The perk's effect is apparent through barriers, both social (language and culture) and physical (clothing, dirt, disguises, ordinary darkness, etc.).

Examples include:

Accessory (p. B100 and **Power-Ups 2: Perks**, p. 10) with *Lingering effect*. Lets the character sanctify and leave behind one specific kind of commonplace holy item; e.g., he can create a pint of holy water for a friend to use. He can only maintain one blessed item at a time. *2 points.*

Brotherhood (*Perks*, p. 17) with *Universal truth*. A class of potentially dangerous divine servitors (angels, demons, Zombies of the Final Judgment, etc.) supernaturally senses the chosen one's presence – even if he's hidden or disguised – and won't harm him provided that he stays out of their way. *2 points.*

Cultural Familiarity (p. B23) with *Universal truth*. Regardless of their *temporal* culture, the faithful recognize the holy person as "one of us." No penalties for cultural unfamiliarity ever apply among them. *2 points.*

Good with the Faithful (*Perks*, p. 13) with *No die roll required*. This not only gives the blessed one the skill bonuses of Sensitive (p. B51) when dealing with worshipers of his deity, but also lets him sense possession and impostors among them without rolling dice. *2 points.*

Honest Face (p. B101 and *Perks*, p. 4) with *Universal truth*. The holy person has a beatific aura that dispels others' suspicions, even when he's marching around in armor, lurking half-unseen in the dark, etc. *2 points.*

One-Task Wonder (*Perks*, p. 17) with *No die roll required*. The blessed one always succeeds at one specific, uncontested noncombat task with one particular mundane skill that has broader uses. He needn't know the skill! The skill is most often Religious Ritual, but could also be something like Meditation for seeking enlightenment. If using it leaves behind a persistent effect – like blessing a home or performing last rites – add *Lingering Effect*, too. *2 points if ephemeral; 3 points if lingering.*

*Now you have the tools to create
your own Blessings!*

Attribute Bonuses

As *Heroic Feats* (pp. 4-5) illustrates, the ability to roll 1d and add it to an attribute for 3d seconds, once per game session, is fairly priced at 1/4 of the point cost of the average bonus, rounded up. For ST or HT, that's 9 points, and the 10-point price tag of Blessed (*Heroic Feats*) comes from adding Licensed Exorcist. This fails for DX; adding 1d there should cost 18 points even before the perk. It's fairest to recognize this disparity and do something about it.

Limited DX: DX +1 [20] grants Basic Speed +0.25 [5]. That leaves 15 points for all the rest, which amounts to a Talent (pp. B89-91) with "everything else involving DX." That's certainly 13 or more skills, so it isn't unfair. However, the usual goal of a heroic DX boost is to aid *combat* skills, and it would be logical to regard a bonus to those as a narrower, 10 point/level Talent. Thus, DX affecting combat rolls but *not* Basic Speed or noncombat activities (such as Boating, Dancing, and Pickpocket) could be priced equal to ST or HT . . . and it would be no less sensible for a nonviolent deity to bestow a DX bonus for *noncombat* skills only, with the same price. The GM may assume that *Heroic Feats* in the **Basic Set** confers one or the other.

Limited IQ: For Blessed that bestows divine wisdom, simply omit Will and Per when boosting IQ. As IQ costs 20 points/level, while Will and Per are 5 points/level apiece, IQ without Will and Per bonuses weighs in at the same 10 points/level as ST and HT.

This leads to the following cost schedule:

Will, Per, or Basic Move: 3 points for +1 to +3*, 5 points for +1d, 9 points for +2d†, 14 points for +3d†, or 18 points for +4d†.

ST, DX (Combat Rolls Only), DX (Noncombat Rolls Only), IQ (No Will or Per), or HT: 5 points for +1 to +3*, 9 points for +1d, 18 points for +2d†, 27 points for +3d†, or 35 points for +4d†.

DX, IQ, or Basic Speed: 10 points for +1 to +3*, 18 points for +1d, 35 points for +2d†, 53 points for +3d†, or 70 points for +4d†.

* Roll 1d and read 1-2 as +1, 3-4 as +2, or 5-6 as +3. Average bonus is +2.

† While the *Basic Set* stops at +1d, the GM may allow higher levels of Blessed that give bigger bonuses. The recommended ceiling is +2d.

Other Major Gifts

There are many ways to add advantage-like elements. We've already seen a few:

Holy Regard. A reaction bonus from followers of the deity (only), who can sense it unfailingly; in effect, it has *Cosmic, Universal truth* (see *Cosmic Perks*, p. 6). 5 points/level.

Holy Touch. The chosen one's slightest touch triggers disadvantages in supernatural entities opposed to his patron deity, per *Font of Ideas* (p. 5). The least contact activates any of Dread, Revulsion, Susceptible, Vulnerability, and Weakness that's applicable in the situation. If the target creature has a weird Divine Curse such as Fragile, Hemophilia, or Unhealing limited to holy attacks, the blessed person's unarmed blows set it off. The character's skin acts as Lifebane (p. B142) against minor unholy pests that no one would miss, like swarms of Satanic flies. Any one of these would be a mere perk – especially if it depended on bare flesh touching bare flesh. The whole collection is far more. 8 points.

Holy Weapon. Any weapon the holy person wields can harm intangible malevolent entities, per *Chasing Ghosts* (p. 5). A version that also works when unarmed – letting the user benefit from his gifts with or without weapons, and perhaps even grapple ghosts – would be Static (Cosmic, Evil supernatural powers, +100%; Divine, -10%; One Ability, Insubstantiality, -80%; Partial, Means of attack only, -40%) [21], and allow both hands or any weapon carried to reach into the spirit world to beat things up. 14 points if it calls for a weapon; 21 points if it doesn't.

These suggest possible generalizations. For instance, Holy Regard follows the lead of the Brotherhood, Cultural Familiarity, Good with the Faithful, and Honest Face perks by applying *Cosmic, Universal truth* to social matters. Other examples of this are:

Language of Faith. The blessed person and other followers of the deity can converse fluently, regardless of their native tongue(s). This is Native-level spoken comprehension of a language, enhanced with *Cosmic, Universal truth*. 6 points.

Sense of Faith. The holy one is aware of the status of his deity's flock. He can sense threats to the faith and to the faithful as a collective (not as individuals!) at any distance, without rolling dice. The religious are similarly aware of *him*, and intuitively know how to assist him in times of need. This is Special Rapport (p. B88) enhanced with *Cosmic, Universal truth*. 10 points.

Holy Weapon can likewise be generalized as follows.

Anti-Magic Weapon. The blessed one can penetrate magical defenses with mundane weapons. Spells cannot block his armed attacks, permitting him to shoot through Missile Shield, stab across the edges of Force Dome, ignore Shield and Armor spells, and so on. Using the approach of Holy Weapon gives: Static (Magic; Affects Others (Accessibility, Weapons, -30%), +35%; Divine, -10%; Not for Wielder, -100%) [8] – or Static (Magic; Divine, -10%; Partial, Means of attack only, -40%) [15], if it also covers unarmed strikes and grapples. 8 points if it calls for a weapon; 15 points if it doesn't.

Advantageous Heroic Feats

Advantages might be granted for 3d seconds once per game session, like the attribute bonuses for Heroic Feats. These should be things that could make a difference on such a brief timescale, typically in combat. In all cases, divide point cost by four and round up. Good examples are Combat Reflexes [4] and High Pain Threshold [3], but more specific possibilities exist; e.g., an arctic spirit conferring Terrain Adaptation (Ice) [2] for the duration of a battle in the frozen wastes.

Not all Heroic Feats are physical. Unfazeable [4] is amazingly useful when battling supernatural enemies who trigger Fright Checks. For that matter, extreme deities whose presence manifests through their servants' actions might *cause* Terror [8]!

Traits that come in levels might be rolled randomly, just like attribute bonuses. For instance:

Hard to Kill, Hard to Subdue, or Magic Resistance: 1 point for 1-3 levels, 2 points for 1d levels, 4 points for 2d levels, 6 points for 3d levels, or 7 points for 4d levels. More than 2d of these traits runs into diminishing returns.

Lifting ST: 2 points for 1-3 levels, 3 points for 1d levels, 6 points for 2d levels, 8 points for 3d levels, or 11 points for 4d levels. Huge levels (3d or more) are less of an issue here than for general attributes.

Striking ST: 3 points for 1-3 levels, 5 points for 1d levels, 9 points for 2d levels, 14 points for 3d levels, or 18 points for 4d levels. As with attributes, 2d is a reasonable cap.

Other leveled advantages may suit specific gods; e.g., Silence granted by the Patron of Thieves, or Slippery bestowed upon servants of the Demon Lord of Slime.

Full-Time Advantages

Permanent advantages could be part of Blessed, exactly as Divine Curse can take the form of a full-time disadvantage that happens to originate from a higher power. Though Divine, -10% was used in some of the complex builds above, it's best avoided here – if a gift *only* makes sense as a complex *Powers*-style build with a power modifier, it's better to make it the ability of a holy power. A similar caution applies to overtly supernatural deeds: flying around, healing people, shooting energy bolts, etc.

Some ideas for turning subtle advantages into blessings:

Claim to Hospitality. The faithful look after the saint's *temporal* needs in return for him tending to their *spiritual* needs. This two-way street is innate to Claim to Hospitality – it isn't the effect of a power modifier – and *Cosmic, Universal truth* isn't in force, as part of "tending to spiritual needs" is openly ministering to a deity's followers, even if that would be risky. 5 points for a regional faith; 10 points for a global one.

Destiny. In settings where the gods guide fate (rather than Fate being a force to which even the gods are answerable), any form of Blessed could incorporate a Destiny. *5 to 15 points.*

Divine Guidance Revisited. Enlightenment might arrive via *advantages* instead of Divination spells. Rather than apply Divine, -10%, handle these as holy variants whose upside (“I sometimes receive extraordinary revelations . . .”) is balanced by a downside (“ . . . but if I break faith, I’m cut off.”). Provided that the holy one keeps the faith, critical successes take the form of his god – voiced by the GM – giving clues, details, or bonuses far beyond what’s usual for such outcomes. The trait’s attribute roll is for interpretation, not activation. *10 points for Common Sense (Holy) or Visualization (Holy); 15 points for Danger Sense (Holy), Illuminated (Holy), Intuition (Holy), or Oracle (Holy).*

Higher Purpose. Use this to price a blanket +1 to a specific set of actions carried out in the name of a god; e.g., “Heal the sick” or “Spread the word.” Higher bonuses (+2, +3, or more) aren’t out of the question. Contrast this bonus – to all rolls for particular tasks, regardless of the skills used – with that for Talents, below. *5 points per +1.*

Mana Enhancer. Reimagined as **Sanctity Enhancer**, this trait raises sanctity levels instead of mana levels but otherwise works normally. *50 points/level.*

Serendipity. Some deities provide for their servants. The GM should account for the need to keep faith not by adding Divine, -10%, but by balancing it against a god having more leeway in defining “coincidences.” *15 points/level.*

Talents. Favored mortals might excel at feats within the deity’s sphere. The payoff for pious behavior is a bonus with skills that aren’t connected by *any* plausible aptitude. For instance, Blessed for the Patron of Thieves might amount to a 10 points/level bonus to Climbing, Escape, Fast-Talk, Filch, Forced Entry, Holdout, Lockpicking, Pickpocket, Shadowing, Sleight of Hand, Stealth, and Traps for no other reason than “divine will”! Contrast this bonus – all rolls for certain skills, regardless of the tasks – with that for Higher Purpose, above. *5, 10, or 15 points/level.*

True Faith. This needn’t be distinct from Blessed – both rely on pious behavior and flow from holy origins. It’s really a matter of which advantage name the GM prefers. *15 points.*

Spells

As *Divine Guidance* (p. 4) shows, one specific Hard spell costs 1 point at IQ-2 level, plus 1 point per +1 to the spell level – and then there’s *another* point for the Charm perk that waives the spell’s standard prerequisites. Put another way, point cost is (IQ bonus + 4); e.g., IQ+10 level costs 10 + 4 = 14 points. For a Very Hard spell, point cost equals (IQ bonus + 5).

BLESSED AND POWER MODIFIERS

As the *Basic Set* explains, Blessed assumes the possessor is “attuned to a god, demon lord, great spirit, cosmic power, etc.,” and will lose its benefits if he fails to act in accordance with his deity’s rules and values. Thus, it includes the drawbacks of a power modifier: Divine, -10%. This isn’t always explicit:

- Components built *Powers*-style – Heroic Feats, Holy Touch, Holy Weapon, etc. – explicitly include Divine.
- Advantages that derive extra oomph from divine fiat – e.g., Common Sense (Holy), Serendipity explained as divine intervention, or Talents indefensible as believable inborn aptitudes – impose the obligations of Divine, but in place of a discount they get to break the rules.
- Some advantages *always* include behavior codes and thus cannot claim a discount for required piety; e.g., Claim to Hospitality and Higher Purpose.
- Perks like Covenant of Rest and Licensed Exorcist include Divine *implicitly* – they’re simply defined that way.
- Traits with *Cosmic, Universal truth* implicitly assume holy support.
- Spells are divine magic, which only ever works for the very pious.

This causes some wrinkles, however.

Doubly Divine

Some *GURPS* supplements treat Blessed as a unitary trait – not a collection of parts – and modify it with the Divine limitation (or its equivalent, like “Holy” in *GURPS*

Dungeon Fantasy). This could be seen as double-counting Divine *and* as limiting limitations. If either bothers the GM, he can redo the math.

Alternatively, go with the flow instead of worrying about this, treating the price of Blessed as the fair cost of the included abilities *in their own right*. If Blessed is bought with Divine, this indicates that the individual buying it possesses a power that comes with a Talent, like Power Investiture, which *already* allows Exorcism (making Licensed Exorcist redundant), spellcasting (ditto Charms), and so on. *Divine Pentaphilia* (p. 9) may have inflated the cost, too. The 10% off for Divine often gives a fairer cost. If that seems overgenerous, then assume that Blessed is subject to stricter adherence to faith, and that transgressions cause it to stop working before the power’s other abilities shut down.

Other Powers

It’s valid to swap the implicit Divine limitation for another power modifier; e.g., so that Blessed relies on chi or minor spirits. For most components, this works best as a simple trade-off: replace whatever limitations and personal codes are associated with the divine power source with those of the new source. Elements that accept Divine’s restrictions in return for breaking rules lose that extra oomph if the new power is less limiting. The GM decides whether it’s worth redoing the math for aspects that explicitly include Divine, but a power modifier worth -10% is almost always a fair trade.

This is a questionable component for Blessed in worlds where clerics routinely cast spells thanks to Power Investiture . . . *unless* the spells it grants are otherwise off-limits to such people. The ability to work magic that's beyond Power Investiture (and possibly difficult for wizards, too!) is attractive. However, it requires the GM to develop separate spell lists for Blessed and Power Investiture, and to make sure they don't overlap.

The cheap point costs for the spells Blessed empowers is justified by the fact that the magic always requires full energy cost, casting time, and rituals – high effective skill provides no shortcut around prayer and personal sacrifice. Nevertheless, the GM must carefully weigh what spells are suitable, as potent magic at low point costs can get badly out of hand even when hedged with the need to keep the faith. It's best to leave flashy healing and combat effects to casters with Power Investiture, and to focus on spells that suggest divine guidance or support arrived at through lengthy rites (minutes to hours) – possibly further hedged with restrictions on allowed subjects or situations.

Some suggestions:

- Analyze Magic** (1 hour, 8 FP), for gods of wisdom.
- Bless** (10 minutes, 10 FP), if limited to the 1-point level on faithful subjects (blessing random thugs is the realm of flashy clerics with Power Investiture).
- Bless Plants** (5 minutes, 1 FP per yard radius), for agricultural spirits.
- Cure Disease** (10 minutes, 4 FP), for gods of medicine. Slow-to-cast Healing spells that don't simply restore HP are fine, especially if clerics can't otherwise use them.
- Dream Sending** (1 minute, 3 FP) to communicate with other faithful.
- Divination** (1 hour, 10 FP) suited to the god's sphere; e.g., Pyromancy for a fire god.
- Final Rest** (10 minutes, 20 FP) – a deluxe version of Blessed (Last Rites) that works whether or not the subject likes it, regardless of his abilities.
- Inspired Creation (VH)** (5 FP/day) fits patrons of crafts, and allows the blessed one to create an item ritually over the course of days.
- Oath** (1 minute, 4 FP) to bind the faithful to promises made willingly.
- Planar Summons** (5 minutes, 20+ FP) to call a powerful servitor that *isn't* the blessed one's personal Ally.
- Remove Curse** (1 hour, 20 FP), for almost any deity.
- Resurrection (VH)** (2 hours, 300 FP), for gods of the afterlife or underworld. Though powerful, it usually affects only the faithful – and it's hard to muster 300 FP unless the *deity* (that is, the GM) wants this outcome!
- Summon Spirit** (5 minutes, 20 FP) – again, for gods of the afterlife or underworld.
- Volcano** (1 hour, 15 FP), for volcano spirits. Making this *do* anything gets quite costly and time-consuming, so it's eminently fitting.
- Will Lock** (3 FP per yard radius) to confine the deity's enemies by having the mortal servant circle them while chanting ritual words.

Enchantments – such as Golem and Wish – might also be appropriate, if the campaign supports PCs taking weeks away from adventuring to fast, pray, and manufacture blessed artifacts.

PRICING BLESSED

The price of the Blessed advantage is the sum of the costs of its parts – all the perks, attribute bonuses, advantage-like abilities, spells, etc. Basic “holy status” is customary, in the form of the Licensed Exorcist perk, but the GM may omit this aspect if it doesn't suit the trait's origins.

Rather than treat each ability of Blessed as a distinct advantage – requiring those with multiple gifts to buy several forms of Blessed – it's fairest to lump all of an individual's capabilities into a single trait. This minimizes the odds that he'll accidentally pay for the same component more than once. If he gains new blessings in play, he simply invests more points in Blessed; in effect, he purchases a higher level.

Divine Pentaphilia

All published forms of Blessed cost whole-numbered multiples of 5 points. This isn't necessary, but many gamers prefer five-point chunks. As the first principle of Blessed is “The gods can break the rules,” the GM is welcome to round up all costs to a multiple of 5 points and justify the difference as a built-in Unusual Background. Even better, hit the mark by adding extra, minor capabilities.

*If any man obeys the gods,
they listen to him also.*

– Homer

EXAMPLES

Here are several examples of how Blessed might look. Building blocks (advantages, perks, spells, etc.) are in **bold-face**. In a particular campaign, *effects* might be called out without reference to these *components*, much as on pp. B40-41.

Angel-Blooded

15 points

Mortals with angelic forebears benefit from a loophole in heavenly law compelling the gods to empower sacred blood. This suggests a fetching ancestor, if not a faithful one!

Angel-Blooded count as *exceedingly* holy, guaranteeing that the heavens will keep them when they die (**Covenant of Rest**), and granting not merely the basic **Licensed Exorcist** ability but also full-fledged **Holy Touch** – their touch terrifies and scorches unholy entities! By mixing bodily fluids with up to a pint of ordinary water, they can convert it to holy water; the power resides in the liquid, so this *can* be given to others: **Accessory, with Lingering effect**. Their flesh is equally extraordinary, and each Angel-Blooded has the option to buy a single angelic “racial” advantage (**Special Exercises**), chosen when Blessed is bought and paid for separately when it manifests; this is usually Flight (Winged). Full angels know Angel-Blooded from humans, and are bound not to harm those who stay out of their way (**Brotherhood, with Universal truth**).

TAKING THE BLESSING OUT OF BLESSED

As *Doubly Divine* (p. 8) notes, many *GURPS* supplements treat Blessed as unitary, not as an advantage that can be decomposed into parts. This sometimes obscures its nature, but that's unimportant when the goal is simply to swap the implicit holy power for something else, as in *Other Powers* (p. 8). But what if the objective is to turn Blessed into something that isn't associated with *any* power? Apply these steps in order:

- If *any* component makes no sense except for holy folk, simply remove it, reducing cost.
- If an *unremarkable* component (ones that's mundane and available to all, like Claim to Hospitality) makes sense, leave it alone.
- If a *remarkable* component makes sense *and* has had its cost increased for *Cosmic, Universal truth* (implicitly or explicitly), leave it be – it has already paid the surcharge to “just work.”
- If a *remarkable* component makes sense *and* has the Divine power modifier, rip out the modifier and redo the math. This will increase cost.
- If a *remarkable* component makes sense but *lacks* Cosmic or Divine, and is being turned into an exotic ability that works without the drawbacks of a power or a code of conduct, add whatever Unusual Background cost suits the campaign, increasing cost. A fair cost is usually close to the value of the element itself.

Example 1: For non-holy folk, both the “holy” status and reaction bonus from the faithful inherent in Blessed (Divine Guidance) make little sense. That leaves only the divination ability. The GM decides that if it works regardless of mana, sanctity, etc., then limited Magery or Power Investiture make no sense, either. He treats it as Charm (Divination) [1] and Divination (H) IQ [4], for 5 points, and adds a 5-point Unusual Background, for a total of 10 points.

Example 2: *GURPS Fantasy* presents Blessed (The King's Two Bodies). This is fundamentally Sense of Faith (p. 7) corresponding to a kingdom rather than a religion. As that's Special Rapport with its cost doubled to 10 points for *Cosmic, Universal truth*, it remains at 10 points – “holy status” and “political status” are considered equivalent.

At first level, Blessed (Dark Disciple) mainly serves the interests of Hell. Once the Disciple dies, his diabolical patron gets to keep him forever (**Covenant of Rest**). He also desecrates the very ground he walks on: **One-Task Wonder (Religious Ritual), with Lingering and No die roll required**. He can conjure up (more like “set free”) demons, too – treat this as **Summon Demon at IQ level**. Still, demons *are* required to leave the Disciple alone, provided that he doesn't meddle (**Brotherhood, with Universal Truth**).

The second level imbues the Disciple with demonic character. He has the right to add one demonic trait (**Special Exercises**) – e.g., horns as a Striker – chosen when Blessed is bought and paid for separately. He can also use **Heroic Feats** to emanate Terror for 3d seconds, once per session. And whenever he wants, he can garner +1 to Intimidation by surrounding himself in creepy-crawlers (**Pet**).

Disciples *never* gain “holy” status – casting out demons doesn't serve their masters' goals! And while those with Blessed normally reflect their deity's rules and values via disadvantages, a Disciple's are *particularly* nasty.

Divine Monarch

30 points

In some kingdoms, Divine Right is fact: the gods crown the king, who rules his fellow man with their blessing. A ruler with Blessed (Divine Monarch) counts as “holy” (**Licensed Exorcist**) and may wield any state regalia – from the simplest wax seal to the crown jewels – as a sanctified holy symbol (**Accessory**). However, his real power is his pull with his people: he enjoys their unfailing recognition, giving +2 on reactions (**Holy Regard**); he can bind them to freely given vows by casting **Oath at IQ level**; and he may learn Enthrallment skills for influencing them (**Unusual Training**).

Moreover, he's always aware of the status of his lands and subjects, and those he leads can likewise sense when he's in need (**Sense of Faith**). Finally, *blood will tell* – he can invoke **Heroic Feats** for +1d levels of Hard to Kill (3d seconds per session) to foil assassins, and if they *do* get him, he's guaranteed a **Dramatic Death** to issue final orders or skewer them.

Inquisitor

10 or 20 points

Not all deities are comfortable with magic-using mortals. Some charge worldly agents to seek out unethical wizards, try them for “playing god,” and mete out punishment. This is Blessed (Inquisitor), which comes in two levels.

At first level, the Inquisitor enjoys +1 on all rolls pertaining to defeating evil wizards, as long as he keeps the faith (**Higher Purpose**). He can thwart magic through **Heroic Feats** that grant 2d levels of Magic Resistance (3d seconds per session). And enemies he slays stay that way (**Rest in Pieces**), which is vital against powerful magic-using foes.

Crusader of Light

10 points/level

Fantasy holy warriors often exchange unwavering faith for divine assistance with putting evil monsters to the sword. Blessed (Crusader of Light) comes in six levels that allow **Heroic Feats**, each giving one of +1d to ST, DX (Combat Rolls Only), or HT – to a maximum of +2d per score – when activated. The first level also grants basic “holy status” (**Licensed Exorcist**). At higher levels, the Crusader may choose *one* benefit per level from among **Accessory (Holy Symbol), Accessory (Holy Water), Covenant of Rest, Dramatic Death, and Rest in Pieces**, until he has six perks to accompany his six dice of bonuses. The order in which perks and bonuses are acquired is his decision.

Dark Disciple

10 or 20 points

Selling one's soul to demonic forces is a tried-and-true road to power. This particular path comes in two levels.

The second level lets him turn any weapon he wields into one that can ignore magic: **Anti-Magic Weapon**. Moreover, his **Heroic Feats** add *another* 1d levels of Magic Resistance (total 3d).

Neither level lets him count as “holy.” This blessing is about defeating sorcerers, not evil spirits.

Living Temple

20 points

When the Evil Empire razed the ancient temples, the Old Gods empowered devout mortals to serve as living, breathing places of worship. Anticipating trouble, they made sure these folk could operate *subtly*.

Individuals with Blessed (Living Temple) count as “holy” (**Licensed Exorcist**), and their mere presence consecrates a building as suitable for worship: **One-Task Wonder (Religious Ritual), with Lingering effect and No die roll required**. They can provide the necessities of worship, turning a pint of ordinary water into holy water, or any crude holy symbol into a sanctified one, and then giving either to a fellow worshiper (*two* instances of **Accessory, with Lingering Effect**). To remain hidden from enemies of the faith, they’re able to learn and use Invisibility Art and Light Walk (a couple of **Unusual Training** perks). To further reduce their odds of standing out, they can interact with the faithful as if they were “just locals” (**Cultural Familiarity, with Universal truth and Language of Faith**), and are able to spot impostors such as agents of the Evil Empire (**Good with the Faithful, with No die roll required**).

In backgrounds with clerical magic, it would be reasonable for a higher level to add some version of Sanctity Enhancer.

Purified One

10 points

Not all deities are powerful residents of far-off planes! There are inner gods – voices urging us away from excess and toward balance – and people who heed these sometimes become paragons of tangible virtue. The Purified One always knows the enlightened path: **One-Task Wonder (Meditation), with No die roll required**. He’s the epitome of self-control, capable of learning and using the Body Control and Mental Strength skills regardless of other skills or advantages (*two* **Unusual Training** perks), and able to use **Heroic Feats** to face the worst terrors with rock-solid calm (Unfazeable for 3d seconds, once per session). His inner glow dispels suspicions wherever he may go (**Honest Face, with Universal truth**).

Blessed (Purified One) isn’t about “holiness” in the usual sense. Its gifts swap the implicit Divine power modifier for Chi, -10%.

Speaker for the Gods

25 points/level

Some deities prefer to address mortals through wise folk. At the lowest level, this is haphazard. The Speaker for the Gods counts as “holy” (**Licensed Exorcist**) and can be understood by anyone who shares the faith (**Language of Faith**), but the enlightenment he provides is uneven. He can perform **Heroic Feats** to augment his own wisdom with that of the gods, gaining a burst of +2d to IQ (not including Will or Per, for 3d seconds per session), which he hopefully uses in service to the faith.

Higher levels are more predictable and hence more respected. At the second level, the Speaker receives messages from the heavens on a regular basis, thanks to **Oracle (Holy)**, and the faithful react to him at +2 (**Holy Regard**). At the third level (the maximum), even his casual decisions are wise – **Intuition (Holy)** – and the faithful react at +4 (more **Holy Regard**).

Village Mother

10 or 20 points

There are remote villages where the eldest mother is a focal point for local spirits, who empower her to act wisely on behalf of her people. At its most basic level, she gets +1 with all deeds performed for her village’s greater good (**Higher Purpose**). While the locals may or may not *like* her, they look after her needs in return for her services (**Claim to Hospitality**).

Most Village Mothers gain genuine mystical powers as they age. This takes the form of a higher level of Blessed that lets her sense the spirits directly, enabling her to conduct exorcisms as capably as any formally “holy” person (**Licensed Exorcist**), cast **Summon Spirit at IQ level**, concoct potions with healing powers (Herb Lore enabled by **Unusual Training**), and aid her village’s harvest (**Bless Plants at IQ level**).

Wilderness Guardian

15 or 30 points

Certain wild places beckon brave outdoorsmen to enter and test their grit. Surviving the ordeal earns a blessing – from Nature Herself – as a protector of the wilderness.

At first level, the Guardian is aware of the state of the wild place where he dwells, and the creatures and even the trees there are conscious of him and occasionally aid him. This takes the form of **Sense of Faith**. He also enjoys +1 in combat when defending his home ground (**Higher Purpose**).

The second level puts the Guardian in touch with the *spirits* of his chosen home. They cannot harm him as long as he respects them (**Brotherhood, with Universal truth**). He also acquires a totem animal, which won’t fight as his Ally but will stay close and warn him of intruders (**Pet**). He can briefly (3d seconds per session) move much like a spirit himself, using **Heroic Feats** to gain +2d to Basic Move *and* Terrain Adaptation that allows him to completely ignore the effects of his native terrain. He may further learn and use the Light Walk skill to pass without trace, cross thin ice, and so at will (**Unusual Training**).

Blessed (Wilderness Guardian) is a *primal* gift – it has nothing to do with exorcisms, temples, or sanctity.

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.

CLERICS OF ORDER AND CHAOS

BY COLE M.B. JENKINS

The primal forces of order and chaos may have existed since before the world began, but their gods still need followers to work within the world. Using the same format found

in *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 7: Clerics*, holy warriors and clerics of order or chaos can now join the party!

GODS OF ORDER

Gods of order may be primal deities concerned with order in a cosmic sense. They care mostly about ensuring that the stars move on their tracks. When such deities intervene in the affairs of mortals, it may be only so that civilizations rise and fall in an orderly fashion. Other gods of order may be stern law-givers that seek to regulate and organize the day-to-day affairs of mortals. Either way, they are concerned with preventing world-shaking threats that wreak havoc on a global scale.

Civilization likes order, so elaborately constructed temples of order are typically welcome in most towns and cities. Order cults are more likely than most to rise to power, since the way everybody else does it is so *disorderly*. They may actually *be* the government.

Gods of Order and Morality

While some fantasy games treat order and chaos as its own moral axis, this isn't necessarily the case. Primal gods of order are aligned with Nature and typically see themselves as above conventional morality. Less cosmic gods of the law-giver archetype may be Good if they promote wise systems of justice and reward honorable behavior. Evil gods of order may promote brutal authoritarian regimes with byzantine and draconian legal systems, which seek to enslave the world. All gods of order are opposed to Insane forces in general and to Elder Things in particular.

Elements

The obvious (and mandatory) element is Order. Servitors of purely primal Nature-aligned gods should take the Elemental lens (p. 13) and the Primal element (p. 13). Otherwise take

either Evil or Good as required. Peace is appropriate for Good gods of order, while Fear suits Nature and Evil.

Good order is the foundation of all things.

– Edmund Burke

SPECIAL POWERS

Order grants a special set of Holy Might abilities (*GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 1: Adventurers*, p. 22): Delete Spirit Empathy. Change Detect for good and evil to order and chaos. Add Dictum of Fate (see p. 14) [35; +5 per additional level]; Luck (Active, -40%; PM, -10%; Normalizing*, -30%; Wishing†, +100%) [18] or with Extraordinary Luck [36] or with Ridiculous Luck [72]; Resistant to Chaos Powers (+3) or (+8) (PM, -10%) [5 or 7]; and Resistant to Transformation‡ (+3) or (+8) (PM, -10%) [5 or 7]. Replace True Faith (PM, -10%; Turning, +65%) [24] with True Faith (Cosmic, Affects Elder Things, +50%; Turning, +65%; PM, -10%) [31].

* Take the roll that is *closest* to average, that is, number of dice × 3.5, rounded up.

† See *GURPS Powers*, p. 59.

‡ Protects against Shapeshift Other, Flesh to Stone, a medusa's petrification attack, and similar hostile transformations.

The powers granted by Evil gods of order are still *orderly*, and are the same as the Holy Might abilities above, except that Resistant to Evil Supernatural Powers is replaced by Resistant to Good Supernatural Powers. The power modifier requires Excommunicated as usual.

SERVITORS OF ORDER AND CHAOS

GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 5: Allies recommends that all divine servitors take one of the Good, Evil, or Nature elements. However, for primal Nature-aligned servitors, none of these seem especially appropriate. Good and Evil are moral positions unsuited to the neutrality of Nature, and the Nature element is primarily concerned with living things as opposed to elemental natural forces.

New Lenses for Divine Servitor

The following lenses are more suitable for divine servitors of Nature-aligned gods of order and chaos and for servitors of primal natural forces in general.

New Lens: Elemental (+0 points)

This servitor is an intelligent emanation of some cosmic force or classical element. Unlike other elementals, these are physical manifestations of a cosmic power rather than free-willed spirits. Reduce IQ to 8 [-80] and Will and Per to 8 [0]. Remove Blessed [-10], the Holy Might moral code [10], Dependency [25] and the five quirks [5]. Add Doesn't Breathe [20], Doesn't Eat or Drink [10], Doesn't Sleep [20], Injury Tolerance (Homogenous) [40], Single-Minded [5], and Unfazeable [15]. Add Fragile (Unnatural) [-50] and Obsession (Promote my element above all else) (12) [-10]. Change the Hidden Lore to (Elementals) and the *Class* to Elemental.

New Lens: Fae (+0 points)

This servitor is a powerful faerie summoned from some idyllic realm. It is most appropriate for servitors of faerie deities. Regardless of deity served, these beings may always take Beauty as an element. Reduce ST to 11 [-10]. Increase DX to 13 [20]. Remove Immunity to Metabolic Hazards [-30], the Holy Might moral code [10], and Wealth (Dead Broke) [25]. Change the Dependency to (Mana; Very Common, Constantly). Add Magery 0 [5], Callous [-5], and Sense of Duty (Nature) [-15]. Change the Hidden Lore to (Faeries) and *Class* to Faerie.

New Elements

Two new descriptive elements expand the potential spheres of influence for deities.

Primal

This element, which has the Elemental lens (above) as a prerequisite, is for the servitors of cosmic gods of natural forces. Like Evil, Good, or Nature, this element fleshes out the servitor. It can be used independently or combined with any of those elements.

Attributes: ST+4 [40].

Secondary Characteristics: HP+1 [2]; Will+4 [20].

Perks: Primal Rage*. [1]

Disadvantages: Berserk (12) [-10]; Cannot Speak [-15].

Skills: Brawling (E) DX+2 [4]-15; Intimidation (A) Will+1 [4]-13; Mental Strength (E) Will+2 [4]-15.

* The servitor gets +3 to the Will Roll to deliberately go berserk.

Primal (Doubled)

As above, plus:

Secondary Characteristics: HP+5 [10].

Advantages: DR 2 [10]; Patron (Primal deity; 6 or less; Highly Accessible, +50%; Minimum Intervention, -50%; Special Abilities, +100%) [30].

Faerie

Servitors with the Fae lens (above) may take this element. It fleshes out the template for servitors of Nature aligned faerie lords and ladies who are more associated with natural elements than other things. It can also be used alongside Good, Evil, or Nature. As creatures of magic, Faerie servitors are empowered both with magic and the power of their god. They may learn and cast wizard spells as though they had Magery equal to their Power Investiture as well as learn the spells of their religion. They cannot use clerical or druidic spells as prerequisites for wizardry spells. *All* of their spells are subject to *both* Mana and Sanctity (or the druidic modifiers).

Attributes: IQ+2 [20].

Secondary Characteristics: Per -3 [-15].

Advantages: Power Investiture 3 (Faerie Servitor) [45].

Disadvantages: Duty (To the faerie courts; 12 or less)* [-10] and *either* Lecherousness (12) [-15] *or* Trickster (12) [-15].

Skills: Connoisseur (any) (A) IQ-1 [1]-13; Innate Attack (any) (E) DX [1]-13; Naturalist (H) IQ-2 [1]-12; Savoir-Faire (Faerie Courts) (E) IQ [1]-14; Thaumatology (VH) IQ-3 [1]-11.

Spells: 20 wizard spells or the spells of the servitor's patron, which will be either (H) IQ+1 [1]-15 or (VH) IQ [1]-14 with the +3 for Power Investiture.

* Roll whenever the servitor is summoned. If the duty comes up, it means the servitor has been given some other task in addition to aiding the summoner while it's in the mortal realm.

Faerie (Doubled)

As above, and:

Advantages: Patron (Deity; 6 or less; Highly Accessible, +50%; Minimum Intervention, -50%; Special Abilities, +100%) [30]; Wild Talent 1 (Focused; Magical, -20%) [18].

Skills: Increase two skills by 1 point or take two additional spells.

PRIESTS OF ORDER

Order's priests use the standard cleric template from *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 1: Adventurers*, p. 6, with the following modifications.

Disadvantages: Change the required disadvantages to one of Honesty (12) [-10], Sense of Duty (Coreligionists) or Vow (Maintain order and prevent change) [-10]. • Delete Weirdness Magnet [-15] and add Callous [-5], Intolerance (Servants of Chaos*) [-5], No Sense of Humor [-10], and Odious Personal Habit (Relentlessly Logical) [-5] to the list of further disadvantages.

Secondary Skills: Add "Elder Things" to the allowed specialties for Hidden Lore. • Add Law (Civilized Lands) (H) IQ-2 [1]-12.

Background Skills: Choose only four (instead of five) background skills.

* Anarchists, criminals, cultists, divine servitors with the Chaos element, Elder Things, most Faeries and so on.

Evil priests of order use the evil cleric template from *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 3: The Next Level* (p. 23) with the following lens.

Disadvantages: Add Bully [-10*] to the first list of disadvantages. • Delete Weirdness Magnet [-15] and add Intolerance (Servants of Chaos) [-5], No Sense of Humor [-10], Odious Personal Habit (Relentlessly Logical) [-5], Sadism [-15*], and Vow (Maintain order and prevent change) [-10] to the list of further disadvantages. Honesty [-10*] is also appropriate for Evil priests from oppressive kingdoms with draconian laws.

Primary Skills: Replace Poisons (H) IQ [4] with Interrogation (A) IQ [2] and Intimidation (A) Will [2]. • Add Whip (A) DX+2 [8] and Shield (E) DX+2 [4] as a fourth melee skills package.

Secondary Skills: Add "Elder Things" to the allowed specialties for Hidden Lore. • Delete Interrogation (A) IQ [2] and Intimidation (A) Will [2]. • Add Law (Civilized Lands) (H) IQ [4].

Background Skills: Add Poisons (H) IQ-2 [1] to the list of available skills.

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

ORDER SPELLS

Clerics of order have the following spells available.

PI 1: Oath (*Required*), Armor, Cleansing, Detect Magic, Final Rest, Lend Energy, Lend Vitality, Magic Resistance, Recover Energy, Relieve Paralysis, Rooted Feet, Sense Chaos*, Sense Evil†, Shield, Silence, Soilproof, Vigor, and Watchdog.

PI 2: Relieve Madness (*Required*), Aura, Awaken, Bravery, Clean, Command, Compel Truth, Detect Poison, Dispel Magic, Minor Healing, Peaceful Sleep, Protection from Chaos, Protection from Evil†, Purify Air, Purify Food, Purify Water, Remove Contagion, Resist Acid, Resist Cold, Resist Disease, Resist Fire, Resist Lightning, Resist Pain, Resist Poison, Resist Pressure, Restore Hearing, Restore Memory, Restore Sight, Restore Speech, Stone to Flesh, Stop Paralysis, Stop Spasm, Test Food, Truthsayer, Turn Spirit, and Turn Zombie.

PI 3: Affect Spirits, Astral Vision, Bless, Body Reading, Coolness, Create Food, Cure Disease, Curse, Dispel Creation, Dispel Illusion, Dispel Possession, Glow, Great Voice, Major Healing, Neutralize Poison, Relieve Sickness, Repel Spirits, See Secrets, Sense Life, Sense Spirit, Stop Bleeding, Strengthen Will, Warmth, and Wisdom.

PI 4: Astral Block, Banish, Breathe Water, Continual Light, Create Water, Divination, Gift of Letters, Gift of Tongues, Healing Slumber, Instant Neutralize Poison, Instant Restoration, Monk's Banquet, Pentagram, Repair, Remove Curse, Restoration, Suspend Curse, Suspended Animation, Umbrella, and Vigil.

PI 5: Command Spirit, Continual Sunlight, Essential Food, Regeneration, Seeker, and Suspend Mana.

PI 6: Bind Spirit, Great Healing, Instant Regeneration, Planar Summons (Divine Servitor), and Suspend Time.

* As the Sense Good/Evil and Protection from Good/Evil spells in *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 11: Power-Ups* (p. 15), but for chaos instead of good or evil.

† Unholy Clerics get the versions of these spells for good instead.

HOLY WARRIORS OF ORDER

Holy warriors of order may simply use the standard template (*Dungeon Fantasy 1*, p. 7) with the following alterations.

DICTION OF FATE

35 points for level 1; plus 5 points for each additional level

Servants of order can use this aura to normalize the effects of random chance in their immediate vicinity. Take a Concentrate maneuver and roll Will to activate Dictum of Fate. If you fail, you may Concentrate and try again, but subsequent attempts cost 1 FP. Once activated, for the next minute, roll a Contest of Will with every foe who comes within two yards. If you succeed, they may not use Luck (or similar abilities to force rerolls, like the curse ability of Chaos Monks from *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 14: Psis*, p. 42) for a number of seconds equal to the margin of victory. If they try to use their probability-altering ability during this period, it still counts as a use and resets their "clock." Each minute, the servitor may roll Will to keep the aura up. On a failure, he may take a Concentrate and roll again for 1 FP. Each additional level doubles the affected radius.

Statistics: Affliction (Aura of Power, +175%; Based on Will, +20%; Negated Advantage, Ridiculous Luck, +60%; PM, -10%) [35]. Additional levels add Area Effect, +50% [+5/level]. Aura of Power is from *GURPS Power-Ups 4: Enhancements*, p. 4.

Advantages: Replace the mandatory Higher Purpose with Higher Purpose (Slay Elder Things) and replace Shtick (Foes slain personally do not rise as undead) [1] with Binding Oaths [1] (see below). ● Use order's Holy abilities (p. 12).

Disadvantages: Choose the mandatory disadvantage from the same list as order's clerics (see p. 14).

Primary Skills: Add (Elder Things) to the options for Hidden Lore.

Some holy warriors of order are religious police that hunt down lawbreakers and oppose disruptive forces in service to a divine mandate, rather than mortal law. They are especially dedicated to destroying Elder Things, as these chaotic beings from beyond reality pose an eternal threat to order. For these types of warriors, use the template for the justicar (*Pyramid* #3/10: *Crime and Grime*, p. 4) with the following lens.

Advantages: Replace the mandatory Higher Purpose with Higher Purpose (Slay Elder Things) and delete Intuition [-15]. ● Add Holiness 2 [10] and Binding Oaths* [1]. ● 25 points in order's Holy abilities (see p. 12); put leftovers into advantages. ● Take 15 points (instead of 35) in the advantages available to justicars, Holiness 3 or 4 [5 or 10], or Intuition [15].

Disadvantages: Replace the mandatory Intolerance [-5] with Intolerance (Servants of Chaos) [-5]. ● Add Code of Honor (Chivalry) [-15] and Odious Personal Habit (Relentlessly Logical) [-5] to the list of further disadvantages. ● Change Sense of Duty (Nation) to (Coreligionists) [-10]. ● Delete the option to worsen Honesty.

Primary Skills: Reduce Observation, Search, and Tracking, all from (A) Per [2]-15 to (A) Per-1 [1]-14.

Secondary Skills: Add Exorcism (H) Will-1 [2]-13, Hidden Lore (Elder Things) (A) IQ-1 [1]-13, and Physiology (monster type) and Psychology (same monster type), both (H) IQ-2 [1]-12. ● Delete the section of secondary skills options (you may take them as background skills instead).

Background Skills: Add Religious Ritual and Theology, both (H) IQ-2 [1]-12; Meditation (H) Will-2 [1]-12; and Esoteric Medicine (Holy) (H) Per-2 [1]-13.

* *Binding Oaths:* The holy warrior can swear oaths that are supernaturally binding by performing a short ritual of oath-taking. All parties must consent to the ritual of their own free will (any form of coercion, whether magical or mundane, will cause the ritual to fail). At least one oath-taker must have this perk (and can't have lost his powers due to transgression). See *GURPS Fantasy*, p. 147, for effects.

Wield the Sword of Order

To take up the cause of order with another template, use the appropriate lens and make the changes for the holy and unholy warrior templates.

UNHOLY WARRIORS OF ORDER

Frequently employed as the secret police and spiky-armored enforcers of evil theocracies, unholy warriors of order use the same templates and lenses as recommended above with Excommunicated [-10] in place of Honesty (12) [-10]. They may take Honesty (12) [-10] – or take it at (9) for [-15] or 6 for [-20] – as one of their disadvantage options if they serve an oppressive state with draconian justice.

Confusion is a word we have invented for an order which is not understood.

– Henry Miller

GODS OF CHAOS

As with their orderly counterparts, primal gods of chaos may exist to ensure that change and progress will always counteract stasis and stagnation on a cosmic scale. Chaos may be promoted by gods of discord who seek to destabilize civilization and punish the self-important. Whimsical gods, such as those of the faerie folk, may act only according to their capricious fancies in order to make the world more “fun.” Gods of madness may be allied with (or are) Elder Things whose alien motives are entirely incomprehensible to mortals.

Clerics of primal chaos are largely indistinguishable from particularly weird druids, and they are generally treated as such, even by other druids. Clerics of chaotic faerie lords and ladies are found in cosmopolitan communities where they are warily accepted as whimsical but dangerous elements of fae culture. Cults of discord tend to be secretive and typically

illegal, but they are much more carefree than cults of elder gods. They are as likely to be hidden in palaces as in the slums. Gods of madness tend to attract only the insane or the desperate and can generally be found only in bedlams or underground (usually literally).

Gods of Chaos and Morality

Gods of primal chaos are Chaotic or aligned to Nature. If they are aware of morality at all, they see it as an irrelevant restriction. Most other gods of chaos are either aligned with Nature (if they seek ordinary disorder) or Insane (if they oppose consistent reality). Whimsical gods of freedom may be Good, while sowers of discord may be Evil, but most gods of chaos are too random to define themselves in moral terms.

Deities of chaos generally are not organized enough to have a moral position, so there really are no “holy” or “unholy” chaos priests. Good religions tend to have a negative reaction to drunken cults of discord or elder madness. Members of such proscribed faiths should take Excommunicated [-10] as one of their disadvantages.

Elements

Chaos is, of course, mandatory. Deception and Fear are always appropriate for spirits of confusion. Primal servants of chaos should take the Elemental lens (p. 13) and the Primal element (p. 13). Faerie lords and ladies of chaos prefer servants with the Fae lens (p. 13) and the Faerie element (p. 13).

As discussed above, Chaos does not necessarily intersect with morality (*GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 7: Clerics*, p. 5), but if it does, servants of Good or Evil gods should take those respective elements. Neutral morality needs no special element, though it *suggests* one of Faerie, Nature, or Primal. Chaotic or Insane gods may be covered adequately by Chaos or could add Deception, Elder (*Pyramid* #3/43: *Thaumatology III*, p. 10), Fear, or another appropriate element.

For Servitors of Elder Things, see *Elder Gods of Chaos* (below).

SPECIAL POWERS

Service to chaos may be uninhibited, but it is not undemanding. The powers granted by chaos may use a holy power modifier that requires Sense of Duty (Wild Nature) [-15] or Trickster (12) [-15].

Alternatively, they may use the following variant druidic power modifier.

Power Modifier: Chaos Druid

-15%

Chaos druids cast spells and use abilities that are influenced by entropy rather than nature. They are at full skill in a howling wilderness or at sea; -1 in somewhat orderly wild places like old-growth forests and messy civilized areas like bustling cities; -2 in rural areas demarked by farms and hedgerows; -3 in orderly civilized areas like quiet villages; -5 in regimented environments like monasteries, barracks, and giant-ant hills; and -10 anywhere entropy has ceased, such as in a cursed castle that’s frozen in time. Use these same modifiers for spells cast with this form of Power Investiture. Abilities that don’t require a success roll instead lose 10% of their potency, as the druidic power modifier.

Chaos druids also attract chaotic beings with their powers. Whenever a chaos druid uses a power or casts a spell, and for one minute afterward, chaos spirits, faeries, and Elder Things get +3 to Per rolls to detect the druid. This increases both the chance of attracting psionic threats when psi powers are used within 10 yards, and random encounters in dungeons and other areas strongly associated with chaos (such as faerie mounds or Elder Thing ruins).

Holy Abilities: Allies (Divine servant of equal points; 12 or less; PM, -15%; Summonable, +100%) [19] or (15 or less) [28]; Aura of Power: Chaos (*GURPS Power-Ups 4: Enhancements*, p. 5) (PM, -15%) [32; +5/additional level];

Channeling (PM, -15%; Specialized, Chaos Spirits, -50%) [4]; Detect (PM, -15%) for order [17], chaos [17], or supernatural beings [17]; Injury Tolerance (Diffuse; Swarm, Cannot affect the material world*, +80%; Costs 1 FP, -5%; PM, -15%) [160]; Intuition (PM, -15%) [13]; Luck (Active, -40%; Destabilizing†, -30%; PM, -15%; Wishing‡, +100%) [17] or with Extraordinary Luck [35] or with Ridiculous Luck [69]; Medium (PM, -15%; Specialized, Chaos Spirits, -50% [4]; Patron (Deity; 6 or less; Highly Accessible, +50%; Minimal Intervention, -50%; PM, -15%; Special Abilities, +100%) [28] or (9 or less) [56]; Resistant to Order Powers (+3) or (+8) (PM, -15%) [5 or 6]; Spirit Empathy (PM, -15%) [9], and Wild Talent (Emergencies Only, -30%; PM, -15%) [11/level].

* *Swarm variation:* See *GURPS Powers*, p. 53. The cleric turns into a flock of brightly colored butterflies, motes of pulsing light or similar swarm of harmless chaotic elements. If the effect ends for any reason (including being unable to pay the FP cost) while you are *scattered* you will be unable to act (you must take Do Nothing maneuvers) until the entire swarm has contracted. As a separate 80-point power-up, you can gain the ability to affect the material world with your ST and spells while in swarm form.

† Take the roll that is *farthest* from average, that is, number of dice × 3.5; rounded up.

‡ See *GURPS Powers*, p. 59.

Elder Gods of Chaos

Some chaos gods are actually Elder Things. When this is the case, their granted abilities always have the Chaos Druid PM (above) rather than the holy or unholy one. The mad eye of the universe cares as much about mindwarper as ants or humans; it just spews chaos at anybody crazy enough to use it! To build divine servitors of such gods, use the lenses and elements from p. 10 of *Pyramid* #3/43: *Thaumatology III*. (And read the rest of that article for a different take on Elder Things, in which psi replaces cleric abilities.)

PRIESTS OF CHAOS

Worshippers of chaos don’t sit around stuffy temples reading old books; they dance around eldritch glades screaming eerie chants. Use the druid template (*GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 1: Adventurers*, p. 7) with the following lens.

Advantages: Replace Green Thumb [5] with Chaotic Mind* 1 [5] and change the Power Investiture to Holy or Chaos Druid as appropriate. ● Instead of Druidic abilities take the Chaos Druid Holy abilities (see above). ● Delete Animal Friend 1-4 [5/level] and Green Thumb 2-4 [5/level] and add Chaotic Mind 2-4 [5/level] and Serendipity 1 [15] to the list of available advantages.

Disadvantages: One of Sense of Duty (Wild Nature) [-15] or Trickster (12) [-15]. ● -30 points chosen from any of the disadvantages available to druids, Excommunicated [-10], Frightens Animals [-10], or Intolerance (Servants of Order†) [-5].

Primary Skills: Replace Herb Lore (VH) IQ [4]-14 with Exorcism (H) Will [4]-14. ● Reduce Naturalist (H) IQ [2]-14 to IQ-1 [2]-13.

Secondary Skills: Add “Elder Things” as an optional specialization of Hidden Lore. ● Change “Druidic” to “Chaos Cult” for Religious Ritual and Theology.

Background Skills: Add Mind Block (A) Will [1]-14‡ and Gambling (A) IQ-1 [1]-13 to the list of available background skills.

Spells: Choose from the clerical spells of chaos (see below) instead of druidic spells.

* *Chaotic Mind:* Adds to Hidden Lore (Faeries and Elder Things), Mind Block, Psychology (Faeries and Elder Things), and Weather Sense. *Reaction Bonus:* faeries, Elder Things and the insane.

† Guardsmen and other authority figures, followers of gods of order, divine servitors with the Order element and so on.

‡ Includes +1 from Chaotic Mind.

Thus you can see Chaos is inevitable. We lurk not only beyond their grasp and at their gates; we lurk within the darkness of their souls, on the tip of their tongues, in their tortured dreams. We are them, but freed from the shackles of ignorance.

*– Diuman Cilious,
in Dawn of War:
Soulstorm*

CHAOS SPELLS

Worshippers of chaos can learn the following spells.

PI 1: Beast-Rouser, Berserker, Bravery, Clumsiness, Daze, Detect Magic, Fear, Foolishness, Ignite Fire, Itch, No-Smell, Quick March, Recover Energy, Seek Air, Seek Earth, Seek Fire, Seek Food, Seek Magic, Seek Water, Sense Emotion, Sense Foes, Sense Life, Sense Order*, Umbrella, and Vexation.

PI 2: Drunkenness, Dullness, Emotion Control, Fog, Forgetfulness, Frost, Garble, Hair Growth, Hide Path, Light Tread, Mass Daze, Mental Stun, Mindlessness, Minor Healing, Mystic Mist, Nauseate, Panic, Pestilence, Predict Earth Movement, Predict Weather, Protection from Order*, Repel Animal, Shape Air, Shape Earth, Shape Fire, Shape Plant, Shape Water, Spasm, Spider Silk, Stun, Terror, Tickle, Wall of Wind, Weather Dome, and Windstorm.

PI 3: Agonize, Alter Body, Animate Plant, Clouds, Compel Lie, Compel Truth, Conceal, Control Limb, Disorient, Ecstasy, Encrypt, False Tracks, Fascinate, Freeze, Glib Tongue, Melt Ice, Noise, Rain, Rain of Nuts, Resist Cold, Resist Lightning, Resist Pressure, Retch, Sleep, Sickness,

Snow, Summon Elemental, Tangle Growth, Walk Through Plants, Walk Through Wood, Waves, Weaken Will, Whirlpool, and Wind.

PI 4: Blight, Body of Fire, Body of Water, Body of Wind, Control Elemental, Control Person, Dispel Magic, Frostbite, Fumble, Hail, Hallucination, Healing Slumber, Lightning, Madness, Mass Sleep, Roundabout, Permanent Forgetfulness, Possession, Sandstorm, Shapeshifting (Insect Swarm†), Storm, Tide, Transform Body, and Wither Plant.

PI 5: Alter Terrain, Bless, Curse, False Memory, Great Hallucination, Partial Shapeshifting, Permanent Madness, Shapeshifting (any), Shapeshift Others, and Transform Other.

PI 6: Earthquake, Move Terrain, Transmogrification, and Volcano.

* As the Sense Good/Evil and Protection from Good/Evil spells in *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 11: Power-Ups* (p. 15), but for order instead of good or evil.

† See *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 5: Allies*, p. 9.

CHAOS WARRIORS

Chaos often attracts people of a violent nature who leave confusion and disorder in their wake. Apply this lens to the standard holy warrior template.

Advantages: Remove Higher Purpose [-5] and Shtick [-1], replacing them with Brotherhood of Chaos† [1] and Daredevil [15]. ● Take Holy abilities from the Chaos list (p. 16). ● In further advantages, replace Higher Purpose with Chaotic Mind 1-4 [5/level] (see above).

Disadvantages: Replace this entire section with: Trickster (12) [-15]. ● Another -15 points chosen from among Bad Temper [-10*], Berserk [-10*], Frightens Animals [-10], Gluttony [-5*], Greed [-15*], Jealousy [-10], Laziness [-10], Lecherousness [-15*], Selfish [-5*], Social Stigma (Excommunicated) [-10], or Weirdness Magnet [-15]. ● A further -10 points chosen from among the previous traits or Bloodlust [-10*], Bully [-10*], Callous [-5], Code of Honor (Pirate's) [-5], Compulsive Lying [-15*], Fanaticism [-15], Intolerance (“Good” religions) or (All other religions) [-5 or -10], Overconfidence [-5*], or Stubbornness [-5].

Skills: Delete Esoteric Medicine [-1], Physiology (monster) [-4], and Psychology (monster) [-4]. Available Hidden Lore specialties are Elder Things, Elementals, Faeries, or Nature Spirits. Take *four* background skills instead of five [-1].

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

† The Brotherhood perk (*GURPS Power-ups 2: Perks*, p. 17) for hostile faeries, sapient Elder Things, chaos spirits and other *supernatural* creatures of chaos.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cole M.B. Jenkins uses his natural chaos in the service of order. He lives with his very orderly wife and cat in California. Many surprising facts about him can be found in *GURPS Thaumatology: Ritual Path Magic*. He would like to thank the Pyramid Write Club, but the first rule of Write Club is “We do not talk about Write Club.” He *can* thank Kevin Hosford (who demanded to play a holy warrior of order) and Todd Glasspoole for playtesting and peer review.

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EIDETIC MEMORY

THE VOICE OF THE MOON

BY DAVID L. PULVER

Religious beliefs can span centuries of time and gulfs of space. This campaign frame describes a (fictional) witch cult reborn as a neo-pagan religion and a modern cult of space enthusiasts. Its useful for *GURPS Horror*, *GURPS Monster Hunters*, modern-day settings, and, with only a little adjustment, *GURPS Fantasy* and *GURPS Banestorm* campaigns.

THE MOORSTONE WITCHES

*That Moorstone Witch has lost her skin
Her cousin flayed her for her sin
Rose ate her guts with a serving spoon
And now poor Ann's flown up to the moon!*
– Old children's nonsense rhyme

The evidence regarding an anomalous witch cult in 17th-century England are a few bits of local folklore or nursery rhymes about the “Moorstone Witches” and a single letter from a local vicar to his bishop in the archives of the Anglican Church. Locals know that a witch named Rose Miller was hung in the village of Lower Threxton in the year 1622, accused of the ghastly murder of her cousin, who was another witch.

The Vicar's Letter to the Bishop of Norwich

I write to you regarding your request for more details on the matter of the trial of Rose Miller, daughter of Nicholas Turner, a farmer. I regret that I cannot answer all your questions. Indeed, I remain deeply perplexed by these troubling events.

As near as can be determined, the matter began during the Third Crusade. A soldier named Hugh Archer returned from the Holy Land with a curious trophy, an odd white stone. His motive for retrieving it is lost, but we know that until last summer, his distant descendant, the farmer Thomas Goodwin, was using it as a doorstep.

In the spring of 1621, Thomas Godwin's cows became ill. As was the custom in his village of Little Snoring, he opted to consult with a cunning woman, Ann Turner, who was said to know certain means of using herbs, charms, and powders to work good or ill on man or beast. It was said her mother Isobel

had been a cunning woman also, or as some people put it, a Witch, and Ann had inherited what such folk name “the sight.”

Whilst seeing to Godwin's cows, Ann observed the doorstep and informed Master Goodwin it might be “elf shot” and perchance the malady afflicting his cows. He protested that it was called the “Moorstone” and had come out of Africa or Arabia. She touched it and, to their great alarm, let forth a sudden shriek Godwin later described as “Ve- Vlyetok – or something foreign!” and fell to her knees in a swoon.

Upon regaining her senses, she asked Master Godwin if she might take the stone in trade for the potions used to restore his cows. He gladly accepted, being now nervous of it, and indeed repentant (or so he claims now) of ever consorting with a Witch.

Ann Turner and the stone were little seen outside the house she occupied (she was a widow) for some months, and when seen again folk remarked on her unnatural pallor, but also unusual energy and magnetism. Hitherto, she had not sought followers; now she had a desire to gather others under her sway. Over some months, she recruited a number of women of the parish including Dorothy Potter, Alice Wainwright, and Rose Miller; as would later be learned, these formed the nucleus of a Witches' Coven.

By all accounts, Rose, then 16 years of age, was a strange and willful child, given to odd fancies and sayings. Ann befriended her, telling her she recognized a “gift” akin to her own, and taught her the uses of herbs and diverse charms and chants. After months of whispered secrets and promises, she was taken in blindfold to a clearing in the woods, and swore obedience to the Coven before an altar. She drank from a silver goblet a milky potion that tasted of honey, dust, and rot. She was made to kiss the altar, on which stood the Moorstone, and as the Witches danced and sang, she grew dizzy and felt herself spirit rise like smoke. Her breath stopped, and she felt her heart cease to beat. And then she choked out a Name: Vlyjehotok!

What did she see? Who can know what devilry entered her young mind? When she confessed her sins, she tried to make us understand. There was a sense of becoming a part of a vast and ageless power. The Name. A vision of war in the heavens, a fall but not as Lucifer did to Earth, but rather to the Moon.

In that terrible impact, a tiny speck was blasted forth; to slowly drift through the heavens until it fell to Earth in ages past, gradually losing contact with its true self that lay trapped and frozen in a silver forest beneath a lake of dust. She felt tiny, longing to return to the vastness, on the Moon.

Her powers awakened through this unholy communion, Rose found her mind was open. From Ann and the other Witches, she testified to having learned to cast spells that let her enter the bodies of beasts that crawled or flew, and see through the eyes of such persons as she desired, even when engaged in shameful activities. She learned to perceive the secret thoughts of men, and cast the Evil Eye upon those who angered her. After rigorous questioning, she admitted to using this power on her father when he scolded her, upon Hetty Fairfax for mocking her walk, and upon the Williams boy after he stole a kiss unwanted. By such arts, the Witches prospered, as folk paid them to learn things that were secret, or to keep their own secrets, all in the name of furthering their power so they might help the “angel” they called Vlyjehotok, the Voice in the Moon.

*The Moorstone provides
a limited array of spells . . .
and some nasty side effects.*

That Witches succumb to the Devil’s snares we cannot doubt, but the name Vlyjehotok is not found in the usual Demonologies. Still, Cardinal Alfonso de Spina wrote that the legions of the fiends number 133,316,666, so surely many demons are unrecorded. Or perhaps it was the Devil itself, for Rose confessed to attending sabbat at least eight times, where at night they worshiped before the stone, drank wine, and capered in an unseemly fashion. The Witches’ ultimate goal was to reach the Moon, in body or spirit, so they could commune with their Devil. To these ends, they consulted what books and lore they could acquire by their means or through influencing others, and made diverse powders and elixirs, including flying ointments and potions to facilitate their commerce with spirits of the air, or to free themselves for a time from the shackles of their bodies. Yet they could not reach the Moon. Once Ann broke down and cried, for she could not clearly understand their Devil’s desires or how best to fulfill them.

Such melancholy may have weakened her, for not long after she fell ill with some Malady her craft could not heal. Her pallor, already great, worsened to such an unnatural state that she could not venture out in daylight, said Rose, watching over the Coven through borrowed eyes of beasts or men. As she became reclusive, so did the leadership fall to other Witches, both Dorothy Potter, who was next eldest, and Rose, who Ann had favored like a younger sister, which lately Dorothy had become increasingly jealous of. As Ann’s constitution weakened, it was Dorothy who turned the other Witches against Rose, claiming she had poisoned the Coven’s leader in an effort to usurp her place. Dorothy forbade Rose from meeting with Ann, claiming that their mistress said she was no longer welcome by her side, and that Vlyjehotok chose Dorothy as their new leader.

The events I now recount are less than certain. Rose recalls a growing and terrible fear that she would be exiled from the

Coven, that Dorothy plotted her demise with magic, that she would never touch Vlyjehotok through the Moorstone again. Desperate, she decided to enter Ann’s house by stealth, and appeal to her mistress in person. Rose recollects breaking into Ann’s house, only to find the place dark and empty. She lit a candle, and its light illuminated a door, bound with chains, that led into the attic. She unlocked the chains and ascended the stairway.

Despite vigorous questioning, Rose Miller was unable to recall what she found in the attic. She was instead seen early the next morning in the village square, her clothes in unseemly tatters, barefoot, spattered with red and black stains. She clutched a white stone to her breast, which some later identified as farmer Godwin’s Moorstone. She repeated: “Agnes is gone. She came out and flew away to the Moon. I don’t want to be a Witch.” In her left hand was a bloody knife, and her eyes were wide and fearful.

Over the next few days, Rose Miller gave a full confession, first to the Vicar and then to higher authorities he called in, although she still could not say what she had seen or done in the attic. The accouterments of Witchcraft found in the households of Agnes Fairborn, Dorothy Potter, Alice Wainwright, and other accused members of the Coven corroborated her testimony, as did others who came forth to say they had been cursed or blackmailed by the Witches but had kept silent these months due to fears.

The strange and disturbing condition of the body found in the attic of Ann Turner remains inexplicable. If that pale, withered husk in the chalk circle was indeed the Witch Agnes, the absence of its head and internal organs cannot be explained. It is unclear what force shattered the attic window from the inside – Rose perhaps – nor the nature of the curious blue-black smears left on the broken glass and upon her clothing.

The other Witches of the Coven named by Rose – warned, so some would believe, by their powers or familiar spirits – attempted to flee the parish. Dorothy Potter, three other Witches, and two male family retainers were cornered by soldiers at Parker’s Mills. They all perished after a fire that broke out during an attempt to storm the house, choosing to remain within the burning building rather than give up. The fate of the two other Witches, sisters Isobel and Martha Dashwood, both recent members of the Coven, remains unknown. They may have fled by boat to Ireland.

Following these grim events, the parish has returned to its customary doings, though some claim to have heard strange cries in the night, seeing a strange bird or moth silhouetted against the moon, and people who must venture out do so only in numbers.

Friar Baldric and I attempted to drive the Devil out of the Moorstone, but it did not respond. An attempt to assail it with a pick was similarly unsuccessful, for its substance is harder than it appears; a tiny chip and spurt of dust was produced, which I feared to inhale. I have sealed the stone in a safe place and await your instruction.

Rose Turner, then aged 18, last of the Moorstone Witches, was found guilty of Witchcraft and Murder. She was hanged on July 11. May God have mercy on her soul.

*Your obedient servant,
Father Henry Swift
August 1622*

WITCH-CULTS OF RURAL NORFOLK

Lucy Griswell was an eccentric English folklorist and author who became fascinated by the Moorstone Witch legend. It was her research that turned up the so-called Vicar's Letter (in a private collection), reprinted in her (out of print) study of 17th-century hedge-magic and paganism, *Witch-Cults of Rural Norfolk* (Cambridge, 1952).

Griswell speculated that survivals of these cults might continue to exist. Due to its sensationalistic content, Griswell's work was savaged by several scholars in the early 1960s, who claimed she drew uncritically on Margaret Murray's discredited theories. In latter years, Griswell devoted herself to researching another legend of Norfolk, that of the "Moon Moth," who haunts the woods and hills over old deserted villages, in the form of a man-sized headless moth or bird that appears in the full moon.

In 1975, she was traumatized when a burglar, identity unknown, broke into her house and stole a large quantity of her private papers. Griswell, now 92, is currently confined to an old-age home.

LOST TRUTH OF DIANA (LTD)

This is neo-pagan tradition founded by an Anglo-American academic, Marian ("Luna") Hopkins. Marian had been initiated into a neo-pagan (Alexandrian) witch coven while attending the University of California. Having English ancestors

from Norfolk on her mother's side, Marian felt a strong desire to ground her own Wiccan practice in "authentic" tradition that matched her own heritage. As part of her research, Marian read Lucy Griswell's *Witch-Cults of Rural Norfolk* and became fascinated with Griswell's theories and discoveries regarding the Moorstone Witches.

After failing to get her own high priestess interested in incorporating elements of the Moorstone Witch tradition into her existing coven, Marian broke away to form her own circle. Based on Griswell's anthropological theories and her own feminist historical studies, she postulated a sleeping female moon goddess whose awakening – achieved through the psychic energy of the followers – would usher in a new age of enlightenment.

In 1975, Marian traveled to England. She visited Griswell but received a surprisingly frosty reception – the old woman was scared of something she had found, some odd connection between local legends and the old witch cults. She urged Marin to stay away and offered dark hints of what would happen if "power grows too fast for the human body to contain." Undeterred, Marian spent several weeks piecing together clues in unpublished folklore papers, old newspaper morgues and church archives. A newspaper article in a March, 1889 *Norfolk Daily Standard* mentioned a late-16th-century parish church in Lower Threxton, St. Michael on the Hill, that was badly damaged by a fire. The old vicar perished and the church records were lost, but during the renovations, workmen discovered a sealed crypt with a vault housing a "curious stone sphere, secured by chains" in a subbasement. It ended up being donated to a local antiquities museum.

MOORSTONE WITCH POWER INVESTITURE

The Moorstone is a milky white crystalline stone of unknown composition. If the cult is "real" it is a severed chunk from the brain of an Elder Thing that has fallen to Earth. Originally landing in the Sahara desert, it was uncovered and later worshiped by prehistoric megalith builders, found its way into an Egyptian tomb, was looted by Arab tomb robbers, and eventually ended up in a Jerusalem mosque where it sat until the city was sacked during the First Crusade.

The stone's powers, if any, are up to the GM, but the following are suggested:

1. It is hard to damage (DR 40+, HP 8+) but over time sublimates a fine crystalline dust, which if gathered has some alchemical utility.

2. It can grant Power Investiture (Worship of Vlyjehotok) in conjunction with a ritual, or to people with a level of Magery.

3. Power Investiture only provides a limited array of spells, possibly because the god is still sleeping. A possible mix of spells include: Astral Vision, Beast Possession, Blur, Borrow Language, Borrow Skill, Compel Lie, Control Limb, Curse, Decapitation, Dream Projection, Dream Sending, Dream Viewing, Fascinate, Fear, Gauntness, Great Hallucination, Hide Thoughts, Lengthen Limb, Madness, Mindlessness, Mind-Reading, Mind-Search,

Mind-Sending, Nauseate, Nightmare, Panic, Permanent Madness, Possession, Rider Within, See Invisible, Spasm, Soul Rider, Terror, Transform Body, Transform Other.

4. An unfortunate side effect of Power Investiture is "Moorstone Syndrome," a progressive condition that strikes some initiates over time, possibly based on the amount of magic they use or the degree of Power Investiture. The affected persons gain Obsession (Reach the moon) and Supernatural Features (Pallor). Over several months, repeated exposure or possibly failed HT rolls can lead to a slow decline of ST and HT, gaining Low Pain Threshold, and finally getting Nocturnal and Numb.

A critical failure may result in the rapid sloughing away of skin into a husk, and the crawling out of a skinny winged Elder Thing, possibly possessing traits such as Appearance (Horrific), Claws, Doesn't Breathe, Doesn't Eat or Drink, Flight (Space Flight; Winged), Temperature Tolerance, and Vacuum Support. Such an entity may be compelled to fly into space to the moon (a rather slow process . . .), where, unable to reach Vlyjehotok (buried deep beneath the surface), it will flit about the Sea of Serenity, awaiting a Day of Resurrection.

The GM may wish to model the effects of the Moorstone using *Power Corrupts* (*GURPS Horror*, p. 146) with Power Investiture, resulting in the above disadvantages.

After tracking it down, Marian gave into temptation and brazenly stole the Moorstone from the museum and took it to her hotel room. There she and a circle of Wiccan friends performed a dangerous self-initiation ritual that opened her mind to it and granted her power as its new high priestess. The result was more than she dreamed of: The entity Vlyjehotok was real, powerful, and she felt it up there, on the moon, calling to her.

Within six months, Marian had founded her own neo-pagan order, which she publicly dubbed Lost Truth of Diana, but which her inner circle referred to as the New Moorstone Coven, or the “Moorwitch” for short. With the power of the Moorstone, Marian initiated several other witches, and she found her own powers growing. Eventually, other “daughter” covens were also founded.

In neo-pagan circles, the Moorwitches of the LTD became known for their psychic powers . . . and their sometimes ruthless willingness to use them in defense of the pagan community or their own coven. But Marian was also leery of warnings by old Griswell, and she took care to moderate her use of magic.

Superficially, the tradition has borrowed from mainstream witchcraft, especially the Dianic Wicca “goddess worship” tradition. For more advanced second- and third-degree initiates, however, the veil is lifted on the cult’s true purpose. By the time initiates are taught the cult’s unique rituals, they have learned that the Lost Truth serves “the one who is Diana, Selene, Artemis, the White Goddess – but whose secret name is Vlyjehotok, the Sleeper in the Moon” and of their Moorstone Witches “the first to grasp these truths, until they were hunted down by the Patriarchal Church.”

In magical workings, LTD has a focus that emphasizes the development of magical mental powers and attempts to contact trans-planar entities. Elements of LTD borrow from ceremonial magic traditions. One of its successes has been using scrying to localize a position for the Sleeping Goddess, which they believe is a great “power spot” physically coexistent with a certain small crater within the Sea of Serenity.

What will you do to get to the moon?

VOICE OF THE MOON

“For us, reaching for the moon isn’t just a goal – it’s the promised land. The moon is not just barren rock – it’s the gateway to all of space and beyond,” said Debbie Zim, a astrophysics student who is also a priestess in the coven of Voice of the Moon, a neo-pagan religion (“don’t call us a cult”) that actively supports space development.

– “Techno-Pagans Support Space Program,”
Pasadena Star-News, 1996

Voice of the Moon’s roots go back to 1978. Debbie Zim, an LTD priestess of the Pasadena, California coven, was a second-degree initiate in LTD. She had touched the Moorstone rock and felt the power of the vision of Vlyjehotok, but even before that, she had been a science-fiction fan and politically active in the L5 Society. She was convinced a new era of mass space travel was about to blast off, in which space would not just be for a few astronauts, but for tens of thousands of

colonists. She believed it would be possible to *physically* visit the Moon and meet the Sleeping Goddess . . . in person.

This conflict came to a head in 1980, when Zim hinted to fellow priestesses that her Moorwitch coven had used psychic magic to influence the minds of certain U.S. senators and lobbyists into helping defeating the Moon Treaty (which many space activists believed curtailed the possibility of lunar colonization). With that victory, more would follow – the moon was in reach!

Zim’s views received mixed reception in the LTD. Many members were committed to a more spiritual interpretation. Some of them thought actual visit to the Moon would be akin to desecration, not to mention requiring a politically repellent alliance with vested patriarchal interests that controlled NASA and the U.S. government.

Marian Hopkins and the rest of LTD’s California inner circle’s refusal to support Zim’s direct involvement in the political process got heated when Voice of the Moon further alienated LTD by advocating male initiates be allowed to undergo the second and third degree initiations. This was anathema to many in the old inner circle, who still controlled the Moorstone itself and thus who would be initiated.

This dispute led to Zim breaking with the organization and forming her own splinter group, Voice of the Moon, which was committed to using magic in the service of space advocacy. It was also less focused on magic (lacking access to the stone, it only had those initiates who had already undergone the rituals). The result was either a lot of hot air, or an ongoing series of psychic magical battles, depending on who you chose to believe. What *did* happen was that two of LTD’s five sister-covens joined with Zim in the schism, and another nearly self-destructed over the dispute. In 1995, a group of “rogue witches” in Voice of the Moon – mostly younger would-be 2nd degrees – attempted to steal the Moorstone itself, briefly succeeding in doing so (long enough to create several new initiates in a “quick and dirty” rituals. In their quest to retrieve the stone, Marian Hopkins was forced to use a lot more power than she liked; afterward, she appeared notably pallid and shaken . . . Since 2000, she has not been seen in public at all, and the “loyalist” LTD has been mainly guided by her chosen successor, high priestess Karen Thorn, who has taken an even harder line against the Voice of the Moon.

On the political front, Debbie Zim’s hoped for era of mass space colonization failed to materialize, Voice of the Moon remained committed to a physical pilgrimage to the Moon. The growing rise of the “techno-pagan” movement helped attract to it aerospace engineers, astronomers, and the CEOs of a number of Silicon Valley companies. Among them was multi-millionaire web entrepreneur, gamer, and space enthusiast Peter “Zeoth the Magus” Silverman, who became high priest of the group’s New Mexico coven in 1999. He would become its primary financial supporter in the early 21st century.

THE THING IN THE MOON

What is Vlyjehotok? The default assumption is some form of Thing Man Was Not Meant to Know (see *GURPS Horror*, p. 73) – a cosmic horror that sleeps on the moon, trapped for the moment beneath the dusty regolith, yet whose seed – the Moorstone – has served as a psychic lure to bait unwary mages to him. In the 17th century he was served by the Moorstone witches; later two neo-pagan groups fell under his sway.

The interesting thing about the cults is that despite worshipping a cosmic horror, none of them are evil – merely mistaken. This allows plenty of opportunity for duped innocence, and “face heel” turns as cultists learn the error of their ways (or small factions of rogues to join with the PC party to oppose – and save – their still-deluded sisterhood). Moreover, the effort of Voice of the Moon to achieve a space program with magic is a laudable goal that adventurous PCs might wish to support.

LUNAR ENERGY GROUP (LEG)

Two-term Republican congressman Daniel Galrave faced awkward questions this news cycle after anonymous sources emailed his primary opponents and several socially conservative bloggers the tip that three of his campaign's largest donors included members of the Voice of the Moon covenant, a neo-pagan “new religion” tradition whose beliefs include the practice of witchcraft.

Despite triggering unkind insinuations from his opponents' camp, Galrave's commitment to traditional values should not be questioned, given his strong record on social issues. It is likely the donations were triggered by Galrave's strong support for deregulation of the commercial space industry, a cause that Voice of Moon's “high priestess” Debbie Zim has long championed.

Given the poor funding of Galrave's primary opponents and the disorganization of the district's democratic party following the surprise decision not to run by his only credible challenger, Eric Banes, he will likely sail to reelection this fall . . .

– PolitiCowBlog: Hot Milk for the Body Politic

Lunar Energy Group are ostensibly a well-funded organization of investors and space advocates that want to build a commercial facility on the moon for future mining of Helium 3. However, while 90% of the group are dedicated engineers and scientists funded by over-optimistic venture capitalists and lunar enthusiasts, the leadership is covertly controlled by the Voice of the Moon temple. LEG's unprecedented success in lobbying and raising venture capital is due to the cult. Spying with mind-reading or dream-reading allows LEG to perform industrial espionage and dig up blackmail on individuals it wishes to influence. Where that fails, some of the more radical members may attempt more direct use of Moorwitch psychic magic to possess, confuse, or torment its targets to trigger scandals, which pave the way for a more pliable replacement.

In addition to lobbying, LEG's inner circle is also researching other ways in which supernatural powers may aid the cause of space development. While the Moorwitches' mental magic is not highly suited for this, that means they are even more likely to try and recruit (or capture and coerce) any entities or mages who do possess such abilities.

If LEG is successful, deployment of remotely operated mining robots to the moon might be possible within a decade or so. Moreover, if the thing in the moon is really a Thing That Must Not Be Named, it's possible that any sanity-blasting psychic contagion from uncovering him could pass through a camera link and infect whatever operators are watching in Mission Control . . .

A manned return to the moon would be well outside the scope of anything the cult could manage on its own, but

perhaps it could manage to infiltrate some of its followers into a robust Chinese or American “return to the moon” manned space program. If so, the cult might have enough influence to fake data and manipulate decisions so that their god's site is selected as the location for a lunar base. They would also install an agent among the astronauts. This could set up a classic “horror in space” adventure where most of the party are astronauts and scientists, but one (a PC or NPC) is a hidden Voice of the Moon cultist whose real goal is to contact and free their sleeping god.

This could be coupled with a murder scenario if one NPC aboard discovers the cultist's plans and is done away with by him. What seems at first like a “locked room in space” murder mystery will take a turn for the weird when mining drills uncover an ancient alien *thing* that threatens to awaken.

For added horror, besides the cultist, the mission's proximity to the sleeping Elder Thing may result in a wide variety of secondary effects or manifestations (horrific dreams and hallucinations, electronics malfunctioning in lethal fashion, dead things reanimating, etc.). Eventually, however, the PCs will come face to face (or at least camera to viewscreen) with the entity. Those whose sanity survives may want to do something about it. Given that there's a reasonable chance that any spacecraft or lunar base facility might be nuclear powered or at least have some volatile rocket fuel handy, “detonate something dangerous to blow it up” is a reasonable outcome. There may also be an option to crash a lunar shuttle into it, or carve it up with a giant laser drill.

THE MOORSTONE WITCHES ON YRTH

With trivial changes to dates and locations, the Moorstone Witch legend can be moved to Yrth, with the reference to something that lives in or on Yrth's moon. The best location for the witch cult would be the border region between Caithness and Megalos, with the witches under suspicion not for using magic, but rather as suspected devil-worshippers.

The original incident could be recent, with investigators (perhaps sent by the Thomasites) seeking to discover what really went on, or it could be in the past, with investigators sent to check out rumors of the resurfacing of the Moorstone itself or its witch cult. Alternatively, a group of Moorstone Witch cultists may be patrons attempting to acquire power or magic that would let them magically journey to Yrth's moon to find and free their god. An effort to do this may be cloaked in a secular guise, with a circle of knowledge-seeking wizards and sages engaged in Yrth's “space program” alongside the secret pawns of fanatical Vlyjehotok cultists.

THE MOUTH IN THE MOON

What if the Elder Thing is successfully awakened? The Ancient One template (*GURPS Horror*, p. 75) is a good place to start, if he really is a hideous cosmic horror. In this case, one option is the traditional “extrudes tentacles to grab and eat anyone who can't run to their spaceship and get off the moon fast enough.”

Often the first victim is any of his own cultists still standing, or any scientists foolish enough to want to “peacefully communicate” with the entity, possibly giving the PCs time to make a dash for it . . .

An interesting alternative to a lunar bloodbath is the idea that Voice of the Moon cult is *right* (at least to some degree), and Vlyjehotok, while a cosmic elder thing, is not evil as such. Instead, he is an “opener of the way” – a living machine that upon awakening is programmed or instinctively compelled to do something.

The protagonists have time to flee as vast columns and pillars of alien machinery begins to pop up out of the lunar regolith. Over the next several hours (before anything much can be done on Earth), a huge structure starts to rise out of the moon, as mass converters or nanotechnology draw building material and raw elements from the surrounding rock. The crater at the heart of the structure begins to pulsate with strange energies; it is revealed that the proper translation of its name is not “Voice of the Moon” but rather “Mouth of the Moon” or perhaps “Gate of the Moon” – it has manufactured a stargate!

Where does the gate lead? Perhaps to some ancient network of linked wormholes, which (long abandoned by their dead creators) now provide humanity access to the stars. Or maybe a fleet of hostile aliens are just waiting to pour out to attack Earth, giving the GM the excuse to transition the campaign into a post-apocalyptic invasion . . .

DANGEROUS LIES

The cult of Vlyjehotok may have no mystical basis at all! It could simply be a creation of a couple of 17th-century villagers who thought they were witches, some overexcited witch hunters who forced confessions out of a disturbed young woman, and the later embellishments of folktales, pseudo-historians, and a group of credulous neo-pagan revivalists.

That doesn’t mean the cult is not a possible source of adventure! In a *GURPS High-Tech* setting the Voice of the Moon’s combination of backroom political connections and cult backstory may make it a fertile subject for a *GURPS Cops*

or *GURPS Mysteries* adventure focused on uncovering a complex murder, blackmail, or investment-fraud scheme. Some cult leaders may be true believers, but others may be cynically exploiting their followers for monetary gain. Old rivalries between factions (the space movement vs. the mystics) could lead to flaring tempers and motivate a murder, with the cult history and its political connections both a colorful backdrop and a source of plentiful red herrings.

Various artifacts associated with the cult – notably the original papers of Griswell (the Vicar’s Letter) and the Moorstone itself (if it exists!) – might also be a MacGuffin that private detectives or cops could be hired to steal or recover (if stolen).

If the cult’s own sense of persecution grows and its efforts to fund its space program fail, it could also metastasize into a toxic “apocalypse cult” akin to the Heaven’s Gate, Solar Temple, or People’s Temple tragedies. Perhaps cult leaders would attempt to reach the moon via mass astral-projection experiment involving “out of body experiences” induced by near death events. Such an attempt could easily go wrong if the revival fails or the drug dosage is miscalculated (perhaps deliberately?) and instead result in a horrendous mass suicide. For an action-filled resolution, the adventurers might be part of a SWAT team trying to battle past cult guards (maybe even some remote-control lunar prospecting robots!) in time to prevent the ritual from taking place.

ABOUT THE COLUMNIST

David L. Pulver is a Canadian freelance author. An avid science-fiction 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.

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CURSED THOU ART

BY CHRISTOPHER R. RICE

The Divine Curse (p. B132) disadvantage encompasses execrations from deific sources, racial supernatural afflictions, strange destinies, *geasa* or supernatural oaths, and many more possibilities. It's a blanket trait that the GM can use to cover everything from perpetual bad luck to being unable to enter homes unless invited. But this comprehensiveness and versatility comes with a drawback: how to price *new* Divine Curses? These guidelines suggest ways to price new Divine Curses and offer several examples.

Defining game mechanics makes it *clear* how the curse affects the character, which can cool applicability arguments. For example, if your curse makes you "unsteady in combat," you might use Combat Paralysis to decide what the curse actually does. Game mechanics can also help clarify Divine Curse so that those with it *feel* like they're being ground under the heel of an angry, harsh, or vindictive higher being (or mortal!).

CONSTRUCTING THE CURSE

Divine Curse typically comes in two flavors: descriptive curses, which allows the GM some room for adjudicating effects, and prescriptive curses, which have hard-and-fast rules.

Descriptive curses can be as simple as "Cannot eat meat" or as complicated as "Cannot enter dwellings for the first time unless invited." Violating descriptive curses can have narrative effects, game-mechanical effects, or both. If the only effects are game-mechanical, the Divine Curse can usually be built as the full disadvantage, lowered attribute or skill level, etc., with a special Mitigator (p. 26) based on how easy the curse is to avoid. The GM may lessen the effect if he feels the adventurer had no choice, or increase it if the victim *willfully* violated his curse! Negative effects are usually immediate, but the GM can "save it up" until later. For example, violating "Divine Curse (Cannot Eat Meat)" might result in Unluckiness for the game session. However, if the hero was *forced* or *tricked* into eating squirrel stew, perhaps only one future successful roll fails.

Prescriptive curses are easier to create for the GM, as they typically involve repurposed game mechanics.

*We are cursed men, Miss Turner.
Compelled by greed, we were. But now,
we are consumed by it.*

*– Barbossa, in Pirates of
the Caribbean: Curse of
the Black Pearl*

Unlike the base traits they're composed of, curses can be bought off with little more than GM permission, sufficient atonement, and character points.

TYPES AND PRICES OF DIVINE CURSES

When designing descriptive Divine Curses, start by looking at other published examples to gauge price. Without examples, base the price on the cost of the game-mechanical result of violating the curse or rely on common sense. For prescriptive curses, use the cost of the base trait.

Commandment: Divine Curses that mandate or forbid certain behavior are extremely common in folklore, fiction, or mythology. Defying the dictates of your curse has dire consequences.

Cosmic Law: The curse is a cosmic law underpinning the universe. Such curses have immediate effects for breaking them ("takes 1d damage every time a mortal is injured by their hands") or cause lasting, long-term problems ("leaving the sacred grove ages you one month per week gone").

Destiny: The curse is part of a foretold prophecy. Such things can be nebulous and descriptive ("Will die by the hands of no man") or prescriptive ("Takes quadruple damage from mistletoe weapons").

Misfortune: A specific task the person performs or is involved in is *always* doomed to fail. Some might even be full-blown jinxes (pp. 28-29), like Ulysses, whose bad luck with *everything* affected his companions.

Self-Imposed: Your “curse” is all in your head. The effects can imitate any nonsupernatural Divine Curse, but are completely psychological and/or psychosomatic. Even some “exotic” or “supernatural” traits may qualify if the effects are plausibly self-inflictible.

Supernatural Affliction: This curse can have any thematically suitable effect; it’s often individualized for a single character, family, or race of beings. Those under the effects of Curse (*GURPS Magic*, p. 129) also fall into this category.

Weird Science: This curse could represent many things with the right technobabble. For example, the science-fiction version of a Divine Curse that mimics Unluckiness might be “detrimental quantum entanglement.” See *Technological Bane* (p. 29) for an appropriate “weird science” Divine Curse.

MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCES

If the effect of a curse only affects the person if he performs some particular action, treat this as a mitigator (p. B112) with the following requirements:

Circumstance or action is *difficult* to avoid (e.g., not communicating with others or wearing clothing) or requires *daily* contact with an object, place, or person. -60%.

Circumstance or action is *moderately* difficult to avoid (e.g., not getting angry or wearing shoes) or requires *weekly* contact with an object, place, or person. -65%.

Circumstance or action is *easy* to avoid (e.g., not speaking or wearing a hat) or requires *monthly* contact with an object, place, or person. -70%.

If the mitigator requires special conditions, or an object with very expensive materials, add +5% to the values. If it requires extremely specific circumstances or materials, add +10% to the values.

Because the gods are cruel, such mitigated traits are often accompanied by an exaggeration of the very trait they’re supposed to be suppressing. For example, Disadvantageous Alternate Form (Mitigator, Getting Angry, -65%) and Berserk (12) may be packaged into a single Divine Curse to represent the cursed one transforming into a monster whenever he gets angry. In such cases, add +40% to the above values.

BASE TRAITS FOR DIVINE CURSE

Divine Curses, at their most basic, give supernatural origins to existing disadvantages. Obviously, the rules for *New Disadvantages* (p. B165) are perfect for designing “free-form” Divine Curses.

Lowered attributes might also be possible. However, applying limitations directly to disadvantages rarely yields fair results. See *GURPS Power-Ups 8: Limitations* (p. 6) for one way to do this.

The GM can include quirks in a Divine Curses to add minor drawbacks or to bring the cost to a multiple of five. *GURPS Power-Ups 6: Quirks* will be invaluable in pricing such traits.

Disadvantages by Theme

Here are some suggestions for matching disadvantages with themes.

Absent-Minded (p. B122), **Confused** (p. B129), and **Delusions** (p. B130) are all appropriate for curses that make the bearer lose track of reality.

Amnesia (p. B123) can separate characters from their worldly advantages – or torment lovers.

Bad Temper (p. B124), **Berserk** (p. B124), **Bloodlust** (p. B125), and **Bully** (p. B125) are mythological classics and suit tragic, god-cursed heroes.

Bestial (p. B124) and **Stress Atavism** (p. B156) could represent those cursed with animal-like natures.

Cannot Speak (p. B125) typically accompanies other disadvantages that occur once the character speaks (see *Mitigating Circumstances*, above). For example, a young woman is forced to weave cloaks made of nettles while taking a vow of silence so her brothers can return to their human forms.

Charitable (p. B125) and **Selfless** (p. B153) actions might be performed to prevent a curse from activating, rather than out of real altruism.

Chronic Depression (p. B126), **Lunacy** (p. B143), **Manic-Depressive** (p. B143), **Split Personality** (p. B156), and similar traits are common in folklore about witches driving people mad.

Chronic Pain (p. B126) or **Neurological Disorder** (p. B126) can describe anything from a price paid by a mermaid to walk on land, to the penalty for defying a commandment.

Combat Paralysis (p. B127), **Fearfulness** (p. B136), and **Post-Combat Shakes** (p. B150) could represent a fate to fail in battle, while **Cowardice** (p. B129) can be a war-god’s curse. Being easier to dispatch can be **Easy to Kill** (p. B134), **Hemophilia** (p. B138), **Low Pain Threshold** (p. B142), **Susceptible** (p. B158), or similar traits – often limited via Accessibility to a specific form of injury (such as heel wounds or mistletoe) or against a particular foe.

Compulsive Behavior (p. B128) and **Vows** (p. B160) are extremely common as Divine Curses. The easy interpretation is that characters *cannot* defy the curse’s mandate. To permit some free will, someone who violates his curse suffers from *twice*

the Divine Curse’s value in other disadvantages until the character atones for his misdeeds. Methods of atonement vary, but will be as bad as the curse itself *or* difficult to discover or satisfy. If atonement is easy, *halve* the value of the final cost. If it’s incredibly difficult or dangerous, *double* the cost.

Curious (p. B129), **Obsession** (p. B146), and **Xenophilia** (p. B163) can characterize an unhealthy fixation with the unknown, in finding “the truth,” or being forced to solve conundrums.

Cursed (p. B131), **Destiny** (p. B164), and **Unluckiness** (p. B160) can represent many curses from folklore or mythology. If the GM runs out of bad luck ideas for Cursed, he can use a jumped-up version of Unluckiness and “arbitrarily and maliciously make something go wrong” *at least* eight times per game session for Cursed characters.

Dependency (p. B130), **Draining** (p. B132), **Increased Consumption** (p. B139), **Maintenance** (p. B143), **Restricted Diet** (p. B151), and **Uncontrollable Appetite** (p. B159) can describe a character's need to have or partake of some particular item.

Disadvantageous Alternate Form (*GURPS Horror*, p. 18) is another common folklore theme – especially combined with a forbidden action like speaking aloud or going to church on Sunday. This also includes the more specific **Shadow Form** (p. B153).

Dread (p. B132), **Revulsion** (p. B151), and **Phobias** (p. B148) can characterize a Divine Curse that forces the afflicted away from specific persons, places, or things.

Enemies (p. B135) can express a curse that *forces* a specific group to be antagonistic to the victim. Calculate Divine Curse's point value based on the campaign's starting point value, compared to the Enemy group's point total (p. B135). Anything *two to three* times the character's starting point total is worth -30 points as a Curse, while anything higher is worth -40 points. *Intent* can modify this, but ignore *Frequency of Appearance* and instead use the modifiers from Reputation (p. B22). For example, if all elves (a 40-point racial template) in a 150-point campaign attack you on sight, and are a large class of people in the setting, this would be worth -5 points $(-10 \times 1/2)$.

Flashbacks (p. B136) and **Phantom Voices** (p. B148) become visions of past sins, or the ghosts of people the victim has slain.

Fragile (p. B136), **Slow Healing** (p. B155), **Unhealing** (p. B160), and **Vulnerability** (p. B161) can represent bizarre alterations to the body, physical curses, or enhanced probabilities of certain types of damage doing more harm. Achilles' legendary weakness would be Vulnerability (Attacks to the heel $\times 3$) [-15].

Frightens Animals (p. B136) and **Lifebane** (p. B142) are commonly associated with undead or demons, but might be a cruel punishment for nature lovers.

Gluttony (p. B137), **Greed** (p. B137), **Impulsiveness** (p. B139), **Lecherousness** (p. B137), **Jealousy** (p. B140), **Kleptomania** (p. B141), **Selfish** (p. B153) and similar "impulse control" disadvantages are common supernatural punishments for thematically similar offenses.

Honesty (p. B138), **Truthfulness** (p. B159), **Pacifism** (p. B148), and **Sense of Duty** (p. B153) can describe curses *making* the bearer obey the law, be peaceful, care about a specific group, or speak only the truth. For an example of the last, see *The Rhymers' Tongue* (p. 30).

Extra Sleep (p. B136), **Light Sleeper** (p. B142), **Insomniac** (p. B140), **Nightmares** (p. B144), **Slow Riser** (p. B155), **Sleepwalker** (p. B154), and **Sleepy** (p. B154) are typical of vengeful gods of sleep, angry stepmothers, and witches.

Megalomania (p. B144), **Overconfidence** (p. B148), and **On the Edge** (p. B146) can characterize curses that urge the bearer into foolish actions that usually result in ugly death if left unchecked.

Nocturnal (p. B146) can represent someone being forced into another (inanimate) form during a specific time; see **Disadvantageous Alternate Form** (above) for a variation of this. Changing the time (e.g., night to day) is a feature, as long as it's a 12-hour duration.

Reputation (p. B22) and **Social Stigma** (p. B155) can be used to give reaction penalties against specific people or

groups. Curses may ignore the usual restrictions on level! Of particular note are Criminal Record (you "stink" of criminality), Excommunicated (the gods hate you), Ignorant or Uneducated (even if you *do* know your society's required skills you're treated otherwise), and Monster (you're treated as a thing of horror, no matter your appearance).

Supernatural Features (p. B157) and **Unnatural Features** (p. B22) can be made to function only against a specific group of people. Use the modifiers for *People Affected* for Reputation (p. B27).

Reprogrammable (p. B150) and **Slave Mentality** (p. B154) can be curses that force the bearer to do what others tell him. If only specific people or groups can command the victim, use the modifiers for Reputation, as above.

Weakness (p. B161) can be used for curses that inflict damage. If the Divine Curse's effects don't take place immediately, multiply the final cost by *half* the final cost for delays up to twice as long as the underlying trait, *one-third* for delays up to three times as long, *one-fourth* for delays up to four times as long, and *one-fifth* for delays up to five times long. Longer durations are not possible. Curses causing damage to *others* will be some form of Innate Attack with Always On; see *Marked One* (p. 29) for an example.

Weirdness Magnet (p. B161) can be used as is or treated as more cinematic; the cost remains the same. This can represent "action movie" logic where the protagonist so often winds up in the "wrong place, right time." It can also have Aspected (-20%), to focus the weirdness. For example, those with Weirdness Magnet (Aspected, Romance, -20%) might lead a fairly normal life . . . except vampires ask them out on dates, werewolves claim them as their mates at first glance, and mummies insist they're reincarnated lovers.

Self-Control Numbers Based on Will

When a Divine Curse includes a disadvantage with a self-control number, it usually makes more sense to turn this into a Will roll instead. The value of the disadvantage depends on the severity of the Will roll: 2.5 \times normal cost for Will-15, 2 \times cost for Will-10, 1.5 \times cost for Will-5, normal cost for Will, and half cost for Will+5.

CURSES, FOILED AGAIN!

All the previous advice assumes that someone starts with Divine Curse, but what if it's gained in play? That depends on the setting, GM, and players. Most players are okay with losing HP or even a limb, but if you start flinging hexes from on high, they'll get grouchy. The GM should warn players if Divine Curses could afflict their adventurers during the campaign. By making it clear that angering the thunder god can make someone a human lightning rod, players may be a little more sensible.

Players should only take a Divine Curse if it suits their character – *not* just for points. A Divine Curse usually means a backstory with something so important, terrible, or great – maybe *all* three – that a higher power took notice and made the hero *pay*. (Or maybe the gods did it for no reason at all.)

EXAMPLES

Some of these examples of Divine Curses contain advantages, usually to help the sucker suffer *more*. Examples do not include Divine Curse as part of their heading, but when noting such traits on a sheet use the title in parenthesis – such as Divine Curse (Calamitous Wyrd) [-5].

For explanations of each of the suggested types, see pp. 25-26.

*Those whom the gods wish
to destroy, they first make mad.*
– Ancient Greek Proverb

Calamitous Wyrd

-5, -10, or -15 points

Suggested Types: Destiny, Misfortune, Self-Imposed, or Weird Science.

Long ago, the Fates decreed you would do a specific thing. This is usually described in a short in-character phrase (“Will kill his father and marry his mother”), but can be game mechanical (“Fails Influence skill rolls”) or be totally *unknown* to the player. (An unknown Destiny alters the cost by an additional -5 points.)

Each level gives the *Game Master* one Destiny Point (**GURPS Power-Ups 5: Impulse Buys**, p. 5) per game session to spend as a character point on *Buying Success* (p. B347). The points must be spent in a thematic way for your curse. For example, with “Fails Influence skill rolls,” these points might be spent to cause your rolls to fail, increase the rolls of others to resist you, or retroactively reduce previously established reactions.

These points refill at a rate of 1 point per session. For particularly debilitating curses, *double* the value of the disadvantage (do this *before* adding the Unknown modifier, if applicable) and have *all* Destiny Points refresh every session. Additionally, if the GM wishes, he can save Destiny Points (up to *twice* the base amount) for particularly disastrous results.

Designer's Notes: This is Destiny using the alternate version from **Impulse Buys**, p. 5. Saving points from session to session is a feature.

Cassandra's Dilemma

-15 points

Suggested Types: Destiny, Misfortune, Self-Imposed, or Weird Science.

Your advice is always ignored when it's actually useful or valid. This is regardless of the source of your information – you could be an actual prognosticator, a particularly intuitive detective, or just an average person. The curse isn't apparent until you are asked for advice. Then, if your advice is sound, it will be dismissed, second-guessed, or otherwise ignored. If your advice is bad, it will be taken, even if you realize your

error and try to correct people. Reverse psychology or similar ploys will be taken in the most harmful way possible.

Designer's Notes: The underlying disadvantage here is priced like a Severe Delusion that affects only others.

Dionysus' Torment

-14 points

Suggested Types: Commandment, Destiny, Misfortune, or Self-Imposed.

You love to party! But partying doesn't love you back. In fact, you and partying should really break up, except partying can't quit you. Whenever given a chance to drink, get funky, or boogie down, roll Will-5. Failure results in you giving in, while success means you resist – for now. Despite vast experience, you can never learn Carousing or Dancing, and make default rolls at an additional -4. You suffer -2 to HT rolls to “hold your liquor.” Finally, you experience *legendary* hangovers, having to stay in bed an hour longer than normal, suffering -5 on self-control rolls, -4 on IQ or IQ-based skills, *and* adding three hours to a hangover's duration (p. B440). The GM can further assess -3 on any roll he feels should be penalized due to your prior evening's excesses.

Trying to resist your baser instincts result in -1 to reaction rolls (-3 versus party animals), as everyone you meet marks you as a “party pooper.” Additionally, you suffer *all* the ill effects of Alcoholism (p. B122) whenever you go without partying for a week, regardless of whether you have a drinking problem.

Designer's Notes: Alcohol Intolerance [-1], Horrible Hangovers [-1], Incompetence (Carousing) [-1], Incompetence (Dancing) [-1], Slow Riser (Accessibility, Only after partying or dancing, -40%) [-3], and Compulsive Carousing (Will-5; see p. 27) [-7].

Jinx

-2 points

Suggested Types: Destiny, Misfortune, Self-Imposed, Supernatural Affliction, or Weird Science.

Bad things happen to you and those around you. This curse triggers about once per hour of game time, when the GM calls for it – but only when something dangerous or important is happening! When this happens, you and *everyone within four yards of you* must make a Will roll. Others (not you!) may add a bonus to this roll equal to their average DR; wearing armor correlates to planning ahead, which is an excellent way to avoid the vagaries of Fate.

Failure gives a penalty equal to the margin of failure on your/their next important roll. Failure by 5 or more (or a critical failure) also results in an immediate bad break (as for Unluckiness, p. B160).

Because everyone subconsciously realizes that there's something unlucky or “wrong” about you, they react to you at -4.

As this curse can be “weaponized” with advanced planning, the GM may forbid it to PCs.

Designer's Notes: Affliction (Will; Area Effect, 4 yards, +100%; Attribute Penalty, Modified Package*, Margin-Based, +54%; Backlash, Affected by own power†, -28%; Based on Will, +20%; Emanation, -20%; Emergencies Only, -30%; Game Time, +0%; No Signature, +20%; Secondary Disadvantage, Unluckiness, +2%; Takes Recharge, One hour, -30%; Unconscious Only, -20%; Uncontrollable, -30%) [18] and Reputation -4 (“Wrong”; Everyone; Always) [-20].

* *Modified Package:* This is -1 to ST, DX, IQ, and HT with the limitation “Accessibility, only on rolls for skills, Quick Contests, etc., -40%.”

† *Backlash:* See *GURPS Power-Ups 8: Limitations*, p. 11. The “Affected by own power” version is priced as *half* the cost of this Affliction’s Attribute Penalty and Disadvantage values. For other traits like Innate Attack, use the character point cost of the advantage as a percentage for this limitation.

Marked One

-14 points

Suggested Types: Commandment, Cosmic Law, or Destiny.

You are cursed to endlessly wander the world, never settling in one spot and in death being condemned to eternal punishment. If your character tries to stay in one place, roll Will-10 per day. Failure means you *must* travel at least (20-Will) miles from your current spot before you can try to “settle down” (at which point you roll Will-10 again). If you stay in one spot for more than seven days, you acquire Cursed (p. B129) until you begin wandering again.

Because you are marked by the divine, should anyone *other* than the gods or their designated servants harm you, the aggressors take damage. Attackers *instantly* suffer 7 points of injury, regardless of distance, requiring no roll, allowing no active defense, and ignoring DR. This can happen multiple times if they harmed the marked one more than once. This ability cannot be turned off.

The mark (which cannot be concealed in any way) gives a -7 to all reaction rolls, +7 to rolls to deduce what it and who its bearer is, and gives -7 to attempts to use *beneficial* divine abilities on the bearer.

Because of the nature of this disadvantage, the GM may forbid it to player characters.

Designer's Notes: Compulsive Wandering (Will-10; see p. 27) [-10], Crushing Attack 7 points (Accessibility, Only against those who have done at least one point of damage to you, -20%; Always On, -50%; Aura*, +80%; Cosmic, Irresistible attack, +300%; Cosmic, No active defense, +300%; Long-Range* 2, +100%) [81], Cursed (Mitigator, Moving weekly, -65%) [-49], Damned [-1], and Supernatural Features (Marked One) [-35].

* Coupling Aura with Long-Range (instead of Melee Attack) is not normally allowed and thus requires GM permission.

Sower of the Wind

-50 points

Suggested Types: Cosmic Law, Destiny, or Misfortune.

Whenever you inflict damage on another sentient being (e.g., animals or people, but not plants), you instantly lose 1d FP, to a maximum of the injury you inflicted. This damage

ignores DR and cannot be avoided. If you accidentally cause damage, this only causes 1 FP loss. If you harm someone *pre-emptively* without them showing any aggression to you, *double* the loss.

Ignore “damage” inflicted on small creatures as you instinctively avoid hurting them. Total pacifists react at +2 to you when they realize your condition.

If this curse only activates when you hurt a *sapient* being (e.g., another human), the trait cost becomes -24 points. If it affects all living beings (e.g., plants, animals, etc.), the cost is -76 points. If you take HP damage rather than FP, the curse is worth -106 points if it applies to all life, -70 points for sentient beings, or -34 points for only sapient ones.

Designer's Notes: Shtick (Avoids stepping on small creatures) [1], Trivial Reputation (Total Pacifists) [1], and Weakness (Inflicting damage on sentient beings; 1d per hit; Fatigue Only, -50%; Reduced Time 6, +120%; Variable, -40%) [-52]. Treat injury to all living beings as Very Common, to sentient beings as Common, and to sapient beings as Occasional. Remove Fatigue Only if this curse causes HP damage.

Technological Bane

-15 points/level

Suggested Types: Cosmic Law, Misfortune, Self-Imposed, or Weird Science.

You and technology do not mix. It’s not that you can’t *learn* technological skills; it’s just that you are a walking Pauli effect, emitting bogons according to Murphy’s Law. You take -1 per level on *all* rolls involving or operating technology. For example, you could learn Research/TL8 and suffer no penalty if you rely on the card catalog, but if you used a laptop to search the Internet, you’d take the skill penalty.

Each level gives -1 to reactions from tech geeks, previous victims of your curse, and similar people. Each level also *reduces* the Malfunction number of any technological device you use. Gear without any listed Malf. start at 19; subtract your level only when *you* use it. You may have up to four levels of this trait, unless the GM allows otherwise.

If this affects others around you as well (in a radius equal to your level squared, in yards), this cost becomes -20 points/level.

Optionally, the bane might have a beneficial side effect, allowing you to direct your curse against any specific weapon or piece of personal gear that you can see. Roll a Quick Contest: your Will (minus range penalties) vs. the target’s HT. Success decreases its Malf. by your Technological Bane level for *this turn only*. Failure has no effect, but *critical* failure affects all of *your* gear the same way! This offensive ability requires you to have at least two levels of Technological Bane; it adds 25 points to its value, totaling a net -5 points for level 2, -20 points for level 3, and -35 points for level 4.

Designer's Notes: Each level is one level of Tech-Hex Anti-Talent [-15/level]; see p. 30. If the GM allows the optional beneficial side effect, add Affliction 1 (HT; Malediction 2, +150%; Malfunction 4, +40%; Nuisance Effect, Critical failures affect you instead, -5%; Reduced Duration, 1/60, -35%) [25]. Limiting the level of the Malfunction enhancement (p. 30) to the level of the Divine Curse is a special feature.

UNDER THE HOOD: TECHNOLOGICAL BANE

Technological Bane includes an Anti-Talent (*GURPS Power-Ups 3: Talents*, p. 20) covering technological skills and a new enhancement for Affliction. At the GM's option, these traits can be used on their own.

Tech-Hex

-15 points/level

All rolls where you *use* commonplace technology, including TL-based skills. You can still learn TL skills and use them normally, but when you use your skill in conjunction with technology, you suffer the penalty. This makes learning some skills useless (e.g., Computer Operation)! However, you could learn Mathematics/TL8 (Applied) and suffer no penalty if you used a slide rule and paper.

Reaction Penalty: Technophiles, computer geeks, people who have been victims of your "gift" (see below), and so on.

Additional Drawbacks: +1/level to Malfunction number of any technological device you use. Gear without any listed Malf. start at 19; subtract your level of this Anti-Talent *only when you use it*. For example, if you have Tech-Hex 3, you'd decrease the Malf. of devices you use by three and devices without Malf. (like most gear) will have something bad happen on a 16 or higher.

Notes: Given what adventurers do, this disadvantage needs no additional drawbacks. This trait does assume that significantly older technology (at least two TLs) is unaffected. The disadvantage only makes sense at TL6+.

though "Tock-Hex" or "Steam-Hex" may be a viable Anti-Talent in a TL4 or TL5 campaign; the GM may reduce the value of this trait to -10 in such games, while increasing it to -20 (or more!) in high-TL campaigns. Optionally, the effects of the disadvantage may be applied to not just gear *you* use, but any such equipment *nearby*. The GM can rule this effect "disperses" the further away you are. Regardless, this adds -5 to the base cost of the Anti-Talent.

Affliction

see pp. B35-36

The following new enhancement suits probability manipulators, witches, technopaths, and gremlin-like creatures.

New Special Enhancement

Malfunction: You can temporarily increase or decrease an item's Malfunction value by one. If it doesn't normally have Malf., treat it as 19. For firearms and other weapons, this has the usual results; for equipment which normally lacks Malf., any roll indicating a malfunction means it breaks down and requires a minor repair (p. B484). A roll of three or more over its Malf. (or an 18) means it requires a major repair instead! At the GM's option, you can affect more than just personal gear; add Cosmic (+50%) to target vehicles, cybernetic implants, etc.

This costs +10% per ± 1 to Malf. (choose to either increase or decrease when selecting the disadvantage), or +20% per 1 point if you can do both.

The Rhymer's Tongue

-27 points

Suggested Types: Commandment, Misfortune, or Supernatural Affliction.

You are forbidden to speak untruths, though you *can* lie by omission or rely on other's assumptions. If you try to lie, make a Will-15 roll. Success means you lie, but suffer 1 point of injury as you bite your tongue; critical success avoids the injury as well. Failure means you verbalize the truth or aren't convincing with the lie. Furthermore, if you *do* manage to lie, the GM immediately gets a free use of *Player Guidance* (p. B347) – to make your lies come true! Lies that benefit you, however, will backfire. For example, if a cursed adventurer says he has money to pay for the arms shipment, he'll

inevitably *find* the money . . . but it'll belong to the Mafia, be stolen, etc. The GM may save up a couple of "dangerous coincidences" for a single session that quickly goes pear-shaped.

Because you cannot lie, you've become adept at spotting other liars. Treat this as having Detect Lies at Per-2.

Designer's Notes: Destiny (Major Disadvantage; Accessibility, Only for player guidance, -50%; Faster Refresh*, Full replenishment per session, +100%) [-15], Detect Lies (H) Per-2 [1], and Truthfulness (Will-15; see p. 27) (Successful resistance costs 1 HP, +10%) [-13]. Destiny uses the alternate rules from *Impulse Buys*, p. 5; saving points across sessions is a feature.

* Normally, the GM may only tap into the "player guidance" effect once every other session. With "Faster Refresh," the GM can get the effect *every* session.

CURSING FOR FUN AND PROFIT

When the character is doing the cursing rather than being cursed, there are still plenty of possibilities.

Curse with an ability, spell, and more!

CURSING AS AN ABILITY

Some folks may call down curses using supernatural power or close association with the divine (or profane . . .).

This is usually done via a suitably modified Affliction, though particularly grisly curses with Symptoms (p. B109) could use Innate Attack. Those who can bestow *any* sort of curse are better off using *Variable Enhancement (GURPS Power-Ups 4: Enhancements*, p. 5), with an Accessibility modifier, rather than buying Modular Abilities. The value of Accessibility will vary, but if it *only* inflicts Divine Curses on the subject, it's worth -50%; if the GM lets you make up Divine Curses on the spot, this is worth -20%. If you can only bestow one specific form of Divine Curse, use the Disadvantage enhancement for Affliction normally. Conversely, if it can remove Divine Curses, use the same method, but only for adding the proper Negated Disadvantage enhancement (*GURPS Powers*, p. 41).

An example build:

Execration: Affliction 1 (Lower of Will or HT; Based on HT or Will, +40%; Cancellation, +10%; Duration, Permanent, +150%; Malediction 2, +150%; Variable Enhancement (Accessibility, suitable Divine Curses only, -20%), +100%; Vision-Based, Reversed, -20%) [53]. *Notes*: Allows you to curse others. You must be able to see the subject. Make a Will roll vs. the lower of the subject's HT or Will; use normal range penalties (p. B550). Success means he suffers from a Divine Curse of your choosing worth up to -25 points, which must include an "atonement" clause. This curse lasts until you cancel it or the subject properly atones. 53 points.

CURSING AS MAGIC

There are multitudes of spells that can "curse" a subject. All page references are for *GURPS Magic*. Suitable spells are: **Alter Body** (p. 41), **Alter Visage** (p. 41), **Curse** (p. 129), **Enlarge Other** (p. 43), **Flesh to Ice** (p. 190), **Flesh to Stone** (p. 51), **Greater Geas** (p. 141), **Lesser Geas** (p. 139), **Shapeshift Others** (p. 33), **Shrink Other** (p. 41), and **Strike Barren** (p. 41).

Optionally, casters who use the Curse (or Bless) spell can use the rules from *GURPS Power-Ups 5: Impulse Buys*, with the spell providing 1 character point per level to spend in some way that harms (or helps) the subject.

Other magic systems often have obvious analogues. For example, *GURPS Thaumatology: Ritual Path Magic* could allow a spell like the following.

Hex

Spell Effects: Greater Transform Chance.

Inherent Modifiers: Altered Traits, Divine Curse.

Greater Effects: 1 (x3).

Gives the subject a -15-point Divine Curse of the caster's choosing when cast, if the subject fails his roll to resist. This lasts until dispelled, or the subject atones or meets some other difficult condition.

Additional energy is often added to make the spell difficult to counter or cancel.

Typical Casting: Greater Transform Chance (8) + Altered Traits, Divine Curse (3) + Duration, Atonement specified at time of casting* (24). 105 energy (35x3).

* Uses the rules for *Conditional Termination (Ritual Path Magic*, p. 18)

MAN VEXES – THE DEVIL HEXES

Depending on the campaign setting, *anyone* may be able to curse another person. To do this, make a reaction roll, but use only the modifiers below. If the hexer has an appropriate Power Talent, add its level as a bonus. Entries marked with a * are incompatible – use only *one* of them.

Modifiers: -10 if done without any reason or cause*. -5 if the reason was minor*. -2 if there was just cause, but no one was permanently hurt*. +0 if you were harmed, or a loved one was permanently hurt or killed*. +2 if you *and* a loved one were harmed or multiple loved ones were permanently hurt or killed*. +3 if the curse "fits the crime" or is "just." +5 if the curse layer is dying.

The GM may give an appropriate bonus or penalty if the curse is pronounced in a Bad Place (*GURPS Horror*, pp. 128-130, an area of high sanctity or mana, (un)holy ground, etc. An Excellent reaction means the subject gains a Divine Curse of the caster's choosing or appropriate to the situation (GM's call); if the roll was a natural 18, he instead gains Cursed or *multiple* Divine Curses. On an Very Good (or less) reaction, nothing happens, but on a Disastrous reaction, the curser is

himself hexed! The GM may waive this if the curse-layer's cause is just, or make it *worse* for those who fling such imprecations capriciously! The GM who needs a point value for such curses should add the modifiers used on the reaction roll and multiply them by *two* and use that as the value of the Divine Curse. For example, if the total modifiers to the roll are +5 then the Divine Curse should be worth at least -10 points. This assumes that curses are rare in the setting, if they're more commonplace (as in many fairy tales), then a Good or better reaction will do to curse someone, while a Very Bad or worse reaction will cause the curse-layer to be doomed himself!

Optionally, the GM might use the rules for *Divine Intervention (Impulse Buys*, p. 9) and have a *higher power* do the cursing! If so, the curse's value is worth -1 point per point by which the roll succeeded.

In either case, if it's a "dying curse," multiply the final value of the points for the Divine Curse by *five*. Optionally, if the hexer can use an ability to "fuel" a curse upon death, add a +20% enhancement to it and count 1/5 of its points as a bonus on the roll. Do note this *kills* the person, even if he might have otherwise lived!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

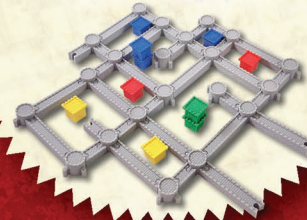
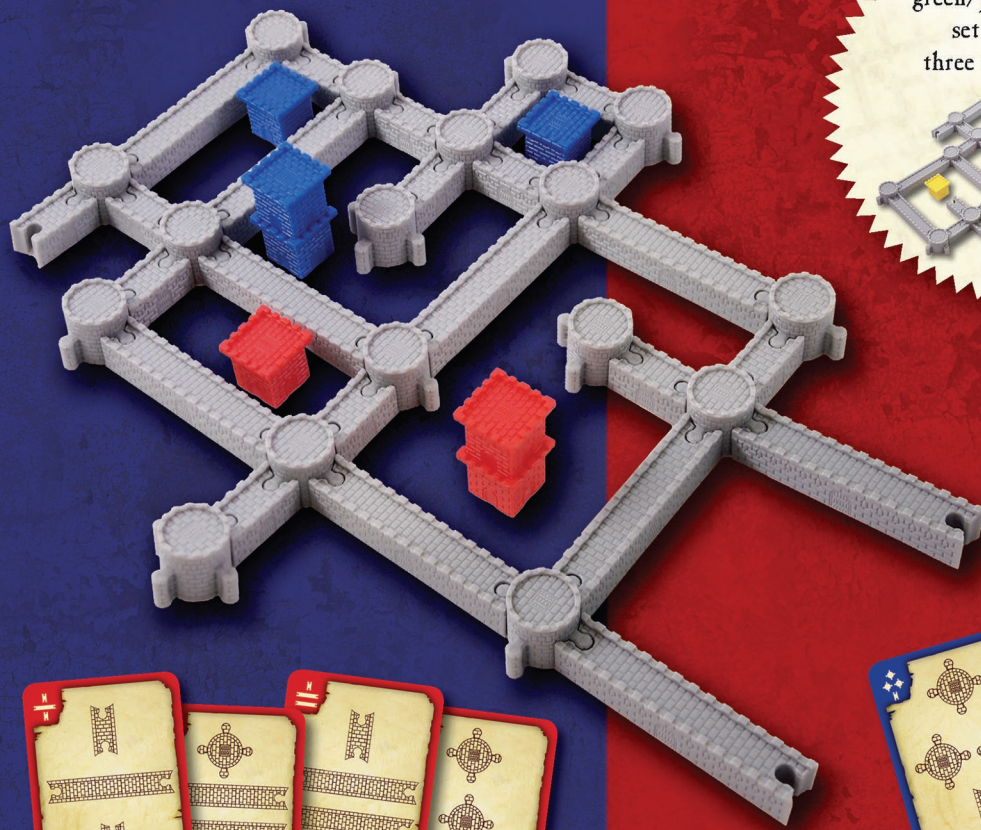
Christopher R. Rice isn't cursed, but he does lead an "interesting" life. From Portsmouth, Virginia, he dreams of being able to write full time, or at least eke out a living doing it. When he's not writing about *GURPS*, he's blogging about it. Visit his site Ravens N' Pennies (www.ravenspennies.com) for more *GURPS* goodies. 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 Douglas Cole, for being most excellent sounding boards.

So many
interesting
ways to
curse people!

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SECRETS OF THE UNIVERSE!

BY STEVEN MARSH

The Open Mind of the Universe – commonly abbreviated to “the Open Mind,” with practitioners known as “Mindists” or “Open Minders” – is a relatively new religion, founded less than a human lifetime ago. It entices converts through the possibility of mind-expanding exercises, motivational talks, and nonjudgmental universalism.

Because the Open Mind claims that it doesn’t consider itself to be in (outright) contradiction with most other faith traditions, it has found a niche among those who strongly identify with other religions but find themselves seeking deeper answers from without. (Other religions’ opinions range from cautious apprehension to outright condemnation.) However, the Open Mind has also positioned itself as being an alternative for those who do not have any religious views, portraying itself as a more “modern” outlook on the cosmos than those stodgy old faiths.

Although outsiders tend to view the pseudoscientific dogma of Mindists as unconvincing, the most amazing aspect of the Open Mind is that its promises to expand the minds of its practitioners *are* legitimate. Specifically, those who adhere to its tenets are granted mental powers. In **GURPS** terms, Open Minders receive disadvantages for becoming members, the points from which are immediately used to gain psionic abilities. However, in some settings, outsiders might write off displays of these abilities as trickery.

Not counting the dabblers who partake of its free self-help regimens and seminars, there are two publicly known tiers of Mindists. The first – most common – are known as Worlds. Worlds have the following disadvantages: Disciplines of Faith (Ritualism) [-5], Sense of Duty (Open Minders) [-10], and Wealth (Struggling) [-10] (owing to a vow of poverty that gives surplus money to the organization). The character points gained from these disadvantages are turned around and used to purchase 25 points in psionic abilities; the psionic packages from **GURPS Psis** are ideal for this. Depending on the GM’s vision of the organization, the list of abilities that a practitioner could gain access to may be limited.

The second tier of the faithful are known as Stars. Such practitioners gain the following disadvantages (replacing the previous ones): Disciplines of Faith (Ritualism) [-5], Total Intolerance (Religious) [-10], Sense of Duty (Open Minders) [-10], Secret (Inner workings of the Open Mind) [-10], Wealth (Poor) [-15] (again, owing to a vow of poverty). Just as for Worlds, the points gained from

these disadvantages are used to purchase 50 points in psionic abilities (see the packages from **Psis**), or 25 points if they were Worlds who later decided to attain the next level.

The above assumes an Open Minder of Average Wealth; others should reduce their Wealth level enough to free up the requisite points. For example, to reach the second tier a Struggling [-10] believer might become Dead Broke [-25], while one who’s Very Wealthy [30] might become Comfortable [10] – using the 5 leftover points to add *mundane* traits (not psi) reflecting his new enlightenment.

SECRETS OF THE OPEN MIND

Those who have reached the rank of Stars within the Open Mind have a -10-point Secret, worth -20 points if revealed. This represents general knowledge of the inner workings of the Open Mind; if a practitioner reveals these secrets, his life will be made much more difficult by the remainder of the church. The extent of this harassment will depend on how sinister (or not) the Open Mind of the Universe is, although it will almost certainly manifest as some kind of Enemy.

If the Open Mind is basically harmless, then the Secret-revealing former member should gain Enemy (Open Mind of the Universe; Rival; 9 or less) [-20]. The Open Mind will be a powerful nuisance for the ex-member, but he shouldn’t be in any life-destroying danger.

If the Open Mind is more bloodthirsty, then former members should gain Enemy (Open Mind of the Universe; Hunter; 6 or less) [-20]. In this case, many options of everlasting harm are available to the Open Mind, including denying him resources, destroying his reputation, or even arranging for a “disappearance.”

In addition to the transformation of a Secret to an Enemy, former members will likely have a desire to buy off their voluntary disadvantages (Disciplines of Faith, Sense of Duty, etc.) or convert them to other disadvantages.

Curiously, regardless of what secrets leak about the Open Mind, there always seem to be more. Those who rise to the level of Star (or above?) will always know something that can make him an enemy of the Open Mind, even if some harried former members have supposedly blabbed everything.

In all cases, if a Mindist already has any of the listed disadvantages or has such a low Wealth that he cannot lower it enough to recoup the necessary points, then he must provide the missing character points *before* he can experience his awakening and acquire psionic abilities.

These powers manifest via a process that awakens adherents' minds over the course of a seminar that lasts one week (in the case of someone becoming a World) or two weeks (for those becoming Stars). This is *not* a gradual process, and all acquired powers also immediately come with the knowledge and skill required to use it effectively. Those who become Stars do *not* need to be Worlds first; they can undergo their awakening from uninitiated to Stars in one retreat (enabling them to acquire one 50-point *Psis* package all at once instead of acquiring two 25-point packages).

If Not Now, Then When?

Canny readers may note that there is next-to-nothing placing the Open Mind of the Universe at any particular tech level or social assumption. Indeed, it should work just as well as a low-tech secret society as it would as a Victorian-era faith or a hard-science-fiction cult. Wherever there are thoughts to awaken and souls to enlighten, the Open Mind of the Universe could be welcome . . .

MIND-OPEN MATTERS

The core of the Open Mind of the Universe – “join church, get powers” – has a number of dials that can be adjusted based on the needs of the campaign setting.

- *Secret or Known*: The Open Mind works best if it's the only (or most likely) source of psionic abilities in the game world. As described, it's up to the GM to determine whether outsiders know of the abilities bestowed by the faith. In a world that resembles our own, it may be a complete secret, or

only discussed in vague terms: “Oh, he joined the Open Mind and seems to have gained new insight into others and became more perceptive.” In a more cinematic world, it's entirely possible for the core idea – “join and power up” – to be known. The nature of this secrecy will also determine which abilities are available for members; it's hard to maintain a world of invisible psi if Carla went away on a retreat and can now set fires with her mind. In a secret world, the most likely options available from the *Psionic Packages* section of *Psis* are Anti-Psi, ESP, Probability Alteration, and Telepathy.

- *Evil or Benevolent*: Although there's the threat of retribution for higher-echelon members who fall away from the Open Mind (see p. 33), it's otherwise up to the GM to determine how sinister or not the organization is. Its foundation and dedication to secrecy means there *could* have all kinds of evil lurking beneath the surface, but it's also entirely possible that the Open Minders are legitimate and benevolent, seeking to unleash the potential of its members. (One intriguing option for a sadistic GM is to have the Open Mind be entirely devoid of any sinister connotations, yet continue to encourage and emphasize its aura of secrecy and potential maliciousness; it's so hard to conclusively prove an absence of evil . . .)

Combining these concepts, there's a lot of room for how deep and evil its secrets run. For example, many of the packages from *Psis* are 100 points; maybe there's a level above Worlds and Stars that makes these powers available to purchase. If so, “Voids” has a certain ring and sinister connotation that may hint of the cosmic inky blackness lurking at the upper echelons of its faith. Or perhaps the Open Mind could be an entirely mundane-yet-wicked human agency, financially building itself up at the expense of teaching its members some parlor tricks.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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RANDOM THOUGHT TABLE

KEEPING THE FAITH

BY STEVEN MARSH, *PYRAMID* EDITOR

I've always felt roleplaying games exist in an odd relationship with spiritual powers. On the one hand, they demand a certain level of precision in their competencies; most players would be unsatisfied with dumping a boatload of points into abilities that can't be relied on, or aren't even provable in the game world. On the other hand, in the real world, matters of faith are generally subtle and often . . . well, taken on faith.

Few game worlds tackle the larger philosophical issues behind most spiritual or clerical powers. Imagine if a resurrection-type spell were possible and known in the real world and wasn't terribly limited; in other words, it could be utilized on anyone regardless of state of grace, outlook, religion, and so on. Even if the spell were phenomenally expensive, it would still radically alter almost every aspect of life and outlook. For the plebeians on the street, explanations about how the cosmos worked would almost certainly be more accessible and accepted, in the same way that the Apollo missions led to greater understanding of how the world looked in the "big picture," or how the Hubble Telescope expanded our perceptions of the universe. For the wealthiest – presuming resurrection was costly or nontrivial – it would revolutionize interactions; no longer would there be a fear of accidents, assassins, or other malfeasance befalling the wealthy and powerful. (In such a setting, I could easily see "resurrection rich" become slang for an astronomical sum of money: "Sure, I make a good living, but I'm not *resurrection rich* or anything . . .") Companies of sufficient wealth wouldn't worry that they'd lose a CEO's leadership or a vital engineer's secrets due to illness or misfortune. Risk-taking would probably be a *lot* more common. Taking a hot-air balloon to the Arctic Circle? Sure, why not?

However, your standard dungeon-crawl setting doesn't seem to notice or care about these effects. This is probably smart, since – honestly – the resultant world would be pretty darn *weird* and hard to relate to. (Besides, most standard fantasy settings are about as realistic as a Renaissance Faire, so it's easier to ignore the world-changing effects of resurrection than to risk causing any *more* cognitive dissonance.) I play a fair number of computer RPGs, and I'm always astounded at the number of quests in game worlds with resurrection powers boil down to, "You must fetch the lone sprig of Foo-bar from yonder mountain to save our ailing King Bedbownd."

Why? If he dies, we can just work some resurrection mojo and he'll be good as new. But, no . . . apparently it's easier to help a PC who was infected with mummy rot and then reduced to ash by a dragon than to help an NPC with Plot Point Sniffles.

However, it seems like there should be some middle ground between "trying to figure out the minute societal effects of realistic clerical magic" and "ignoring it and hoping it's not *too silly*." Here, then, are a few ideas for how to approach spiritual powers in ways that are true to the abilities *and* don't result in the filthy rich juggling dynamite for giggles.

THE MATTER MATTERS

In most fantasy worlds – especially those of the dungeon-fantasy sort – clerics are often the go-to source for healing abilities. However, the rest of the world doesn't often seem to change much (unless you argue that healing magic is what turns a realm from being an "everybody dies of plague" hell-hole to a Renaissance Faire-esque romp). One of the easiest ways to modify such a setting is to say that healing magic is reserved for those who follow the tenets of adventurers (including adventuring clerics); in other words, the only ones with access to healing magic are those who venture into cobwebbed crypts and abandoned towers in search of fame and fortune. This works especially well in settings where the mere act of adventuring is a Good deed, such as the presumption in *Earthdawn* that dungeon-crawling fantasy is a noble calling because it helps to rid the world of horrid terrors from beyond our world. You can even extend this notion to the Bad Guys' healing abilities by saying that their Impure and Evil deeds are serving *their* gods . . . which means their clerics can heal them.

One side effect of such a world would likely be that those who are ill or dying would have a strong incentive to take up the adventuring life, to appease the gods whose servants could prolong their lives. It's a matter of taste whether this is appropriate or not; I personally like the idea of King Bedbownd donning armor and doddering around a dungeon trying to appease some cosmic entities, but if that seems too disruptive then it might be that heroes are somehow called to or destined for adventuring life, and nobles-come-lately aren't able to take up arms and access that sweet sweet healing magic.

Ye Must Be Worthy

The forces that empower healing magic may reserve their most potent miracles for the heroes (and villains) who truly matter. In *GURPS*, “importance to the universe” is most conveniently measured in character points, while “degree of miraculous power” can be thought of as the minimum Magery level required to cast the spell. This leads to . . .

Magery Required	Minimum Character-Point Value of Subject
None	25
1	75
2	150
3+	300

Always look at the “path of least Magery” when using this rule. For example, Lend Energy (and thus Lend Vitality and Minor Healing) require Magery 1 or Empathy, which means “no Magery required.” *GURPS Magic: Spell Charts* is a helpful resource when using this rule – and it’s free!

The net result is a world in which common peasants (-25 to 0 points) cannot be magically healed at all; typical citizens (25-50 points) can benefit from Final Rest and Minor Healing; nobles and beginning heroes (75-125 points) qualify for Cure Disease, Major Healing, and Restoration; and emperors and skilled adventurers (150-250 points) can receive Instant Neutralize Poison and Regeneration . . . but only the mightiest heroes (300+ points) can rely on Great Healing, Instant Regeneration, and Resurrection. The GM can and should play with the minimum character-point values to match the setting’s assumptions, of course.

CONVERSION RATES

One idea that seems like it’d work would be to require the injured to convert to the same faith or ideals as the miracle worker they wish to aid them. However, this is tricky to get right. If you allow for conversions as needed, then it seems too straightforward a process. Perhaps there is a limit that keeps people from treating faith as a revolving door – say, a character can only switch between faiths (at most) once every number of days equal to the number of character point they’re built on. Thus low-point peasants could ping-pong between beliefs (and healing opportunities), while uber-competent heroes are more set in themselves and less likely and able to switch their moral allegiances. (This might explain Han Solo’s lack of faith in the Force . . .)

THICK AND FORGETFUL SKULLS

Han Solo didn’t believe in all that Force mumbo jumbo. It’s unclear *how* he could have clung to his disbelief; the Jedi council was a vibrant organization when he was 10 years old, and stories of their abilities and antics would have almost certainly reached him. (Heck, assuming the Jedi were as widely known as it seem they were, he would have heard about Jedi at an age where many people in our universe become lifelong Star Wars fans . . .)

However, it’s an interesting thought exercise. Maybe one aspect of clerical or spiritual powers are that they are

forgettable – not in the sense that they’re boring, but rather that perceiving them causes them to slip away. A good analogy would be dreams; they seem vivid when experienced, retain a certain flavor when we first awaken, and rapidly drain away in wisps upon fully rejoining the waking world. Thus a miraculous healing is fully appreciated and perceived by witnesses, but quickly becomes a vague sense of “Healer Bob helped me when I was stabbed.” In fact, this method could be used in our *own* world; I suspect many of us have experienced things that seemed vaguely beneficial and slightly miraculous in our memories; maybe those are the remnants of a *true* miracle, shunted from our minds like slivers of a dream.

A world like this would even permit *true* believers – those who know the true nature of miracles – to retain their knowledge. They may or may not be miracle workers themselves; I find the idea of a miracle worker who understands he has direct access to divine abilities but can never fully remember having done them to be fascinating. These “rememberers” need not be campaign wreckers with abilities that defy explanation; how many people in our *own* world claim to have witnessed divine intervention, written books about their experience with miracles, etc.? Given the rising number of agnostics, such people are obviously easy for a determined society to dismiss.

HOW LOW WILL YOU GO?

As a final idea, perhaps the energies that power healing magic are strongest *below* the earth. Such miracles rely on a descent to the deepest (and, presumably, most evilly infested) domains. In this case, healing magic would be accessible only to those who are most likely to use such spells in a standard fantasy dungeon-crawling world.

To combine the ideas, perhaps healing magic *also* relies on accumulating the life-force energies of those antithetical to the forces of life (in other words, baddies); the death of the most vile creatures is required to provide the divine spark needed for whole-body restorations or resurrection magic. In this case, sure, the heroes can wait for the king to die and then try to resurrect him to wellness, but in that case, you’re just substituting one kind of quest (“go kill monsters to get the Healing Thingamajig”) for another (“go kill monsters while dragging around a dead body”). The GM will need to figure out how to keep players from milking such a system – for example, hoarding monsters chained up in a dungeon to kill when needed – but that should be fairly straightforward. (“The goddess relies only on energies gathered from enemies who are active agents of entropy” or the like.)

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.

Special thanks to Jason “PK” Levine for his suggestions.

ODDS AND ENDS

FAITH ON YOUR SLEEVE

Members of the Church of the In-Visible believe in self-reflection and assessment. However, there is one aspect of their faith that is most obvious: Members have their character flaws literally visible upon their flesh, in the form of fine lines and curves. Their inner selves and lives are thus visible for all to see. These lines are generally on the face and hands, although especially significant flaws can extend all over the body.

The nature of these markings depends on the campaign. In a world with obvious transcendental underpinnings, these marks may appear supernaturally. In less overt worlds, they may be mundane tattoos, conceived and chosen by self-reflection or psychological examinations. In either case, they can be hidden easily with makeup, clothing, etc. (although adherents are reluctant to do so without good reason).

In *GURPS* terms, all mental disadvantages (and some physical, at GM's discretion) have a corresponding line pattern and color, which are generally known to the faithful. The boldness or thickness of these lines depends on the point value; Curious [-5] might be a faint yellow line across the eyes, while someone with Sadism [-15] may have a thick red curve extending across his forehead down to his chest. Those with Delusions merely believe the markings reflect their misbeliefs: "I have this line because I can talk to squirrels, and that is forbidden."

If the In-Visible are widely known, then a successful Body Language roll can determine what lines represent; otherwise, Theology (In-Visible) is useful. (Adherents are encouraged to reveal their own lines' meanings, especially if asked.)

Although there seems to be little benefit from being a member of the In-Visible, the existence of an

impartial revelation of mental "flaws" would actually be useful. Members who are politicians and merchants may be highly valued if they have the

marks of Honesty or Truthfulness; while those with Vows, Disciplines of Faith, or Codes of Honor may be respected universally.

MURPHY'S RULES

BY GREG HYLAND

My deity rewards me for assaulting the defenseless!



IN WRATH OF ASHARDALON (Wizards of the Coast), A CLERIC WHO ATTACKS WEAK ENEMIES IS A MORE EFFECTIVE HEALER THAN ONE THAT TARGETS MORE CAPABLE FOES.

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