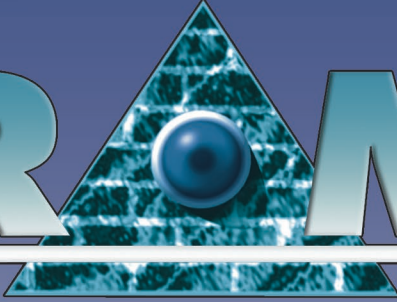


PYRAMID[®]



Issue 3/105 July '17

CINEMATIC MAGIC



CHI SORCERY

by Christopher R. Rice

GOURMET ALCHEMY

by Michael Kreuter

LIGHTS! CAMERA! MAGIC!

by Steven Marsh

THEO-NECROMANCY

by David L. Pulver

SUPER-SORCERY!

by Kelly Pedersen

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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- Pale Blue:* In This Issue
- Brown:* In Every Issue
- Green:* Columnist
- Dark Blue:* **GURPS** Features
- Purple:* Systemless Features

COVER ART
Bob Stevlic

IN THIS ISSUE

Sometimes magic is steeped in shadows – a subtle, ephemeral thing. Other times, it flies across the screen with lens flare and a symphonic score! This issue of *Pyramid* is devoted to the latter.

The magic system of **GURPS Thaumatology: Sorcery** is great for many campaigns, but when you’re trying to emulate the workings of a comic-book universe, sometimes you need *Super-Sorcery!* Discover the tweaks and additions necessary for making this **GURPS** magic system work more like what’s in your favorite comic universe, take up the cloak by donning the super-sorcerer template, and learn the first entries of your mysterious spellbook.

Some magic comes from the heart, mind . . . and fist; the path is revealed with *Chi Sorcery*. **GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 19: Incantation Magic** co-author Christopher R. Rice expands the idea of chi powers for martial artists (from **GURPS Martial Arts**) into its own variant of the *Sorcery* system, with new powers and awesome abilities. Discover how to tap magically into blind fighting, iron skin, the phoenix heart, and 20 more breathtaking effects!

When the impossible happens and gods die, enterprising magicians experiment with *Theo-Necromancy*. In this month’s Eidetic Memory, **GURPS Banestorm: Abydos** author David L. Pulver provides insight and inspiration into what can happen after a god dies – including a **GURPS** spell to summon the being as a ghost! You’ll also get a number of exciting ideas for how to work deceased deities into your games.

Half the fun of magic is sharing it with allies . . . especially if you’re a practitioner of *Gourmet Alchemy*. Discover a new way to model alchemical potions as *powers*, perfect for using on yourself or pouring down the gullet of a needy ally.

Heroes can sometimes tip the world to their favor; perhaps it’s because they heed the call of *Lights, Camera, Magic!* In this short Appendix Z, discover how to adapt the **GURPS Power-Ups 5: Impulse Buys** system to a magical framework that can make situations both more cinematic *and* complicated for those fighting the good fight.

This issue also includes a Random Thought Table that provides some other ideas that can amp up the cinematic aspects of your favorite spell-slingers. With this issue of *Pyramid*, all of Hollywood’s blockbuster budgets can’t compete with your imagination!

Hey, everyone can see all this trippy magic stuff, right?

– Harley Quinn, in Suicide Squad

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FROM THE EDITOR

LET'S ALL GO TO THE MOVIES

As summer continues (at least for the northern hemisphere), the movie complexes and television services continue releasing amazing feats of cinematic mastery. But what if “movie magic” is a bit more real than people know?

This is another loose-themed issue, looking at movie-ready forms of magic . . . or not-quite magic!

Of course, “cinematic” is often just a frame of mind, and the right gaming group can make the most mundane of campaigns feel like a \$250 million blockbuster. Still, the right *options* can inspire those gaming groups to be even more awesome.

“I MADE AN ORIGAMI HAT OUT OF MY MOVIE TICKET!”

That raises an interesting point: I’m always curious to hear about how *GURPS* fans actually *use* the material we make . . . both here in the pages of *Pyramid* and the rest of the *GURPS* line. I’ve read forum reports, blog posts, and emails, and it seems that the answer is: It depends. Some folks treat us like an Ikea store, picking the pieces they want and making more or less what’s advertised on the package. Others experience

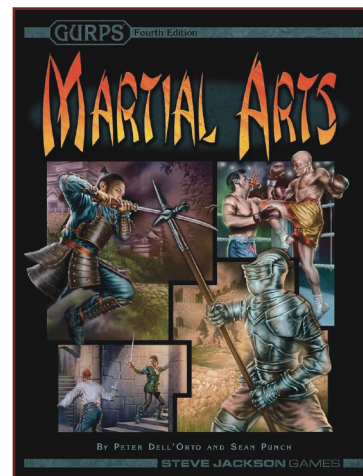
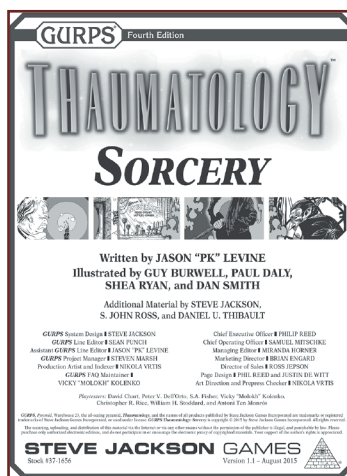
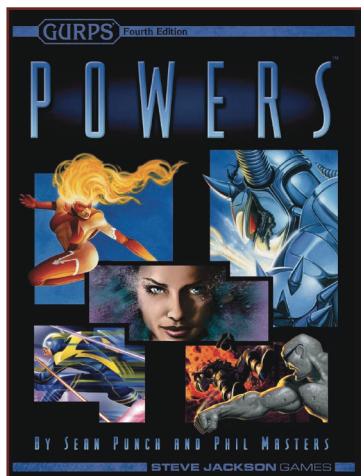
GURPS like a home-improvement store, selecting their planks of gaming lumber and forging their own cool projects out of the nails of rules and the screws of inspiration. (I think that metaphor got a bit away from me . . .)

One of the biggest strengths of *GURPS* – it can be practically anything to anyone – is also one of its biggest challenges: Obviously we can’t create material that’s useful to everyone in all cases, but are we making enough coolness that’s applicable to enough groups? One of my personal guiding principles for *Pyramid* since darn-near I started is for some bit of each issue to be applicable to everyone; it’s a tall order, and I’d love to hear how close our fans think that we’re getting.

WRITE HERE, WRITE NOW

Of course, the best way to let us know how you’re using the various *GURPS* goodies we produce is to actually . . . let us know! You can write to us privately via email at pyramid@sjgames.com, or join the public hive of creativity at forums.sjgames.com.

And if you have any cool ways you’ve used our “hardware,” we love to hear about that, too. There are a lot of talented *GURPS* gamesmiths out there!



Additional Material: Peter Dell’Orto and Sean Punch

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SUPER-SORCERY!

BY KELLY PEDERSEN

GURPS Thaumatology: Sorcery allows casters to perform potent feats, improvise minor magics easily, and with some risk and effort, even try epic effects that they don't know. These features make it an excellent choice for wizards in a superhero setting. Mighty masters of magic in comic books usually have a few tricks that they regularly utilize, but are capable of breaking out something new when the situation calls for it, sometimes with a show of effort or strain. Additionally,

since the "spells" in the Sorcery magic system are all modified advantages, the balance between sorcerers and other superheroes (who also tend to have abilities based on advantages) is a bit clearer. This article presents some tweaks to Sorcerous Empowerment to better fit it to the supers genre, a template for super-sorcerer characters, and new sorcery spells designed to emulate some of the classics of super-wizardry.

SUPE-ING UP SORCERY

A few adjustments need to be made to the base Sorcery power so that it can better emulate comic-book users of magic.

CHANGING THE POWER MODIFIER

By default, the "Sorcery" modifier consists of -5% for the ability costing 1 FP and requiring quiet concentration (or using other rituals, see *Additional Rituals*, pp. 5-6), -5% for being vulnerable to counter-magic and other anti-magic abilities, and -5% for channeling external forces ("mana") which can be regularly absent. But super-wizards don't really seem to run into anti-magic areas that often, if at all. Their amazing powers are part of their appeal, and if they regularly encountered places that removed them, it wouldn't make for very interesting stories. So, for super-sorcery, remove the limitation of channeling mana and replace it with something else. **GURPS Powers** suggests that being countered by "specialized technology that works for anyone who possesses it" is also worth -5% (see *Anti-Powers*, **GURPS Powers**, p. 20). Defining "specialized technology" as "specialized magical techniques and items" fits the theme better. Therefore, the "Super-Sorcery" power modifier is still worth -15%. All spells require two rituals or a ritual and 1 FP, are vulnerable to meta-magical abilities like Dispel Magic, and can be disrupted or countered by occult techniques and items that anyone can use (but require skills such as Occultism or Thaumatology and time to create).

This change also applies to the modifier "Magical" for spells and enchanted items, which is replaced with "Super-Magical," -10%. This includes -5% for the existence of anti-powers, and -5% for specialized anti-magic techniques and tools.

SUPER-EXTRA EFFORT

A sorcerer who wants to add power to a spell must normally spend one more FP and make a Will + Sorcery Talent roll at -4 per additional level (see *Extra Effort*, **Sorcery**, p. 6, for further details). As an optional rule, a caster may put even

more energy in, for a commensurately greater benefit. The super-sorcerer declares how many additional FP he is spending, up to a maximum of his Sorcery Talent, then makes the usual roll. If the roll succeeds, multiply the number of levels gained through extra effort by the number of fatigue spent. A critical success still removes this cost.

Example: Professor Arcana, Mistress of the Mystic Arts, wants to boost her level in Sunbolt to better fight Draculon, the Vampire Planet. On top of Sunbolt's normal cost and the +1 FP from using extra effort, she decides to spend 5 FP, with -12 to the roll. On a success, this would normally add three levels, but since she spent the additional fatigue, this is multiplied by five, adding 15 levels to the spell.

SUPER-SIMULTANEITY

By default, a sorcerer can only cast one spell at a time, and casting another will end any ongoing spells that require maintenance. This limitation can be overcome by buying one or more learned spells at full cost in character points instead of the usual 1/5th cost (see *Simultaneous Spells*, **Sorcery**, p. 8), but this can become quite expensive for comic-book wizards with potent abilities. The following two optional rules allow a bit more flexibility at a cheaper price.

Partial Sorcerous Empowerment: Rather than a mage's entire Sorcerous Empowerment advantage becoming unavailable when using a known spell, a fraction may remain to improvise weaker effects. Determine how many levels of Sorcerous Empowerment (with all limitations, such as Limited Colleges or Limited Scope, included) are required to exactly equal or just exceed the full point cost of the sorcerer's most expensive learned spell. These levels are unavailable to cast other spells, as usual. Any levels the sorcerer possesses beyond that can be used to cast improvised spells, including using hardcore improvisation. Always assume that the most limited levels of Sorcerous Empowerment that can support the desired spell are "used up" first.

Example: Professor Arcana has Sorcerous Empowerment 8. Her learned spell with the highest point value is Sunbolt level 15, with a full cost of 60 points. It requires three levels of Sorcerous Empowerment to exceed this (for exactly 60 points), meaning that she has five levels of Sorcerous Empowerment remaining.

Fractional Full Cost: Another adjustment is to allow casters to pay the full cost of only *part* of a spell, permitting them to use a weaker version simultaneously with others. This works with any spell that comes in levels or otherwise has a price divisible into parts (such as the basic and improved versions of Walk Through Earth, *Sorcery*, p. 15). Determine the fraction of the full cost that would equal or exceed that of any other learned spells. The sorcerer must pay that many points, but can purchase the remaining levels at the usual 1/5th rate. As long as he only uses magic at the lower level he paid full cost for, other low-cost learned spells can be used simultaneously. If the sorcerer wants to use his most potent spell at any higher level, however, other ongoing effects are canceled, as usual.

Example: Professor Arcana wants to attack and defend simultaneously without having to improvise, so she pays the full cost of part of her highest level spell, Sunbolt. Her next-highest cost spell is her defense, Mystic Buckler (see p. 10), which she has at level 1, with a full cost of 28 points. To equal that, Professor Arcana buys Sunbolt at full cost for 7 levels, for 28 points. The remaining 8 levels only cost her 7 points with the usual discount. Now, as long as she only uses Sunbolt at level 7 or lower, Professor Arcana can also simultaneously use one of her other learned spells. If she uses the attack at any higher level, however, all her other spells subject to the simultaneous spells rules will shut down!

ADDITIONAL RITUALS

The *Alternative Rituals* option (*Sorcery*, p. 7) is highly recommended for games using super-sorcery. It gives comic-book wizards more flexibility and interesting tactical choices. Alternative rituals add so much flavor that the GM can permit a sorcerer to choose their own ritual options at character creation. The options below can be swapped in for one or two of the other alternative rituals presented in *Sorcery*. A sorcerer is limited to only three to four choices of rituals, unless the GM permits

More Rituals (below). One of the options must always be the FP cost. Maintenance is always 1 FP/minute, even if the sorcerer didn't choose to pay FP when casting.

ALTERNATE ALTERNATE RITUALS

Here are a few more options for those who want to go beyond the basics.

More Rituals!

Sorcerers may elect to have more options to choose from to meet the *Alternate Rituals* requirement, but at the cost of needing to use more rituals to cast their spells. If they can select from five, they must apply three during casting, while if six options are available, they must apply four. If they can choose from seven rituals, they must use five on any one spell. More than seven options slows decision making too much. An FP cost must always be at least one of the options.

Stronger Rituals!

Stronger versions of some rituals can be picked for the list of *Alternate Rituals* options available to a sorcerer. The continuing cost to maintain spells is still only 1 FP (or 1 HP for every two minutes if using the blood sorcery ritual, p. 6).

FP cost and blood sorcery can be included in the list multiple times. Two FP or HP thus count as two choices, three as three choices, etc. However, every *extra* inclusion adds to any maintenance cost; e.g., two fatigue rituals plus two blood sorcery rituals are +1 FP and +1 HP over the normal limit, so maintenance changes from 1 HP/two minutes to 1 FP/minute + 2 HP/two minutes.

Invoking a name counts as two options if the reaction roll doesn't get the +2 bonus, as three options if there is a -2 penalty, or as four options for -4. Alternatively, multiple names can be invoked, with separate reaction rolls, all at +2.

A focus item can count as two options if it is both larger (SM -5 or -6) *and* must be stolen by stealth or trickery – or if it is SM -7 or -8, but can be snatched with a Quick Contest of DX or ST.

FOCUSED MAGIC

Many superhero sorcerers use magic items to boost their powers, usually via Gadget limitations on their Sorcerous Empowerment or Sorcery Talent. These can *also* count as focus items (p. 6). However, their limitations often exceed the -10% value implied by the Alternative Rituals scheme. If so, as an optional rule, the sorcerer may choose up to [(the absolute value of the gadget limitations) - (10 per ritual choice it counts as)]% of free enhancements to be applied to every spell which uses it for the focus item ritual. These enhancements are chosen when the magic item is first defined; choose those that apply to most spells, because inapplicable enhancements are ignored. Applicable enhancements are *always* in effect when the focus item is used; for the right to choose which apply each time, include Selectivity among them.

Example: Professor Arcana has a talisman, the Eye of the Jade Emperor, which grants her a great deal of power. As a Gadget, it is worth -65% (SM -6; requires a Quick Contest of DX to steal; will grant the thief powers immediately; and is unique). When used as a focus item, she can apply +55% worth of enhancements to spells. She chooses Affects Insubstantial (+20%), Delay, Variable (+20%), Low Magical Signature, -2 (+5%), and Selectivity (+10%).

Blood Sorcery

The sorcerer draws from his own life energy. This costs 1 HP when the spell is cast. The maintenance cost (if any) changes to 1 HP every *two* minutes, regardless of whether FP was paid as part of the initial casting.

BLACK MAGIC

This alternative-ritual option and related ability enhancement requires rules from *GURPS Horror*.

Faustian Bargain

The sorcerer bargains away some of his very soul for power. Casting a spell with this ritual gives the caster corruption points, based on the strength of the spell. See *Power Corrupts*, *GURPS Horror*, pp. 146-148, for how corruption points work. By default, the sorcerer gains one corruption point for every 20 points the *full* cost of the spell is worth (minimum 1 point). A sorcerer can choose to draw on even more dark power; by doubling the corruption points taken, a +10% enhancement may be added to the spell (chosen by the caster, but the GM can veto abusive combinations), a +20% enhancement for quadrupling corruption points, or +50% to gain corruption points *equal* to full cost.

Invoking a Name

A sorcerer can call on one of the great and terrible Powers that haunt the universe, drawing on its strength for fuel. The caster needs to merely drop the Name in the course of casting. The trick is, the Powers don't always *want* to help! Make a reaction roll at +2, plus a modifier if the GM feels that the spell aligns with or opposes a Power's goals, but with *no* modifiers from Charisma, Reputation, or any other mundane trait. On a Neutral or better reaction, the spell succeeds (the GM may even offer a boost for Very Good or Excellent). On a Poor or Bad reaction, the spell doesn't work, or with Very Bad or Disastrous, it may instead turn against the caster (for possibilities, consult the *Critical Spell Failure Table*, p. B236).

Power Flare

Glowing runes manifest in the air, pillars of radiance descend, arcane lightning arcs between the caster's fingers . . . Whatever the exact effect, it's *obvious*, to both mundane and

magic senses. Stealth is completely impossible while casting a spell this way. Additionally, any observers get +10 to spot the sorcerer (who counts as being "in plain sight"), countering penalties for distance, visibility, etc.

Spiritual Ripples

This ritual sends out an etheric signal – "Here I am; come get me!" – to some *dangerous* types. A minute later, or at the end of combat, the GM will roll 3d, secretly. On a 9 or less, something will shortly arrive. This can be a demon, a ghost, or any other supernatural threat. In an area already harboring such dangers, the target number can be increased by up to +3.

Sorcerous Discipline

Rather than a specific ritual, magic can be empowered by adhering to a code of discipline, contemplation, and arcane taboos. Users of magic who take Disciplines of Faith (Mysticism), as long as they uphold that disadvantage, may cast spells using this as one of their ritual choices. However, should they ever fail to uphold the strictures of that disadvantage, all spells they'd cast using that as a ritual immediately end, and this can no longer be used as a ritual until the transgression is corrected. Atoning typically takes a week's worth of contemplation and meditation, though a shorter term of a more onerous restriction may be permitted (speaking only ancient Sumerian for a day, for example), or a self-sacrifice requiring 1d damage.

Focus Item

The sorcerer uses an arcane object to channel his power. It can be either a very small item (SM -9 or smaller) that must be stolen by stealth or trickery (an arcane token stored in a pouch or a crystal contact lens, for instance) or a slightly larger item (SM -7 or -8) that can be forcibly removed (e.g., an arcane bracer or a silver torque that locks firmly). Focus items are either extremely resilient (DR 26+) or outright unbreakable regardless of apparent composition.

If the focus item is ever removed, the sorcerer cannot use it as a ritual until it is recovered. Additionally, any spells already cast using it become vulnerable to subversion by the person who stole it. The thief must make a Thaumatology or Occultism roll at -1 per 25 points of the spell's full cost. If he succeeds, the new "owner" can twist the spell to a new purpose, changing targets, effects, etc., exactly as if he were casting the spell himself for the first time.

BUILDING A SUPER-SORCERER

This template can help players design their own extraordinary magic wielders.

SUPER-SORCERER

500 points

You are a potent master of the arcane arts, with a collection of known spells, the ability to produce significant effects

*By the Hoary
Hosts of Hoggoth!
– Dr. Strange*

on the fly, and some *really* impressive magic if you push yourself.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 12 [40]; IQ 15 [100]; HT 12 [20].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 17 [10]; Per 15 [0]; FP 12 [0]; Basic Speed 6.00 [0]; Basic Move 6 [0].

Advantages: Sorcerous Empowerment 15 [160] and Sorcerous Talent 4 [40]. ● Spend 60 points in learned spells. ● A further 60 points chosen from among DX +1 [20], IQ +1 or +2 [20/level], Will +1 or +2 [5/level], Per +1 to +4 [5/level], FP +1 to +3 [3/level], Acute Detect Magic 1-5 [2/level], Allies (Apprentices; Built on 50%; 12 or less) [4], (Built on 50%; 15 or less) [6], (Built on 75%; 12 or less) [6], or (Built on 75%; 15 or less) [9], Appearance [4 to 16] (add the Impressive enhancement for that “awesome wizard” look), Charisma 1-4 [5/level], Claim to Hospitality (Other magic-users) [5], Common Sense [10], Danger Sense [15], Destiny [5 to 15], Eidetic Memory [5] or Photographic Memory [10], Energy Reserve (Magical) 1-10 [3/level], Fearlessness 1-7 [2/level] or Unfazeable [15], Higher Purpose (“Battle evil with magic,” “Explore the frontiers of sorcery,” or “Conquer the world with your power”) [5], Illuminated [15] (ask your GM first, to see if Illuminated individuals are allowed in the game), Indomitable [15], Intuition [15], Language Talent [10] and five languages at Native/Native [20]†; Longevity [2], Luck [15] or Extraordinary Luck [30], Magic Resistance (Improved, +150%) 1-4 [5/level], Patron (Wise master; 9 or less) [40] or Patron (Powerful spirit; 6 or less; Highly Accessible, +50%; Minimal Intervention, -50%; Special Abilities, +100%) [40], Reawakened [10], Sensitive [5] or Empathy [15], Single-Minded [5], Spirit Empathy [10], Tenure [5], additional learned spells, additional levels of Sorcerous Empowerment (possibly with Limited Scope and/or gadget limitations), additional levels of Sorcerous Talent (up to the campaign maximum), or advantages with Super-Magical (and possibly gadget limitations) representing thoroughly internalized spells (or magical artifacts).

Disadvantages: -25 points of disadvantages chosen from among Absent-Mindedness [-15], Compulsive Rhetoric [-5*], Compulsive Vowing [-5*], Curious [-5*], Callous [-5], Dependents (Apprentices) [Varies] (these are often also taken as Allies), Destiny [-5 to -15], Disciplines of Faith (Mysticism) [-10], Duty (to a master or teacher; 6 or less) [-2] or (9 or less) [-5] (either are also frequently Extremely Hazardous, for an additional [-5]), Enemies (Demons, other-dimensional intruders, rival wizards, or other supernatural threats; Usually a medium-sized group of less-powerful individuals, or a large group of less-powerful people, or a medium-sized group that includes some superhuman individuals; Choose any frequency of appearance that results in a final value of -20 or less) [up to -20], Fanaticism (towards a magical religion or philosophy; May also be Extreme) [-15], Frightens Animals [-10], Intolerance (towards a class of magical creatures who aren't universally unpleasant, such as ghosts, elves, etc. – “demons” is not appropriate!) [-5], Mania [-5*], Obsession (“Become the greatest sorcerer” or “Defeat a particularly impossible foe”) [-10*], Odious Personal Habit (“Arrogance” or “Irritatingly cryptic”) [-5], Phantom Voices [-5 to -15], Phobia (any phobia with supernatural or superstitious significance, such as Blood, Darkness, Death, or the Number 13) [Varies], Sense of Duty (Magical creatures or magical individuals) [-10], Social Stigma (Excommunicated) [-5], Trademark (“Mage’s rune” or some other unique identifier) [-10], Vow [-5 to -15], Unnatural Features 1-5 [-1/level], Weirdness Magnet [-15]. ● A further -25 points

of disadvantages from the previous list or Bad Temper [-10*], Code of Honor (Professional) [-5] or (Comics Code) [-15], Guilt Complex [-5*], Honesty [-10*], Megalomania [-10], Nightmares [-5*], No Sense of Humor [-10], Oblivious [-5], On the Edge [-15*], One Eye [-15], One Hand [-15], Overconfidence [-5*], Pacifism (Reluctant Killer) [-15], (Cannot Harm Innocents) [-10], (Cannot Kill) [-15], or (Self-Defense Only) [-15], Secret Identity [-5 to -20], Selfish [-5*] or Selfless [-5*], Sense of Duty (All humanity; Only take this if you haven't already taken a Sense of Duty) [-15], Stubbornness [-5], Trickster [-15*], Truthfulness [-5*], Unfit [-5], Workaholic [-5], or Xenophilia [-10*].

Primary Skills: Mental Strength (E) Will+2 [4]-19; Research (A) IQ [2]-15; and Thaumatology (VH) IQ+1 [12]-16.

Secondary Skills: Four of the following packages. You can choose the same package more than once, adding points in skills together; spend any leftover points on any other skill from this template.

1. **Blaster:** Innate Attack (any) (E) DX+3 [8]-15.
2. **Diviner:** Dreaming (H) Will [4]-17 and Fortune-Telling (any) (A) IQ+1 [4]-16.
3. **Enchanter:** Connoisseur (appropriate type of object) (A) IQ-1 [1]-14; Hidden Lore (Magical Artifacts) (A) IQ [2]-15; and Crafty Enchanting (below) [1]. ● One of Leatherworking or Sewing, both (E) DX+2 [4]-17; Armoury (Body Armor, Melee Weapons, or Missile Weapons) or Smith (any specialty), both (A) IQ+1 [4]-16; or Artist (Potter, Sculpting, or Woodworking) or Jeweler, both (H) IQ [4]-15.
4. **Exorcist:** Exorcism (H) Will [4]-17; Hidden Lore (Demons or Ghosts) (A) IQ [2]-15; Psychology (Demonic or Ghostly) (H) IQ-2 [1]-13; and Licensed Exorcist (Demons or Ghosts) [1]‡.
5. **Flier:** Aerobatics (H) DX [4]-12 and Flight (A) HT+1 [4]-13.
6. **Healer:** Diagnosis (Magical Ailments, an optional specialty) (A) IQ [2]-15; Esoteric Medicine (H) Per [4]-15; and Pharmacy (Herbal) (H) IQ-1 [2]-14.
7. **Martial Artist:** Judo (H) DX-1 [2]-11; Karate (H) DX-1 [2]-11; and Staff (A) DX+1 [4]-13.
8. **Occult Expert:** Hidden Lore (one occult topic) (A) IQ [2]-15; Occultism (A) IQ+1 [4]-16; and add 2 points to Research skill, raising it to IQ+1.

New Perk: Crafty Enchanting

1 point

Prerequisites: Enchant as a learned spell; one or more craft skills at 15+.

Whenever you make an item using a craft skill you have at 15 or higher, you may count the time spent making the item as time spent in spectral forging as well (**Sorcery**, p. 31). For purposes of spectral forging, time spent crafting does not count as “other projects.” (See **GURPS Low-Tech Companion 3: Daily Life and Economics**, pp. 22-32, for more detailed rules on creating many items.)

Any assistants you want to employ while forging an enchanted item must be competent to assist you in both the creation of the item and enchanting it.

9. *Planar Voyager*: Area Knowledge (The Multiverse or one specific dimension) (A) IQ-1 [1]-14; a second Area Knowledge (a specific dimension, different than the one above) (E) IQ [1]-15; Current Affairs (The Multiverse or one specific dimension) IQ+1 [2]-16; Heraldry (one notable system of supernatural identification) (A) IQ-1 [1]-13; and Savoir-Faire (Magical) (E) IQ+1 [2]-16.
10. *Potion-Master*: Either Alchemy (VH) IQ-1 [4]-14 and Hazardous Materials (Magical) (A) IQ+1 [4]-16; or Herb Lore (VH) IQ-1 [4]-14 and Naturalist (H) IQ [4]-15.
11. *Spirit-Speaker*: Current Affairs (All spiritual realms or one particular realm) (E) IQ [1]-15; Heraldry (one notable system of spiritual identification) (A) IQ-1 [1]-14; Hidden Lore (Angels, demons, elementals, or another class of spiritual being) (A) IQ [2]-15; Psychology (Angelic, demonic, elemental, or another class of spiritual being) (H) IQ-1 [2]-14; and either two different spiritual languages at Broken spoken comprehension or one language at spoken Accented [2].
12. *Student of the Past*: Anthropology (H) IQ-1 [2]-14; Archaeology (H) IQ-1 [2]-14; History (appropriate historical period) (H) IQ-1 [2]-14; and either two different ancient languages at Broken spoken or written comprehension, or one language at Accented [2].

Background Skills: Spend an additional 10 points on other skills or on improving the above skills.

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

† Includes one level free in each language for Language Talent.

‡ Perk from *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 9: Summoners* (p. 5). Removes the -4 to Exorcism (for lacking holy support) when targeting the chosen category of supernatural being.

Customization Notes

Choosing learned spells is the most crucial element of building a super-sorcerer. While spending all available points on a single potent ability is tempting, it makes you vulnerable to being rendered useless in many circumstances. It's better to purchase several at a lower level. In particular, try to have at least one attack, one defense, and one

out-of-combat utility spell. Consider buff spells for defense so that you can cast them ahead of time. It's still a good idea to buy at least one spell at full cost so that you can cast more than one at a time. Take advantage of the options provided in *Super-Simultaneity* (pp. 4-5) to save some points. When choosing known spells, ensure they match your skill set. If you want to be a bold explorer of the planes, select those that let you travel there and protect you, while if you deal with spirits frequently, pick ones to call, bind, or banish them.

The next best customization option is taking additional levels of Sorcerous Empowerment with Limited Focus to represent your specialty. To be a weather wizard, four levels of Sorcerous Empowerment (Limited Focus, Weather Spells, -40%) is a good buy at 48 points.

Also consider taking advantage of Gadget limitations to create "items of power" – many sorcerers in the supers genre lean heavily on such tools. You may add levels of Sorcerous Empowerment with such limitations to your unrestricted levels to determine the maximum power of any spells you can learn. Remember, however, that if you lose the item, any known spells above the unrestricted level of Sorcerous Empowerment will be reduced to match if leveled, or simply unavailable if they aren't. The GM should consider allowing additional levels of Sorcerous Talent, above the normal four-level cap, if the additional levels have Gadget limitations similar to the caster's Sorcerous Empowerment levels.

*These shall be your
garments, Kent Nelson.
From this day on you shall be –
Doctor Fate.*

*– Nabu the Wise,
in More Fun Comics
#1.67*

THE SUPER-SPELLBOOK

Spells from existing Sorcery supplements are generally appropriate in superhero games. The GM can forbid any of them based on campaign parameters, but the supplements available at the time of this article's writing don't include any that seem particularly out of place for a super-sorcerer. The only change needed is to replace the Sorcery limitation with Super-Sorcery (and Magical with Super-Magical), as explained in *Changing the Power Modifier* (p. 4).

(Entity) Summoning

Keywords: None.

Full Cost: 39 points.

Casting Roll: Will, rolled as a Quick Contest against the summoned being's Will. Special casting time, see below.

Range: Special, see below.

Duration: Hours equal to margin of victory on Quick Contest of Will.

Each time you cast this, you summon one being (worth 75% or less of your point value) from a particular broad class of supernatural creatures: demons, faeries, nature spirits, and so on (chosen when you pick this spell). The GM will create this being, but you can request one that meets broad criteria ("useful in combat," "knows about faerie secrets," and so forth). Alternatively, if you know a specific being you want to call, you can summon it (although if you don't have its True Name or some equally significant identifier, you are at -5 on the casting roll). A penalty applies based on the extradimensional "distance": There is no distance penalty for creatures that are currently on the same plane of existence.

Adjacent dimensions impose -5, increasing by -5 for every intervening dimension. Earth is usually considered adjacent to most other realms, but trying to summon an angel to Hell could impose -10, if Earth is between the two.

The summoning itself requires 10 minutes of preparation and ritual. At the end of the casting, you must pay 1 FP and make a Quick Contest of Will against the creature to force it to appear. If you are victorious, the being arrives. It then makes a reaction roll. On Poor or worse, treat it as an Unwilling Ally – it will obey you, but try to subvert your commands or otherwise act against your interests. If the reaction is Neutral or better, it will serve you reasonably faithfully. You can replace this reaction roll with a suitable Influence skill, which varies depending on what type of entity you summon. Unusual skills may apply for this purpose – Law (Demonic Contract) is traditional for demons.

You can also summon beings to answer questions. Treat this as a Contact Group with an appropriate knowledge category, an effective skill of 18, and a reliability that depends on the reaction roll: Unreliable for Poor or less, Somewhat Reliable on a Neutral reaction, Usually Reliable for Good, and Completely Reliable for Very Good or Excellent reactions.

Unlike most sorcery with a duration, this spell must be maintained; thus, unless you can cast simultaneous spells, using another spell will immediately dismiss the summoned being. However, there is *no FP cost to maintain this spell*, only to cast it. A summoned being is vulnerable to being dispelled, banished, or warded off with occult techniques. If it is killed, you must wait 24 hours before using this spell again; if dismissed, you must wait five minutes.

Two other versions of this spell summon beings of different potency. Lesser (Entity) Summoning has a full cost of 14 points, calls forth a being worth up to 25% of your point value, and has a casting time of one minute. Greater (Entity) Summoning has a full cost of 118 points, calls an entity worth up to 150% of your point value, and requires one hour to cast. Treat creatures summoned with the Lesser version as having an effective skill of 12, while Greater (Entity) Summoning provides effective skill 21.

Statistics: Ally (A specific class of supernatural beings; Built on 75%; Constantly; Adjustable, a broad group with diverse capabilities, provides information, below, +150%; Conjured, +100%; Immediate Preparation Required, 10 minutes, -45%; Requires Quick Contest of Will vs. Will, -15%; Maximum Duration, hours equal to margin of victory, -5%; Special Abilities, +50%; Super-Magical, -10%) [39]. Lesser (Entity) Summoning has Ally, built on 25%, and Immediate Preparation Required decreased to 1 minute, -30%. Greater (Entity) Summoning is built on 150%, and increases Immediate Preparation Required to 1 hour, -75%. *Notes:* The Maximum Duration limitation is priced based on Maximum Duration, 12 hours. As a special effect, this spell breaks sorcery rules by allowing free maintenance, but this is offset by imposing a FP cost to cast and dimensional “range” penalties.

New Ally Enhancement: Adjustable

Variable

Rather than invoking the same Ally (or mechanically identical substitutes), you can call up any member of a varied group. This enhancement *must* be combined with Conjured (a variant on Summonable, *GURPS Powers* p. 41). Normally, your advantage only grants a single Ally at a time. If you purchase an Ally Group with this modifier, however, each member of the group that appears can be different, within the parameters set by the enhancement.

The GM, as always, builds and runs any Allies conjured by this trait. When you call on an Ally, you may request specific abilities, skills, or other unique traits, but the GM is free to say that no such individual exists in your category or impose a penalty on the Frequency of Appearance roll for unusual requests.

Adjustable’s enhancement value depends on the diversity of the category of creature you can call on:

- If the group is composed of all very similar individuals, with only slight variation in traits (such as “baboons”), this is worth +25%.
- A set of allies that covers a range of skills or abilities within a single field such as combat or socializing, but are very similar otherwise (e.g., “lesser courtier faeries” or “primates”) is worth +50%.
- If the membership includes a broad range of individuals with different traits, but who all share some fundamental weaknesses or tendencies (such as “elementals” or “animals”), the enhancement is +100%.
- A category that includes members with almost any ability (for instance, “living beings” or “spirits”) is worth +150%.

If any creatures within the group can provide unusual or supernatural abilities, you must also take the Special Abilities modifier; this can be avoided by specifically excluding them. Similarly, if any can provide useful information, you must add an extra +50% to the value of Adjustable.

When using conjured Allies as information sources, treat them as a Contact Group with a knowledge area appropriate to their nature, and an effective skill that depends on the power level of the Ally; 25% of your points is skill 12, 50% is skill 15, 75% is skill 18, and 100% or more of your points is skill 21. Their reliability level depends on the reaction roll they make when they are called up: Unreliable for Poor or less, Somewhat Reliable for Neutral, Usually Reliable for Good, and Completely Reliable for Very Good or Excellent reactions.

Gateway of Worlds

Keywords: None.

Full Cost: 85 points.

Casting Roll: IQ, special, see below.

Range: 1 yard.

Duration: 3d seconds.

You tear open the fabric of reality, creating a gateway to another world that anyone can travel through. You must concentrate for 10 minutes to cast this spell, though you can reduce the casting time, at -1 for every minute reduced (if you roll at -10, you may cast the spell in 30 seconds).

Roll against IQ to cast the spell, but a roll of 14 or more always fails, regardless of your IQ level.

Once successfully cast, a glowing rift forms that leads to another realm. The rift is large enough to fit anyone your size or smaller easily – creatures one or two SMs larger can squeeze through, but anything bigger than that just won't fit. The portal remains for 3d seconds once you cast the spell, and anyone that fits through it can use it. If you don't want enemies passing through, make sure you use Gateway of Worlds in a safe place, or be ready to use Cancel Spells or Dispel Magic to end it early. Specific points in one dimension usually correspond to a specific other location in the other realm, though knowing where exactly you will come out generally necessitates a Thaumatology or Area Knowledge (relevant dimension) roll.

Each dimension (Heaven, The Realm of Chaos, The Blue Zone, etc.) requires its own version of this spell, chosen when you take the spell. This does allow travel back to your home realm from that dimension as well.

Statistics: Jumper (World; Cannot Follow, -20%; Limited Access, One other world and your home dimension, -20%; Sorcery, -15%; Takes Extra Time 6, -60%; Tunnel, Forms before you jump, +100%).

Mystic Buckler

Keywords: None.

Full Cost: 28 points/level for levels 1-4 + 10 points/additional level.

Casting Roll: None. Roll a block, calculated from Shield (Buckler) skill, to defend.

Range: Self.

Duration: Indefinite.

You create a visible shield of arcane force around your hand, which you can use to block attacks from your front. As long as the mystic buckler is present, you gain +1 per level, to a maximum of +4, to *all* of your active defenses against attacks that originate from your front or the side holding the shield. Against any attack that could be stopped by a shield (see *Blocking*, p. B374), you may attempt a block roll to gain DR 4 per level against it. However, you must keep a firm grip on the arcane forces to maintain the shield, meaning you can't use that hand while using this spell.

Improved versions of this spell make the DR Hardened. Increase full cost by 4 points per spell level for each level of Hardened (e.g., Hardened 2 changes full cost to 36 points for levels 1-4 and then 18 points/level).

Statistics: Damage Resistance 4 (Active Defense, -40%; Directional, Front or shield side only, -10%; Force

Field, +20%; Nuisance Effect, shield hand is unavailable, -5%; Super-Sorcery, -15%) [10] + Defense Bonus 1 (Directional, Front or shield side only, -10%; Nuisance Effect, shield hand is unavailable, -5%; Super-Sorcery, -15%; Visible, -10%) [18]. Additional levels up to 4 add the same amount of Damage Resistance [+10] and Defense Bonus [+18]. Levels 5 and above only add Damage Resistance [+10]. *Notes:* Defense Bonus is a meta-trait from *GURPS Supers*. The improved versions add Hardened (+20%/level) to Damage Resistance.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kelly lives and works in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, where he is (almost certainly) not engaged in a vigilante crusade using arcane forces beyond the ken of humanity. He'd like to extend particular thanks to Nicolas Juzda, without whose help this article, like so many before it, would be much less good.

MORE THAN HUMAN

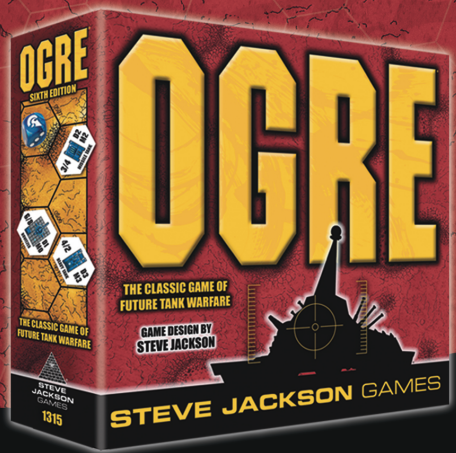


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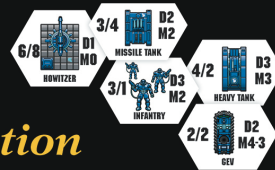
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CHI SORCERY

BY CHRISTOPHER R. RICE

GURPS Thaumatology: Sorcery presents a magical system that's based on the very building blocks of **GURPS** itself – advantages. Unlike standard magic, it doesn't treat spells as skills. Instead, it relies on a two-tier system: "known spells" (spells the character can cast freely) and improvisation via a modular ability. The latter allows the caster extreme flexibility at the cost of time, while the former gives the caster instant fixed effects.

What if this same model were applied to the powers of a cinematic martial artist?

This article combines the ideas from *Chi Powers for Martial Artists* in **GURPS Martial Arts**, p. 46, with the foundation of **Sorcery** to create a "chi sorcery" system. Note that the GM probably should use either this system *or* standard cinematic skills, as mixing both may prove unbalancing.

BUILDING A CHI SORCERER

GURPS Martial Arts and the **Basic Set** offer many options to those creating wuxia-like characters with powers, cinematic skills, combat options, and so on. This rule set only replaces powers and combat cinematic skills – all other advice for attributes, skills, etc. is the same.

A chi wizard must learn from defeats as well as victories, Tohru.

– Uncle, in *Jackie Chan Adventures* #5.11

NEW ADVANTAGE

Chi sorcerers require a new advantage, in addition to other traits typical for martial artists. They may also take Ki Talent, which is the power Talent for chi sorcery and costs and works just like Sorcery Talent (**Sorcery**, p. 5).

Sorcerous Empowerment

Thaumatology: Sorcery, pp. 4-5

All chi sorcerers require the following variant of Sorcerous Empowerment.

Ki Investment

15 points for level 1, +7 points/level

You've developed your internal energies to the point where you can sufficiently perform miraculous physical and spiritual feats. Like Sorcerous Empowerment, it is used to improvise amazing feats (within the bounds of chi sorcery, see p. 13) and is the prerequisite for Body Control (pp. 14-17), Chi Projection (pp. 17-20), and Universal Ki (pp. 13-14) powers.

Unlike Sorcery (which can theoretically do anything), Ki Investment has two broad groups and a single very narrow

one. The two broad groups are *Body Control* (abilities that let you channel your chi internally in order to heal injury, perform amazing athletic feats, purge your body of poison, and so on) and *Chi Projection* (abilities that let you direct your chi *externally* in order to blast enemies, project force fields, fly, and so forth). The last, far more narrow group is *Universal Ki* (which covers an ability that allows you to detect and sense other chi users, as well as manipulate the chi of others).

Special Limitations

The following modifiers are variants of each other; take one or the other, never both.

Flawed Chi: Your chi is limited. If you can only learn or improvise abilities from only Body Control or only Chi Projection, this is worth -20% as a limitation. If you can only improvise abilities from Universal Ki, then this is worth -40% as a limitation. If you use can Universal Ki *and* either Body Control *or* Chi Projection, then this is worth -10% as a limitation.

Limited Chi: Your chi abilities only work in specific circumstances. The GM needs to eyeball the value using the Accessibility guidelines from **GURPS Powers**, p. 99, or other sources, but here are a few examples (remember that the situation must occur regularly during an average adventure for it to be a limitation).

- **Broad:** You can only use your chi when fighting armed (or only when unarmed); while outdoors; while touching the earth with bare feet; during the day (or night); while underground; within the boundary of a state (or similar large area); while drunk or otherwise intoxicated; while fighting supernatural monsters or their minions; only while chanting a specific mantra or phrase. *If* the warrior regularly switches between several martial-arts styles, "while fighting with one specific style" may also count. -20%.

● *Moderate*: You can only use your chi with a single armed or unarmed combat skill (e.g., Broadsword or Karate); for the purposes of defense or fighting without killing; in emergencies; if you fight with certain formal restrictions (bow at the beginning of the fight, restrain your actions to conform with your code, and so on). -40%.

● *Small*: You can only use your chi for a single specific attack (e.g., bite or punch); in non-combat circumstances; against a specific group (e.g., warriors of the Jade Temple); within a *small* area or in a specific building; on certain days of the week. -60%.

● *Specific*: You can only use your chi against one specific person (e.g., the six-fingered man who killed your father); in the defense of a specific person; while in a specific building or structure (e.g., the Jade Temple); for a single Trademark Move (**GURPS Power-Ups 2: Perks**, p. 8). -80%.

You may combine two restrictions from one tier and treat the combination as the next more restrictive tier. For example, if you can only use your powers with Karate for the purposes of defense this would be a Small limitation, not two Moderate ones.

NEW MODIFIER

To achieve the same feel as using *Basic Set* cinematic skills, Chi Sorcery powers makes heavy use of a new limitation.

Requires (Attribute) Roll

see **GURPS Powers**, p. 112

Some abilities take additional time and competence to activate. For abilities that only need an activation roll for each use, simply include

Requires (Attribute) Roll at the base value. For those that are harder to perform the less time you spend preparing, add one of these variations.

Requires (Attribute) Roll, Time-Limited: The activation roll for the ability is at -10 if used instantaneously, -5 after one second of concentration, -4 after two seconds, -3 after four seconds, -2 after eight seconds, -1 after 16 seconds, and *no* penalty after 32 seconds. Add a further -10% to the base cost of the limitation.

Requires (Attribute) Roll, Time-Limited, Margin-Based: With this variant, you roll first and then your margin of success determines how long you must concentrate before the ability works. Success by 0 means the ability works after 32 seconds, success by 1 means it works after 16 seconds, success by 2 means it works after eight seconds, success by 3 means it works in four seconds, success by 4 means it works in two seconds, success by 5 means it works in a single second, and success by 10 or critical success means it works instantly. Add a further -10% to the base cost of the limitation.

Under the Hood: Ki Investment

Ki Investment uses the same schema as Sorcerous Empowerment, but reduces the base point value to 4 points instead of 5, since the abilities it can emulate are not as broad. Further, it reduces the additional base cost per slot to 4 points instead of 5, since improvised abilities require more time than normal to switch. This was then modified by Chi (-10%), Limited, Advantages Only (-10%), and Physical (+100%) to arrive at the final cost. Like Sorcerous Empowerment, however, Ki Investment is its *own* trait and should be treated as such. In particular, apply any modifiers to Sorcerous Empowerment as a whole; do not plug them into this Modular Ability construct.

CHI SORCERY POWERS

Chi Sorcery uses the rules outlined in *Sorcery*, with the following modifications.

● Magic Resistance, Mana Damper, etc. do not provide defense against chi powers, though the GM may allow variants that *do* protect if desired. If using such variants, treat the costs and effects as the same, but they only apply to resisting chi effects.

● Extra Effort critical failures cause all the character's powers to shut down for 1d *minutes*, not seconds.

● Improvisation takes one minute per 25 points of the abilities full cost (e.g., a 55-point ability takes two minutes to improvise). *Hardcore* improvisation takes *five* times as long.

● Alternative rituals may be used, but they require a suitably dramatic wuxia flair! For example, chanting a mantra and performing a kata may substitute for paying the normal FP cost and meeting one other requirement. This is akin to the chi sorcerer slowly pulling a bucket from a well (his chi), versus frantically pulling up the bucket. Likewise, the chi sorcerer can opt to spend an additional 30 seconds meditating as an alternative method to paying FP (count this as one substitution) or a full minute (for two).

● Chi sorcerers are limited in what abilities they can improvise; use the guidelines listed under Ki Investment (pp. 12-13).

● Keywords (*Sorcery*, pp. 9-11) are the same, plus a new one (p. 15).

● While many *Sorcery* spells discourage "always on" powers and encourage Buffing afflictions, Chi Sorcery uses the opposite assumption! Many chi powers are only useful for those who have learned to harness their chi.

UNIVERSAL KI

The following ability is neither Body Control nor Chi Projection and represents the balance between the two.

Chi Sensing

Keywords: Information.

Full Cost: 7, 17, 37, 57, or 65 points.

Casting Roll: Per. Use IQ for analysis.

Range: Unlimited.

Duration: Instantaneous (and optionally Indefinite at level 5).

You can perceive the ebb and flow of chi in others or the local area. At level 1, you can only detect the presence or absence of chi with a Per roll (plus range penalties, p. B550). Level 2 refines your awareness; once you've located a particular source of chi, an IQ roll allows you to detect even tiny changes in it. Level 3 allows you to determine the exact distance you are from your subject. Level 4 means that as long as you succeed on your Per roll to locate your target, you automatically succeed on the roll to analyze your subject. Level 5 turns this ability into a passive sense, letting you maintain it indefinitely; while "on," you may use it as a free action and the GM will even roll for you (but at -4). Additionally, you now may perform a special variation of *Evaluate* (p. B364) against other chi sorcerers; success means you gain +4 to resist the next chi ability they use against you.

Statistics: Level 1 is Detect Chi (Chi Sorcery, -15%; Vague, -50%) [7]. Level 2 removes Vague [+10]. Level 3 adds Precise [+20]. Level 4 adds Analyzing [+20]. Level 5 adds Reflexive [+8].

BODY CONTROL

Body Control abilities are not flashy and many of them lack the "Obvious" keyword. They make the user a dangerous foe nonetheless.

Anatomic Control

Keywords: None.

Full Cost: 22 points for level 1 + 7 points/additional level.

Casting Roll: HT.

Power Modifier: Chi Sorcery

-15%

Abilities with this power modifier require you to draw energy from within yourself or from the environment. Either way is tiring and thus each use of an ability costs 1 FP. You must also take a -10-point Disciplines of Faith, Vow, or similar disadvantage that involves spending 1d hours per day exercising and meditating and paying double for food due to a special diet and other ritual consumables. Alternatively, you can take two appropriate -5-point disadvantages that have equivalent requirements. If you neglect your daily ritual or your disadvantage(s), your power fails the first time you call on it when you're under stress. Roll a die and consult the following:

Roll	Result
1-2	Unstable Chi
3-4	Yin Imbalance
5-6	Yang Imbalance

You need 1d days of (25 - Meditation Skill) hours of meditation to restore your inner balance, minimum of one hour per day.

Those who have access to Body Control abilities, but not Chi Projection automatically suffer from yin imbalance – while those with Chi Projection abilities, but not Body Control automatically suffer yang imbalance. Those with access to both, or Universal Ki only, roll normally.

Chi-Limited: This special limitation is identical to Chi Sorcery except that it doesn't include the 1 FP cost. Use it for linked traits and advantages which already cost fatigue. (In other words, as Magical is to Sorcery, Chi-Limited is to Chi Sorcery.) -10%.

Yin Imbalance

The user's yin energies become dominant, with the following effects.

- Bully (use Will to resist) or reduce the self-control number by a step if the martial artist already has this disadvantage. This is largely expressed as a tendency to make spiteful remarks.

- Killjoy (use Will to resist), or reduce the self-control number by a step if the martial artist already has this disadvantage.

- Noticeably clammy skin (treat as Distinctive Features).

- -2 to HT rolls to resist disease.

- -3 to HT rolls to resist the effects of cold; reduce his cold-temperature band by 10°F.

- +3 to HT rolls to resist the effects of heat; increase his heat-temperature band by 10°F.

- Body Control abilities get +1 to activation rolls, while Chi Projection abilities are at -1 to use.

Yang Imbalance

The user's yang energies become dominant, with the following effects.

- Impulsiveness (use Will to resist) or reduce the self-control number by a step if the martial artist already has this disadvantage.

- Lecherousness (use Will to resist) or reduce the self-control number by a step if the martial artist already has this disadvantage.

- A quirk-level desire for easy pleasures.

- Noticeably hot, dry skin (treat as Distinctive Features).

- -2 to HT rolls to resist disease.

- -3 to HT rolls to resist the effects of heat; reduce his heat-temperature band by 10°F.

- +3 to HT rolls to resist the effects of cold; increase his cold-temperature band by 10°F.

- Chi Projection abilities get +1 to activation rolls, while Body Control abilities are at -1 to use.

Unstable Chi

Every hour roll 1d. On 1 or 2, the user has a yin imbalance, with all its effects; on 5 or 6, he has a yang imbalance, with all its effects. In either case, all his Universal Ki abilities become unusable as well. On a 3 or 4, he is *temporarily* in balance and must roll again the next hour *or* whenever he activates one of his abilities, whichever comes first.

Range: Self.

Duration: Indefinite.

You have the ability to make minute changes within your body to adjust to your current condition. This gives you +1/level to *all* HT rolls, allowing you to better resist poison, diseases, afflictions, etc. You may also make HT rolls to treat your own wounds, as if you had First Aid or Physician at the campaign's TL. At level 2 or higher, you're also considered to be "under the care of a physician" for the purposes of long-term care (pp. B423-425).

You may enter a death-like trance. In such a state, each level reduces your oxygen requirements by 10% (at level 10+, you *don't breathe at all*) and doubles the amount of time you can safely go without food or water. Others can attempt to roll IQ (or Diagnosis) vs. your HT (including the bonus from this ability) + Ki Talent, to discover that you aren't dead. Abilities like Chi Sensing need not win a Contest with you, but do suffer a flat -4. If you are being affected by a toxin or disease and are aware of it, you may with attempt an (HT + level in Anatomic Control) roll to purge your system. Success means that, after 1d hours, the poison or illness has no further effect on you. (This is a lingering effect; you need not maintain the spell.)

Statistics: Immunity to Metabolic Hazards (Accessibility, Requires the subject be aware of his ailment, -10%; Chi Sorcery, -15%; Onset, 1d hours, -20%; Requires HT roll, -10%) [14] + Metabolism Control 1 (Chi-Limited, -10%; Low Chi Signature, +10%; Mastery, +40%) [7] + Skill Substitution (Make HT rolls instead of First Aid or Physician when treating yourself) [1]. Further levels add more levels of Metabolism Control [7/level].

Blind Fighting

Keywords: Resisted (Stealth).

Full Cost: 41 or 89 points.

Casting Roll: Per. Use Per to sense things.

Range: Self.

Duration: Indefinite.

You can use your other senses to see and fight invisible foes or in total darkness. If you lose input from hearing, smell, or touch, your Per is at -2 for each blocked sense; if you lose all three (plus vision), you are completely blind. Any opponent capable of using Stealth will remain hidden unless you *win* a Quick Contest of Per (plus Talent) versus his Stealth; otherwise, if your Per roll succeeds, you never suffer the penalty for trying to hit something you can't see.

The improved version gives you the ability to perceive fully around yourself – beside you, behind you, above you, and beneath you – without needing to move your head or turn around.

Statistics: Dark Vision (Chi Sorcery, -15%; Color Vision, +20%; Hypersensory, Three senses, +40%; Requires Per vs. Stealth Roll, -15%) [33] + Hypersensory Vision (Three senses) (Chi-Limited, -10%) [8]. The improved version adds 360° Vision (Chi-Limited, -10%; Hypersensory, Three Senses, +40%; Panoptic 2, +60%) [48]. Hypersensory is from **GURPS Powers: Enhanced Senses**.

Immovable Stance

Keywords: None.

Full Cost: 16 points for level 1 + 14 points/additional level.

Casting Roll: None.

Range: Self.

Duration: Indefinite.

If you are attacked while this ability is active, add its level × 5 to your effective ST for the purpose of calculating knockback; you may also substitute Will for ST (if higher). Similarly, add its level × 3 to all rolls you make for knockdown and roll against the higher of HT or Will.

Statistics: ST+5 (Accessibility, Only for calculating knockback, -80%; Chi-Limited, -10%) [10] + Attribute Substitution (Use Will instead of HT for knockdown) [1] + Attribute Substitution (Use Will instead of ST for knockback) [1] + Hard to Subdue 3 (Accessibility, Knockdown rolls only, -20%; Chi Sorcery, -15%) [4].

New Keyword: Time-Limited

The spell is built with the *Requires (Attribute) Roll, Time-Limited* modifier (p. 13), and thus requires extra time to use without penalty. By default assumption, the standard version of that limitation is assumed (that is, the spell works like the matching cinematic skills in the **Basic Set**); if it uses the Margin-Based variant instead, this will be noted in the spell's description.

Iron Skin

Keywords: None.

Full Cost: 25 points per level.

Casting Roll: None.

Range: Self.

Duration: Indefinite.

You can temporarily harden your flesh. When struck, roll against (HT + Talent)/2 + 3, at +1 for Combat Reflexes, even if you've already made an active defense. Success gives you 4 DR per level against that attack. Weapons that strike you take damage equal to what they would have done to you (up to 10 points per level). In most cases, this will force a breakage roll (p. B376).

Statistics: Each level is Damage Resistance 4 (Active Defense, -40%; Chi Sorcery, -15%; Includes Eyes, +10%; No Signature, +20%) [15] + Damage Resistance 10 (Accessibility, Cannot exceed damage roll, -10% Accessibility, Only when Damage Resistance is active, -10%; Accessibility, Only to break, not disarm, -20%; Chi Sorcery, -15%; Limited, Physical attacks, -20%; Provides no DR, -100%; Reflection, +80%) [10].

Light Walk

Keywords: Time-Limited.

Full Cost: 8 points.

Casting Roll: DX.

Range: Self.

Duration: Indefinite.

While you can't walk on air, this ability may be the next best thing. If you make your DX roll, vision-based Tracking rolls become useless to trace you, as you leave no visible tracks. You can also attempt to move over fragile surfaces, but this reduces your move to 1/3 normal *and* inflicts a penalty to your DX roll. Thin ice would require an unmodified roll, while rice paper would need a roll at -8!

Finally, a successful Light Walk roll can give a bonus to Stealth rolls equal to half your margin of success (minimum of +1).

Statistics: Walk on Air (Chi Sorcery, -15%; Heightened Skill Enhancement*, +20%; No Ceiling, -30%; Nuisance Effect, Moving over fragile surfaces reduces move by 1/3, -15%; Requires DX Roll, Time-Limited, -20%) [8].

* This modifier allows the ability to give a higher bonus, based on your margin, when using the rules for *Abilities Enhancing Skills* (**GURPS Powers**, p. 162).

Mental Strength

Keywords: None.
Full Cost: 13, 17 or 26 points.
Casting Roll: None.
Range: Self.
Duration: Indefinite.

While active, Mental Strength gives you +3 on any roll to resist a mental assault. The GM is the final arbiter of what counts as "mental," but this includes Hypnotism, Invisibility Art, Kiai, and any magical or psychic ability resisted by IQ, Will, or Per. You may also use your Will (plus bonus) to resist the ability if that would be better for you.

Level 2 improves this bonus to +8. Level 3 makes you *immune* to mental attacks.

Statistics: Attribute Substitution $\times 4$ (Use Will instead of DX, IQ, HT, or Per when resisting mental attacks) [4] + Resistant to Mental Attacks (+3) (Chi Sorcery, -15%) [9]. Level 2 increases the bonus to (+8) [+4]. Level 3 is Immunity to Mental Attacks (Chi Sorcery, -15%) [26].

Phoenix Heart

Keywords: None.
Full Cost: 20, 40, or 60 points.
Casting Roll: Will.
Range: Self.
Duration: Indefinite.

You can heal your own wounds by focusing your chi. This requires a Will roll at -1 per multiple of (HP \times 0.5) you have lost, after which you heal 1 HP per minute. Once you stop maintaining Phoenix Heart, you must wait 12 hours before it may be used again. This is similar to Anatomic Control (pp. 15-16), but does nothing for poison or sickness – just HP loss.

Level 2 raises your recovery to 1 HP per *second*. Level 3 makes it 10 HP per second.

Statistics: Regeneration (Fast) (Chi Sorcery, -15%; Requires Will Roll, -5%; Nuisance Effect, Penalty for low HP, -5%; Takes Recharge, 12 hours, -35%) [20]. Level 2 raises Regeneration to Very Fast [+20]. Level 3 raises it to Extreme [+20].

Power Blow

Keywords: Time-Limited.
Full Cost: 20 or 40 points.
Casting Roll: Will.
Range: Self.
Duration: One second.

With a successful (time-limited) Will roll, you can increase your ST by +10 for a single second. The improved version makes this +20! This does not improve your HP, only your lifting and striking ST.

Statistics: ST+10 (Chi Sorcery, -15%; Doesn't add HP, -20%; Reduced Duration, 1/60, -35%; Requires Will Roll, Time-Limited, -15%) [20/level].

I think that if you kill Harold out of your own vengeance, it'll corrupt your chi. You'll never be the Iron Fist you're meant to be.

– Colleen Wing, in **Iron Fist #1.13**

Precognitive Parry

Keywords: None
Full Cost: Variable (see below).
Casting Roll: Per. Use Per to spot incoming attacks.
Range: Self.
Duration: Indefinite.

While active, you may make a Per (plus Talent) roll to sense any attack that targets you. If successful, you may attempt to parry it with any limb or ready weapon – even if it's moving too fast for that to be physically possible (e.g., a beam or bullet). This does nothing to protect your weapon from the attack. You cannot "parry" area effect attacks, Maledictions, etc.; this ability simply lets you put your weapon where an attack is going to be.

The full cost of this ability is $2 \times$ (the sorcerer's DX) points. For example, a sorcerer with DX 12 treats Precognitive Parry as having a full cost of 24 points. If you later raise your DX, recalculate full cost.

Statistics: Cosmic Parry (Chi-Sorcery, -15%; Requires Per Roll, -5%); see **GURPS Power-Ups 4: Enhancements**, p. 7.

Push

Keywords: None.
Full Cost: Special.
Casting Roll: IQ.
Range: Self.
Duration: One second.

With a successful IQ roll, your next unarmed attack does *knockback* damage only (p. B377), but this is *doubled*.

Cost for this power is a surcharge based on your basic damage. Calculate basic *thrust* damage, taking any applicable advantages (e.g., Striking ST) into account.

If your thrust is not in whole dice, treat each ± 1 as ± 0.3 dice; e.g., treat thrust 1d+2 as 1.6d. Multiply the dice by 0.45 to find your surcharge.

Statistics: Modified Unarmed Attack (Double Knockback, +20%; Chi Sorcery, -15%; No Wounding, -50%; Requires IQ Roll, -10%) [2.25/level].

Sensitivity

Keywords: Resisted (DX).

Full Cost: 20 points/level.

Casting Roll: Per.

Range: Self.

Duration: Indefinite.

Pick *one* target you are either in close combat with or physically touching. Make a Quick Contest against your Per vs. his DX or best combat skill. Success means you get +1 to all rolls in close combat and +1 to active defenses per level, against that one target. Success by 3+ or critical success doubles the bonus.

Statistics: Each level is DX +2 (Accessibility, Only against close-combat attacks, -40%; Chi Sorcery, -15%; Limited by Margin, Full power at margin 3+, -15%; Requires Per vs. DX roll, -15%) [8/level] + Defense Bonus Meta-Trait 2 (Accessibility, Only when the DX bonus is active, -10%; Accessibility, Only against close-combat attacks, -40%; Chi Sorcery, -15%; Limited by Margin, Full power at margin 3+, -15%) [12/level].

Kano: At your worst, sorcerer.

Quan Chi: You shall see my worst.

– *Mortal Kombat X*

CHI PROJECTION

Chi Projection abilities are flashy and many of them have the “Obvious” keyword. Such powers are only possible because of the wielder’s finely honed chi and his ability to draw upon the chi of living things around him to perform his supernatural feats.

Breath of Life

Keywords: Obvious; Time-Limited.

Full Cost: 29 or 45 points.

Casting Roll: The higher of IQ or Per.

Range: Touch.

Duration: Instantaneous.

You may heal up to 12 HP, spending 1 FP per 2 HP healed, by making an IQ or Per roll (whichever is better). You must be able to touch your target’s skin or breathe into his nose or mouth.

The improved version allows you to spend as much FP as you have available *and* tap into your subject’s FP (with permission) to help him heal his own body.

Statistics: Healing (Based on Per or IQ, Own Roll, +40%; Capped, 6 FP, -15%; Chi Sorcery, -15%; Contact Agent or Respiratory Agent, Reversed, -15%) [29]. The improved version removes the Capped limitation and adds “Based on Subject’s FP, +40%,” for 16 points. *Notes:* Respiratory Agent, Reversed, requires that the sorcerer breathe into the target’s mouth or nose to transfer the healing energy.

Breaking Blow

Keywords: Obvious.

Full Cost: Variable (see below).

Casting Roll: IQ.

Range: Self.

Duration: One second.

You charge up your chi to deliver a devastating blow that can pierce armor. With a successful IQ roll, you temporarily gain Armor Divisor (5) on all of your unarmed attacks against *homogenous, non-living* targets. If your attack inflicts even 1 point of damage, treat the target as if it had Fragile (Brittle) (p. B136) for this one attack.

Cost is equal to a surcharge based on your basic damage. Calculate basic *thrust* damage, taking any applicable advantages (e.g., Striking ST) into account. If your thrust is not in whole dice, treat each ± 1 as ± 0.3 dice; e.g., treat thrust 1d+2 as 1.6d. Multiply the dice by 2.6 to find your surcharge.

Statistics: Modified Unarmed Attack (Accessibility, Homogenous Targets, -20%; Armor Divisor (5), +150%; Chi Sorcery, -15%; Requires IQ Roll, Time-Limited, -20%; Symptom, *Any* damage, Fragile (Brittle) (Reduced Duration, 1/60, -35%), +65%) [Varies].

Concealment

Keywords: None.

Full Cost: 8.5 points/level (round up after determining the number of levels).

Casting Roll: DX or Holdout.

Range: Self.

Duration: Indefinite.

You can conceal items on your body in such a way as to make them undetectable. These objects must be of a size that you can reasonably hide on your person; you may store up to 10 lbs. per level in this way. Stowed items count against your encumbrance. To conceal an item, you must make a DX or Holdout roll (subject to all the usual penalties and modifiers; see p. B200). Once concealed, it is undetectable by mundane perceptions and can only be located by you or those you allow. Those with Chi Sensing (pp. 13-14) or similar supernatural senses can roll a Quick Contest vs. your DX or Holdout to detect the concealment.

To *instantly ready* a concealed item (such as a weapon), roll against an appropriate Fast Draw skill +5. For concealed items that lack an appropriate Fast-Draw specialty, roll against DX+1 instead. Success means you treat the item as if it had been fast-drawn normally!

Statistics: Payload 5 (Accessibility, Only items you could reasonably conceal on your person, -10%; Cosmic, Can Fast-Draw objects with DX roll for items without an appropriate skill, +50%; Cosmic, Others can draw from concealment, +50%; Counts against encumbrance, -50%; Chi Sorcery, -15%; Nuisance Effect, Supernatural senses can detect concealment with roll, -5%; Reflexive, +40%; Requires DX Roll, -10%; Reliable 5 (Accessibility, Only for Fast-Draw rolls, -20%), +20%) [9]. Additional levels add another 5 levels of Payload at a time. *Notes:* Weight limit is based on a static BL of 20 lbs. instead of using actual ST.

Dim Mak

Keywords: Resisted (Lower of HT or Will).

Full Cost: 38 points/level or 42 points/level.

Casting Roll: IQ.

Range: Touch.

Duration: 1 minute.

To use this ability, you must touch bare skin. In combat, this requires a roll against an unarmed skill, but any touch against bare skin will do. (Those who witness the attack and have Esoteric Medicine can make a roll at -4 to notice what happened.) Next, make a roll against your IQ vs. the lower of the target's HT or Will. Success means you can trigger the attack later on at any time, merely by willing it. There is no way to remove this delayed effect or prevent the first round of damage.

Once triggered, the target takes 1d toxic damage *immediately*. Every 3d seconds thereafter, the target must roll versus the lower of his HT or Will (minus the margin of your success), taking 1d damage with each failure. This persists until the target succeeds his roll or a minute passes. Additional levels of Dim Mak increase the damage by one die.

Survivors heal normally, but must make two HT rolls at -1 per 2 points of *total* injury. Failure on the first means the target gains Slow Healing 3 (p. B154) for one week per point by which he failed, while failure by five or more – or critical failure on the second HT – *also* reduces the target's HT by 1 permanently!

The improved version of this ability is more deadly. If the target is reduced to -1xHP, and at least (HP/2) of that came from Dim Mak, he may not make a HT roll and simply *dies*.

Statistics: Toxic Attack 1d (Based on lower of HT or Will, +40%; Chi Sorcery, -15%; Contact Agent, -30%; Cosmic, Lingering special effect, +100%; Cyclic, 10 seconds, 6 cycles, Resistible, +125%; Delay, Triggered, +50%; Extended Duration, Permanent, HT loss, +300%; Extended Duration, 10,000x, Slow Healing, +160%; Low Signature, Supernatural, +10%; Melee Attack, Reach C-1, -20%; No Signature, +20%; Requires IQ vs. HT Roll, -20%; Side Effect, Secondary -1 HT, +60%; Side Effect, Slow Healing 3, +65%) [38]. The improved version adds Symptom, 1/2 HP damage, Fragile (Unnatural) (+100%) for another 4 points/level.

Hypnotic Hands

Keywords: None.

Full Cost: 23 or 48 points.

Casting Roll: The higher of DX or IQ. Optionally, roll against a DX or IQ-based weapon or unarmed skill.

Range: Touch.

Duration: Indefinite.

You can hypnotize a target by rapid movements with your hands or weapons. Your victim must be able to see you doing this! Take a Concentrate maneuver and roll against the better of your DX, IQ, unarmed or weapon skill, or IQ-based unarmed or weapon skill vs. your target's Will; include penalties for range (p. B550) and Vision. If you succeed, you can suggest actions to your target (see *Suggest* for guidelines, p. B191).

The improved version allows you to use this against *multiple* targets (at -1 per target after the first).

Statistics: Mind Control (Based on DX or IQ roll, Own Roll, +40%; Chi Sorcery, -15%; Requires Gestures, -10%; Short-Range 1, -10%; Suggestion, -40%; Vision-Based, -20%) [23]. The improved version adds Multiple Contacts (+50%), adding 25 points to the base.

Invisibility Art

Keywords: Resisted (Per).

Full Cost: 10 points/level.

Casting Roll: IQ.

Range: Self.

Duration: Indefinite.

You gain a bonus to Stealth rolls equal to your level (*doubled* if you are completely still) as long as you are at Medium or less encumbrance and succeed on an IQ vs. Per roll each *second*. This bonus is both against aural and visual detection, though you may choose to have one or the other (be seen and not heard or be heard and not seen) and may speak freely without jeopardizing your bonus. If you *are* spotted, you must get out of line of sight before re-activating the ability. At level 10 or higher, you are effectively invisible!

Statistics: Chameleon (Can Carry Objects, Medium, +50%; Chi Sorcery, -15%; Link, +20%; Must break line of sight if spotted, -5%; Reduced Duration, 1/60, -35%; Requires IQ vs. Per Roll, -20%) [4.75/level] + Silence (Can Carry Objects, Medium, +50%; Can speak freely without jeopardizing bonus, +5%; Chi Sorcery, -15%; Link, +20%; Reduced Duration, 1/60, -35%; Requires IQ vs. Per Roll, -20%) [5.25/level].

Flying Leap

Keywords: None.

Full Cost: 31 points/level.

Casting Roll: None.

Range: Self.

Duration: Indefinite.

While active, this ability *doubles* your jumping distance (p. B352) for all purposes. Additionally, calculate distance and "hang time" as usual, but while airborne, treat your jumping Move as *air* Move, exactly as if you had Flight (p. B56). You may optionally use this ability to jump into someone as a part of an attack. In such cases, add 5 to your ST for damage and knockback purposes. In a slam or collision, calculate Move from jumping distance as described for Super Jump (p. B89), and use this velocity to calculate damage.

Additional levels double your jumping distance and add another +5 to your ST if you jump into someone as part of an attack.

Statistics: Each level is Striking ST 5 (Accessibility, Only while leaping, -20%; Chi Sorcery, -15%) [17] + Super Jump 1 (Chi-Limited, -10%; Maneuverable, +50%) [14].

Kiai

Keywords: Obvious; Resisted (Will).

Full Cost: Variable (see below).

Casting Roll: HT.

Range: Unlimited.

Duration: Instantaneous.

With a mighty shout, you can project a *powerful* burst of inner chi! To use this ability, take an Attack maneuver and make a Quick Contest of HT against the victim's Will, at -1 per yard of distance to the subject.

Each of the following kiais is bought as a separate Chi ability, but for the purpose of switching spells, all of your kiais are treated as a single spell (that is, it doesn't take the extra second to switch from one kiai to another).

- *Stunning Kiai.* If you win, your target is mentally stunned for 3d seconds times his margin of loss. Every level past the first inflicts -1 to his resistance roll. *Full Cost:* 26 points/level.

- *Damaging Kiai.* If you win, your victim takes 2d crushing damage per level, with double knockback and double blunt trauma. *Full Cost:* 23 points/level.

- *Forceful Kiai.* You target one subject *and* everyone within two yards of him; they resist at +1 if one yard away, +2 if two yards away. Everyone who loses takes 3d crushing damage that does double knockback *only*. It does not inflict real damage or blunt trauma. *Full Cost:* 18 points/level.

Statistics (Stunning Kiai): Affliction (Will; Based on HT, Own Roll, +20%; Based on Will, +20%; Chi Sorcery, -15%; Environmental, Sound-transmitting mediums, -10%; Extended Duration, ×10, +40%; Malediction 1, +100%) [26/level].

Statistics (Damaging Kiai): Crushing Attack 2d (Based on HT, Own Roll, +20%; Chi Sorcery, -15%; Double Blunt Trauma, +20%; Double Knockback, +20%; Malediction 1, +100%; Environmental, Sound-transmitting mediums, -10%) [23/level].

Statistics (Forceful Kiai): Crushing Attack 3d (Area Effect, 2 yards, +50%; Based on HT, Own Roll, +20%; Chi Sorcery, -15%; Dissipation, -50%; Double Knockback, +20%; Emanation -20%; Environmental, Sound-transmitting mediums, -10%; Malediction 1, +100%; No Blunt Trauma, -20%; No Wounding, -50%) [18/level].

As a feature, all kiais count as the same ability and use an Attack maneuver.

Lizard Climb

Keywords: None.

Full Cost: 12 points + 3 points per additional level.

Casting Roll: DX.

Range: Self.

Duration: Indefinite.

You can scale vertical surfaces by making a DX or Climbing roll per second. This gives you +4 to

Climbing rolls if you use this ability beforehand. Your climbing Move is equal to your Basic Move / 2. Each level thereafter, increase both your mundane climbing speed and Lizard Climb by 1.

Statistics: Clinging (Chi Sorcery, -15%; Reduced Fatigue Cost 1, +20%; Reduced Duration, 1/60, -35%; Requires DX Roll, -10%) [12]. Further levels add Super Climbing (Chi-Limited, -10%) [3/level].

Pressure Points

Keywords: None.

Full Cost: 52 points.

Casting Roll: IQ.

Range: Touch.

Duration: Instantaneous.

You can inflict any of the effects listed under *Pressure Points* (p. B215). If using **GURPS Martial Arts**, you may also add the effects listed under *Pressure Points (Martial Arts, p. 58)*.

Statistics: Affliction 1 (Fixed Duration, +0%; Follow-up, Universal (Accessibility, Crushing attacks, -20%), +40%; Nuisance Effect, Takes Physiology modifiers, -5%; Pressure Points, +406%; Reduced Duration, 1/10, -20%; Requires IQ vs. HT roll, -10%) [52]. *Notes:* See below for what the Pressure Points enhancement is composed of. The GM without access to **GURPS Martial Arts** may wish to reduce the cost to 27 points.

UNDER THE HOOD: PRESSURE POINTS

The Pressure Point ability (pp. 19-20) hides the complexity of its main enhancement in the "Pressure Points, +406%" modifier. This modifier is essentially a series of *Alternate Enhancements* (see **GURPS Power-Ups 4: Enhancements**, p. 5). The actual breakdown of "Pressure Points" is:

Location (Any):* Variable Enhancement (Accessibility, Disadvantages on short list only, -40%), +330%.

Location (Ear):* Disadvantage, Deafness (Accessibility, Only against the ears, -35%), +13%.

Location (Face): Stunning (Accessibility, Only against the face, -25%), +8%

Location (Jaw):* Disadvantage, Mute (Accessibility, Only against the ears, -30%), +18%.

Location (Limbs): Paralysis (Accessibility, Only against the limbs, -10%; Selective, +20%), +165%.

Location (Nose):* Disadvantage, No Sense of Smell/Taste (Accessibility, Only against the ears, -35%), +7%.

Location (Skull): Disadvantage, Blindness (Accessibility, Only against the skull, -35%), +33%.

Location (Spine):* Disadvantage, Paraplegic, (Accessibility, Only against the ears, -40%), +18% and Stunning, +10%.

Location (Torso): Choking (Accessibility, Only against the torso, -5%), +95%.

Those without **Martial Arts** may reduce the enhancement's cost to +199% and ignore all entries marked with an asterisk (*).

Pressure Secrets

Keywords: None.

Full Cost: 30 or 72 points.

Casting Roll: IQ.

Range: Touch.

Duration: Instantaneous.

With a successful IQ roll, you may treat your next unarmed attack as if it were an impaling weapon! Alternatively, you can use this ability with locks and similar grappling attacks. Success means you add 10 to your ST for the purposes of damage, shock, or harmful effects of the lock *for that turn*.

The improved version adds +20 to your ST for the purposes of damage, shock, or harmful effects of the lock, *and* if an opponent's extremity is successfully grappled, add 3d cutting damage to the attack; if total damage is enough to sever the limb, the target must make an immediate HT roll. Failure means the extremity is torn from his body!

Statistics: Extra ST without HP +10 (Accessibility, Only if grapple or lock is successful, -5%; Chi Sorcery, -15%; Nuisance Effect, Takes Physiology Modifiers, -5%; Reduced Duration, 1/60, -35%; Requires IQ Roll, -10%) [24] + Talons (Accessibility, Only if attack is successful, -15%; Chi Sorcery, -15%) [6]. The improved version adds Cutting Attack 3d (Chi Sorcery, -15%; Follow-Up, Grappling to Extremity, +0%; Immediate Crippling, +10%; All or Nothing, -10%) [18] and increases Extra ST without HP to +20, for 24 points.

The Avatar State is a defense mechanism, designed to empower you with the skill and knowledge of all the first Avatars.

– Avatar Roku, in Avatar: The Last Airbender #2.1

Throwing Art

Keywords: None.

Full Cost: 40 points for level 1 + 5 points/additional level.

Casting Roll: None. Use any thrown weapon skill; see description.

Range: Self.

Duration: Indefinite.

You can throw *anything*. Use the guidelines for *Throwing Art* (p. B226) to determine base damage, but the following table to determine range and damage bonus. Additionally, you can use *any* thrown weapon skill – including Throwing – at DX+0. If you know the required skill at DX+1 or higher, you get a *further* +1/die to skill!

Level	Range Multiplier	Damage Bonus
1	×1	+1/die
2	×1.5	+2/die
3	×2	+3/die
4	×3	+4/die
5	×4	+5/die

Statistics: DX+2 (Accessibility, Only for defaults, -80%; Accessibility, Only to raise Throwing and Thrown Weapon to DX, -20%; Chi-Limited, -10%) [8] + Weapon Master (Thrown Weapons) (Chi Sorcery, -15%; Improvised Weapons, +20%) [32]. Additional levels add Super Throw 0.5 (Chi-Limited, -10%) [5] from **GURPS Supers**; each half-level gives ×1.5 range and +1/die damage.

Zen Archery

Keywords: Time-Limited

Full Cost: 15 points/level.

Casting Roll: IQ.

Range: Self.

Duration: One second.

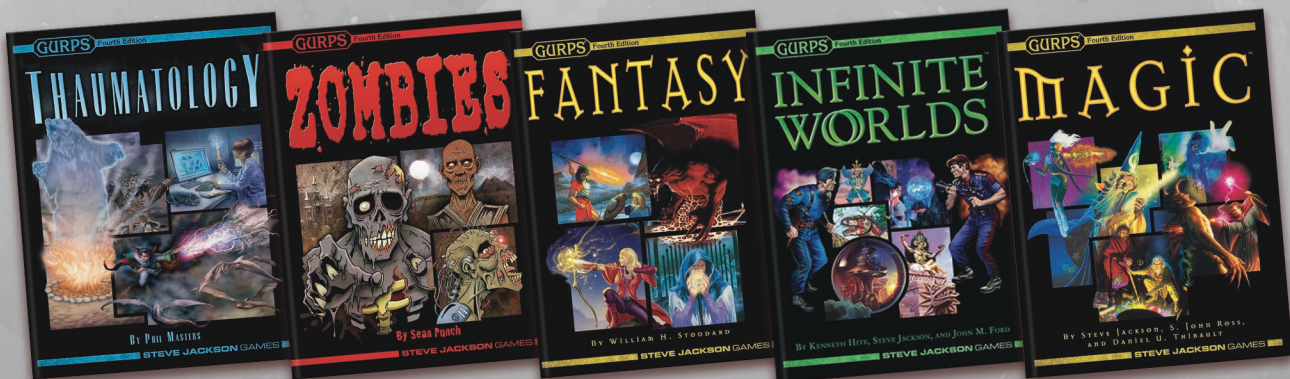
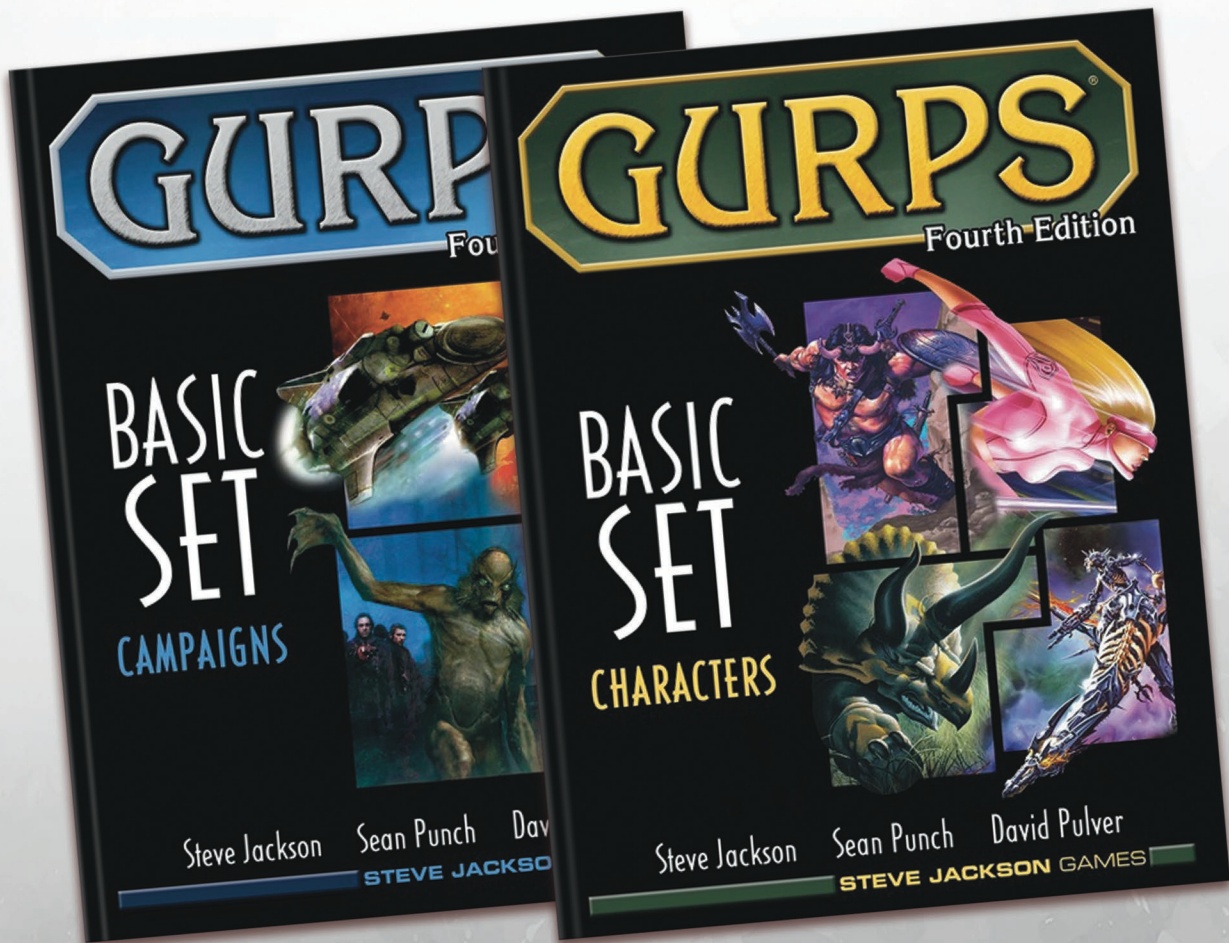
A successful IQ roll lets you ignore -3 worth of range penalties for your next ranged attack, per level of Zen Archery. If you aim at your target, you *double* this amount. This stacks with mundane aids such as scopes, range finders, etc. and, despite its name, can be used for *any* ranged attack.

Statistics: Telescopic Vision 3 (Accessibility, Range Penalties for Ranged Attacks only, -20%; Chi Sorcery, -15%; Cosmic, Stacks with Mundane Aids, +50%; Required IQ Roll, Time-Limited, -20%) [15/level].

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Christopher R. Rice does not know kung fu, but he can scrap with the best of 'em. From Portsmouth, Virginia, he's spinning words and whimsy into gold. Of course, if 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 (the Headhunters); Beth "Archangel" McCoy, the "Sith Editrix"; Christopher "Ternas" Dorr; Euan Hastie; Mavrick Fitzgerald; and Hal "Wavefunction" Batty, for being most excellent sounding boards.

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EIDETIC MEMORY THEO-NECROMANCY

BY DAVID L. PULVER

Where is the graveyard of dead gods? What lingering mourner waters their mounds?

– H.L. Mencken, “Memorial Service”

Way back in *God Is Dead* (in *Pyramid* #3/41: Fantasy World Building), Eidetic Memory discussed the possibility of gods dying, the effect that might have on game worlds, and how new gods might replace them. Left unexplored was a related question: if a god dies, is there life after death for that being? If so, how does this interact with thaumaturgy – for example, if a robust magic system that can raise the dead or summon spirits exists, will such necromancy work on a dead god? Surely this question is one that wizards and priests would have pondered!

This article offers possible answers to these questions in relation to the *GURPS Magic* system, as well as adventure seeds associated with theo-necromantic activities.

REVENANT GODS

Assume multiple gods exist and can walk among mortals, and that while gods may be immortal, in the sense of being unaging, they are not necessarily indestructible. If so, the methods by which a god may plausibly die could include assault perpetrated by other gods or primordial monsters, or a mortal wielding an artifact of divine power. More esoteric means of divine demise might also exist: exposure to divine illness, dying of childbirth (the fate of the primal Japanese goddess Izanami), suicide (as befell the feathered serpent Quetzalcoatl), being trapped in a no-mana area, an accident on their home plane, etc. Another possibility is that gods gradually fade away if worshipers cease to believe in them or feed them sacrifices or prayers. Although few historical religions have been willing to acknowledge this, the concept is common in fantasy (see *Being a God*, *GURPS Fantasy*, p. 33) and may be taken as a default condition in any fantasy world where hundreds of gods from varied pantheons exist over history.

Some gods also have the ability to die and rise again (whether as a singular miracle or a cyclical process) as an integral part of their nature. Gods with such abilities are generally immune to permanent demise, although in some

cosmologies might still fade away and not return if people cease to follow them.

In summary, two of the working preconditions for theo-necromantic magic are that, with enough effort, a god can die or fade away. Furthermore, such events can occur in history without presaging the end of the world. That is, the god who died is either not vital to the world’s function, or was replaced by other gods. Indeed, if a god can fade away due to lack of worship, it is possible that few or no one will even notice they have died. . .

So, if a god can indeed die, does anything remain after death? This is a third fundamental question in determining whether or not necromancers can benefit from the god’s death. It largely depends on the nature of deities. It is possible that the same cosmological rules apply to all gods, but it is equally possible that they differ from god to god, or possibly from pantheon to pantheon (if multiple types of families of gods exist).

Some gods may leave nothing after death. This would be likely if they are entities formed of pure soul-stuff or spirit that can also assume material form. If so, anything potent enough to permanently slay the god perforce also annihilates the spirit; there is no soul to depart. Perhaps the body dissolves or disintegrates, leaving no corpse at all. If this is the case for all gods, they are beyond the reach of necromancy. However, given divine deaths are something that few mortals get to witness, it is possible to imagine necromantic scholars being unaware of this truth. In this type of world, an adventure could revolve around a group of necromancers or priests learning of a dying god and attempting to arrive at the moment of death to discover what happens (or purloin the corpse), only to be thwarted at the final moment as the god discorporates into ultimate nothingness!

Another possibility is that a god can “die” in the mortal realm, but the spirit or soul is sent back to another divine plane of existence (heaven, hell, another dimension), where it will – instantly or gradually – form a new body and may later return. This mode is common in fantasy literature; Gandalf in *Lord of the Rings* and the gods of Michael Moorcock’s *Eternal Champion* sequence all seem to operate in this fashion, and of course there is the example of Christianity as well. As such, this is often taken as the default assumption for a world’s gods.

This setup is likely to be especially common when it is the gods themselves who are responsible for running an afterlife. The argument may be crudely stated: if people go to an afterlife after death, where they are given new bodies by the gods, and the gods control this afterlife that they also can go to, then they can give themselves new bodies.

If a god's death on the mortal plane is temporary, it precludes necromantic spells that involve summoning a god's spirit, although a "window" might exist while the god is reforming. But a death on the mortal plane may still leave a permanent corpse, which could be vulnerable to necromantic machinations such as the Zombie spell. Also, while death on "earth" may indeed be temporary, it's often assumed that a god might still be vulnerable to being slain on his "home plane" or die if his worshipers no longer follow him. In such cases, the god will either suffer annihilation as described above, or be sent to a more permanent afterlife, as detailed below.

The third major assumption, and the one that works best as a prerequisite for theo-necromancy, is that gods, like mortals, have some sort of separate immortal spark or soul that can survive bodily or even spiritual death. Mortals are often considered to have an immortal soul or spirit (or, in some belief systems, such as that of ancient Egypt, a soul that has several parts, only some of which are immortal). The existence of a soul is implied though not mandated by many necromantic spells, such as Summon Spirit and Soul Jar. In some cosmologies, the immortal soul of a mortal is judged by the gods and dispatched to a reward, purgatory, punishment, or perhaps reincarnation. Such a fate is, however, rarely described as being dished out to dead gods; in settings where this exists, the aforementioned "god's death is temporary" paradigm is likely to operate.

In other settings, many or most people who die (except possibly a few select folk intercepted by psychopomps) end up in a single gloomy afterlife, such as the Hades of Greek Myth or the Hel of Norse mythology. Sometimes these souls are simply trapped, but equally often they are mere shades with reduced volition or memory, or pawns of whatever chthonic deity, demons, or primal powers rules the underworld. A related fate is ending up as an invisible and immaterial ghost who is still tied to the mortal world, often seen, especially in modern supernatural belief, as a sort of purgatory existence for those with unfinished spiritual business or who don't fit into either heaven or hell.

If death is seen as a primal power far greater than gods or mortal alike, it's quite possible that consignment to a gloomy afterlife also awaits a deity that is unfortunate enough to be slain. Similarly, gods whose demise is the result of a loss of worship may fade away until they mere ghostly fragments or memories of what they once were, with a similar result. Examples of the shades of departed gods ending up in such an afterlife are not uncommon in mythology. For instance, in Norse myth, when the god Baldur (son of Odin) was slain, his shade ended up in Hel, the land of the dead, just like a normal man. A similar fate happened to the aforementioned goddess Izanami, who ended up in the realm of Yomi (the gloomy Shinto land of the dead). Such may be the fate of any other god who passed away. However, the shades, souls, or spirits of dead gods are likely to be more potent than a mere mortal's, and also possess significant knowledge, which makes them of considerable interest to power-hungry mages. The ideal

state from the necromancer's perspective is that the ghost of a god is weak enough to be controlled by powerful non-cosmic magic, but still having useful knowledge or power! Such an assumption is a match for the way necromancy works in *GURPS Magic* – reaching into a shadowy other world to conjure and manipulate spirits of the dead. If the land of the dead is democratic enough that it applies to everyone, god or mortal, all manner of necromancy spells could be assumed to work on dead gods.

An alternative but related option that may be suited for modern-day occult settings is that there is no afterlife as such, but ghosts, wraiths, and so on are mere echoes or memories of a deceased being. This is more common in contemporary urban fantasy than in heroic fantasy or historical settings, but is also compatible with the standard version of necromancy. If so, spells like Summon Spirit may be merely interrogating these memories; the casting of a Resurrection spell might involve creating a new body and then gathering up these echoes, memories, or fragments to inhabit it.

*As he sang of Balder beautiful,
Whom the heavens could not save,
Till the world was like a sea of tears
And every soul a wave.*

– G.K. Chesterton,
*The Ballad of
the White Horse*

THEO-NECROMANTIC MAGIC

A dead god is essentially an entity that was once a cosmic force but has now degenerated so that its potency is merely that of a powerful spirit – or, if it has been dead a very long time, perhaps a not very powerful spirit!

There are several reasons for summoning the spirit of a dead god.

First, the spirit may know things that an ordinary spirit of the dead does not. In particular, the dead god may have arcane knowledge related to ancient times, to the activities of its former worshipers, to the doings of other gods it was acquainted with, to powerful divine relics, or to anything that was within its former sphere of influence. For example, a god of smithcrafting may know secrets for working exotic metals like orichalcum, while a god of the sea may know the locations of ancient prehuman civilizations that sank beneath the waves. A spirit might also be an excuse for buying an esoteric advantage or perk ("I summoned the forgotten ghost of Potnia, the Pure Mother Bee goddess, and from her learned the speech of the bees and the secret of enchanted honeycomb. . .") This is the usual goal of theo-necromancers.

Second, a necromancer may try to use spells such as Entrap Spirit or Command Spirit to bind the dead god, thus gaining a powerful entity as an ally. Of course, most divine ghosts are still more powerful than ordinary spirits, so this may be challenging.

Third, the dead god's spirit may be willing to make a pact with the spellcaster. Shamans, demonologists and other spirit-wranglers are more likely to be interested in this sort of dealing. The rules for doing this are laid out at length in *GURPS Thaumatology*; the mechanics detailed under *Assisting Spirits (Thaumatology, pp. 90-94)* are appropriate for dealing with a dead god. Everything about spirits in that section is applicable to a ghost of a dead god.

The former god may have several possible motives for agreeing to such an exchange. He may be desirous of any contact after having been trapped in a hell or spirit world. Like a ghost, he may have certain desires he wishes to perform before he can "pass on" into nothingness, such as revenge upon whatever beings killed him, or vengeance against the people who ceased to worship the god, resulting in his spiritual demise. He may also see the necromancer or shaman who is contacting him as a chance to reestablish his cult and worship. In this case, his dealings with the mortal summoner may be explicitly aimed toward this end – for instance, he may trade favors in exchange for efforts to repair temples, locate sacred relics, or find individuals who were descended from the peoples or priests who had worshiped the god. He may encourage the summoner to become his priest.

Some dead gods can be presented as major ghosts (possibly haunting a temple or religious relic). Others may be a more single-minded embodiment of whatever sphere they ruled while alive. For example, a dead solar deity may now be little more than a very strong fire elemental. (You can use the *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 9: Summoners* template for a small elemental, with most of the available lenses and increasing ST to 30+, IQ to 15+ and Will to 20+.) Other dead gods, when summoned, may have power similar to a Spirit of Place (see *Dungeon Fantasy 9, p. 24*), the power having collapsed to the point where it can only really be exerted around the ruins of the god's last temple, sacred city, place of death, or some other relevant location. Dead evil gods may be reduced, in effect, to powerful demons (a fate that was common enough for gods in the real world, e.g., Canaanite deities provided the templates for Christian demons).

Summon Divine Ghost

Information; Resisted by god's Will

Talk to the spirit of a dead god. The subject resists at -5 if the caster was a worshiper of the god. If the spell succeeds, the

subject will answer one question, to the best of his knowledge as of the time he died, and one more per minute he remains. If the spell fails, that caster (or ceremonial group) may not summon that god's spirit again for one year. A critical failure means the caster summoned a malign god's spirit, who lies deliberately.

Modifiers: -5 if you don't know the god's full name. -1 if it has been more than a week since the subject's death, -2 if more than a month, -3 if more than a year, -4 if more than 10 years, -5 if more than 50 years, and -6 if more than 500 years.

Duration: 1 minute.

Cost: 40 to cast. 10 to maintain. Halve these costs if the spell is cast at the site of death or using a physical relic of the god; quarter these costs if both conditions are met.

Time to cast: 5 minutes.

Prerequisites: Magery 3 and Summon Spirit.

Item

Staff, wand, or jewelry. Usable only by mages. The item does not give the ability to cast the spell, but gives +2 to skill. *Energy cost:* 1,500.

Using Other Spells on Divine Ghosts

A divine ghost is a spirit. The following spells can be used on a spirit of a god: Affect Spirits, Astral Block, Bind Spirit, Command Spirit, Entrap Spirit, Ghost Weapon, Materialize, Sense Spirit, Solidify, and Turn Spirit. Bind Spirit and Command Spirit require a type; for dead gods, this is "Divine."

ADVENTURES IN THEO-NECROMANCY

The following plots offer ideas for adventures that feature theo-necromancy.

The Order of the Crystal Skull

The Order of the Crystal Skull is a cabal of powerful necromancers, who are devoted to the advancement of this most secretive and maligned of the magical arts. Seven years ago the members of the order met together in their once-every-decade conclave, only to receive news of unprecedented portent. Their arch-magus, the great Simon Necrophidus, was tiring of his centuries-long life and wished to select a successor and heir.

This was no empty honor. Besides great prestige, the office of arch-magus had direct control over the magical treasures of the order that had accumulated over the last nine centuries of its existence. Numerous mages within the order coveted the chance to use artifacts such as the Harp of Bones, Engine 666, or the Coffin Stairway. They also lusted after the arch-magus' occult library that included such lost works as the Gravestone Tablets, the *Stamford Lich Diaries*, and the *Book of the Death of the Soul*.

Dungeon Fantasy

The GM who is hosting a *Dungeon Fantasy* campaign may prefer to use the rules in *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 9: Summoners* instead of *GURPS Thaumatology*. The relevant rules are in *Spirits and Servitors* (Chapter 2 of *Dungeon Fantasy 9*). Using the dungeon-fantasy cosmology described in that work (see *Dungeon Fantasy 9, pp. 39-40*), a dead god's spirit would likely be banished from the Land of the Gods and instead be trapped in the Spirit Realm or Hell until summoned. If using the more detailed cosmology, a dead god may be trapped in the Ethereal Plane (like other ghosts) or, more evocatively, the spirit is condemned to the horrific Outer Void, dodging Elder Things. (In such cases, souls may either be pathetically grateful to be summoned, or completely mad!)

Adventure Seed

The arch-magus Simon, however, is determined that his successor be worthy. He has proposed that the title of arch-magus presumptive goes to whichever master is the first to successfully complete a particular necromantic challenge that will test candidates' skills to the utmost. For the last century, he has been dabbling in an area of necromancy so esoteric that many doubted exists: theo-necromancy, communication with dead gods. His duties as head of the order have prevented him from following his theories to their ultimate conclusion.

To this end, the arch-magus demonstrated certain unusual variant spells to the membership of the order, and proposed the following contest: The aspirant's challenge is to take up these strands of research and to resurrect the spirit of a dead god. Candidates for the post have three years. At the end of this time, Simon will judge their results at the next conclave meeting. The magus whose theo-necromantic experiment is most impressive (or which comes closest to success, should none succeed) will be judged worthy to inherit the mantle of arch-magus-in-waiting, and, in the fullness of time, will succeed to the leadership of the Order of the Crystal Skull.

The Unhappy Fate of Damien Drood

Magister Damien Drood was a skilled necromancer but an indifferent researcher. He sought to summon a deity, picking a divine entity he believed had died through sheer neglect. After lengthy library research, he identified his target: a godling known as the Swamp-Lord, who had been worshiped long ago by the degenerate human inhabitants of the Sinking City of Tavorsh. It having been centuries since Tavorsh was swallowed by the great bog, Drood was certain that the Swamp-Lord's worship had long ceased and that being was gone.

Diligent poring through scrolls turned up no mention of the Swamp-Lord or any clerics or temple in the last four centuries, and a band of adventurers he hired to visit Tavorsh and explore its sunken towers revealed no sign of the Swamp-Lord's worship. According to calculations in the theo-necromantic classic Malvarius's *A Mathematical Study of Spiritual Decay in Weakly Godlike Entities* the Swamp-Lord should have faded from lack of worship.

Magister Drood proceeded to cast his Summoning spell. Alas for Drood, he failed to realize that the Swamp-Lord was also worshiped by the reptile men of the great bog under the name Squivatrivarsquiv ("the Green Mother"). Consequently, the very-much-alive goddess sensed his foolish spell and dispatched word to her priesthood in the form of dreams. Five weeks later, a hunting pack of reptile-paladins riding frog-demons ambushed him while he was on the road. They then carried him off to the swamp for a human sacrifice, where his heart was fed to the goddess and his entrails devoured by her worshipers.

Magister Drood's fate has since become a byword for carelessness; it is said that lazy necromantic apprentices are taught the rhyme "Remember the doom of Magister Drood; his power was great, his research was crude. . ."

Adventure Seed

The fate of Magister Drood could be turned into an adventure. As alluded, he hired adventures to explore the sunken

city of Tavorsh; this might be a job for PCs, who may also be with him when the Green Mother's minions attempt to eliminate him. Alternatively, perhaps by the time the party return from Tavorsh, they discover Drood captured and carried off (while owing them back pay). Or, they might be hired by the Order of the Crystal Skull (see pp. 24-25) to raze the Green Mother's temple in retaliation for elimination of one of their wizards.

The Theo-Necromantic Quest of Prince Xiphraim the Pious

The ruler of a minor kingdom blessed with an exceptionally valuable gold mine, Prince Xiphraim is obsessed with collecting rare divine relics. Prince Xiphraim's latest obsession is the fabled treasure of Zeokizar Goldenbeard. An obscure deity once revered by several clans of mountain dwarves, Zeokizar was worshiped as their god of age and wealth. According to dogma, he dwelt in a mountain-top palace called Yazabarak, the Glittering Heart, said to be filled with the world's beautiful things, which had been collected as offerings by his clerics in exchange for the god's blessing of extended life upon his worshipers.

However, Zeokizar eventually lusted after the beautiful sea nymph called the Sapphire-Eyed Maiden. Her song lured him away from his flying home to his doom under the sea, for she was the daughter of the elven sea god of the Sargasso and a sentient giant whirlpool. After offending Sapphire with his crude behavior, her outraged parents had him bound in chains of seaweed, drowned, torn into chunks by an legion of monster sharks, and the bits fed to a hundred giant starfish. All dwarf sources indicate that Zeokizar is no longer worshiped, having perished beneath the waves. No sources, however, record the fate of Yazabarak. . .

It is Xiphraim's contention that Yazabarak was a real place and still exists atop some high mountain in a forgotten range on the edge of the world. After exerting various mundane methods to locate it, and failing, Prince Xiphraim heard rumors of theo-necromancy. Xiphraim searched for a practitioner of this black art who might have the power to contact the dead god Zeokizar and convince his spirit to reveal the secret location of Yazabarak. After doing so, Xiphraim intends to sponsor a team of bold adventurers who will loot this ancient divine treasure house of its legendary relics.

Adventure Seed

Prince Xiphraim's advisors have learned that the nearest theo-necromancer who might have the skills to help them is the magus Liagrave Godsbinder, of the Order of the Crystal Skull, said to have mastered a spell for communing with the spirits of dead deities. Unfortunately, Liagrave is languishing in chains in a neighboring principality, Pytharia, after trespassing in their sacred Well of the Serpents. Charged with heresy and tomb-robbing, she is said to be imprisoned in the monster-haunted maze beneath the well, the hidden temple of Pytharia. There, she awaits the "Death of a Hundred Snakes" which will come on the next High Festival, as her punishment for heresy and grave robbing. (In fact, she was seeking a book of ancient necromantic magic known as the Serpent Scrolls, said to have included a list of gods that had been secretly assassinated by their divine rivals.)

The immediate goal of Prince Xiphraim is to hire a band of stalwart dungeon adventurers to penetrate the underground temple and free Liagrave – without any links to the prince, since he doesn't want to upset the neighboring priest-kings of Pytharia and start a war. Prince Xiphraim offers a rich under-the-table reward and points out that the temple-maze contains several rich gold and jewel-encrusted serpent idols. Xiphraim does not tell the party outright why he needs Liagrave. Of course, if any of the PCs are themselves theo-necromancers of reasonable skill, he will be happy to hire them instead.

In addition, if the party prove themselves by successfully rescuing Liagrave (or performing the conjuration themselves), they may be taken into the prince's confidence. Should that theo-necromancer succeed in contacting the spirit of the dwarf-god Zeokizar and locating the god's Glittering Hall, the greedy Prince Xiphraim will need a party of sturdy adventurers to accompany his own representatives on the quest to the loot the place. While the prince, as the sponsor of the quest, will demand the pick of the divine loot, he will offer a significant share to worthy adventurers. He is also prepared to offer the sort of temporal rewards a ruler can grant, such as honors (knighthood) and a grant of arms and land.

BROTHERS OF COSMIC ORDER

This organization of warrior monks claims to be dedicated to the preservation of the cosmic balance. They oppose those who threaten reality itself. In recent years, the organization has learned of the existence of theo-necromancers. They believe attempts to resurrect or contact dead gods risk the very fabric of existence, by resurrecting ancient cosmic feuds.

The Brothers of Cosmic Order worship no gods in particular, but the organization has liaisons and alliances with the clergy of established major pantheons who share their interest in preserving the current balance of power among the gods. ("The eternal which is dead . . . should stay dead!")

With the rise of theo-necromantic activity that followed the recent actions of the Order of the Crystal Skull (see pp. 24-25), the Brothers have also stepped up their actions. A couple of Brotherhood of Cosmic Order hit teams have been trained, equipped, and dispatched to hunt down theo-necromancers . . .

Matthius Fogg's Quest for Tarasofina

Tarasofina was a minor goddess of love, fire, dance, scorpions, and poetry, and special patron of unrequited lovers. She was worshiped long ago in the caravan cities of the great desert, but today nearly all records of her existence are gone. All that survive are a few descriptions left behind in an obscure elven merchant diary (the *Travels of Fenuvia Elfariel*) and a few scraps of poetry in mostly forgotten languages, such as vague references to the artifact known as the "Scorpion Staff" that her high priestess wielded, and the "fire jewels" that decorated her great temple.

According to these ancient texts, Tarasofina's popularity peaked some 1,100 years ago, when she had several temples and sponsored an annual poetry contest that drew bards from

across the realm. However, during the reign of the ancient King Usaf the Upright, the cult of Tarasofina was suppressed and her worshipers were supplanted by rival faiths, possibly as a result of a priestess of Tarasofina enabling the secret marriage of the king's runaway daughter to a commoner. Eventually, the last followers of Tarasofina were literally driven underground, building secret subterranean temple beyond the eastern forests.

Later tales and the single surviving poem ("The Worm Devours Passion") by the blind minstrel Noramarina of the Veil suggest that the last Temple of Tarasofina was invaded by a monster – the Seven-Eyed Worm – and its clergy annihilated. With the passing of the final temple and priesthood, Tarasofina was forgotten. . .

Adventure Seed

Matthius Fogg is a necromancer in the Order of the Crystal Skull (see pp. 24-25) who has taken up the challenge of arch-magus Simon. Through diligent research he believes he has located the last underground temple of Tarasofina. He believes the temple site would be the best place to conduct a ritual to summon and bind the dead god's spirit.

However, there are those legends that the temple is haunted by the "seven-eyed worm" as well as early references to "Scorpion-Guardians" that protected the temple in days gone by. Not being a fool, Magister Fogg decides to recruit a party of adventurers to accompany him and take out the worm and any other monsters that stand in his way.

However, he believes most adventurers would be unlikely to accompany a necromancer performing a strange ritual. To this end, he has instead spread rumors around local adventurer taverns of the "treasure of Tarasofina" (scorpion staff, fire jewels, temple treasury) and its location. He hopes instead that a party of adventurers will go to the temple, while he and his apprentices follow stealthily behind. Perhaps the PCs will even be weakened enough that he can slay them and animate them as zombie bodyguards or as sacrifices for the ritual. . .

The Blasphemous Secret of the Priests of Roshnu

Until recently, Lord Roshnu was the god of food, rain, song, and wine, worshiped by the Vormani people in the Valley of Seven Swords. A huge, fat, three-eyed purple being who stood 12' tall, Roshnu granted his priests a variety of spells related to food, weather, and water magic, ensuring the river flooded at the appropriate times and that rains came when needed. His priests ruled the city-state of Var-Roshnu, where they were famous for both their iron rule and decadent orgies (the high priest boasted a harem of 100 temple-maidens). The priests also maintain the city's excellent temple-restaurants, which draw free-spending adventurers. Roshnu was also a quite visible god, who would appear in the great temple every four years or so, indulging his massive appetite for food and drink which were the sacrifices offered to him in exchange for favorable weather for crops.

However, Roshnu had a legendary feud with his twin brother Dornak the Trickster, god of fire and the desert. Just a few years ago, this feud turned deadly: Dornak tricked his gluttonous brother into eating five eggs of the primal phoenix, which hatched inside him, burning his guts to ash! After he died, the spells of his priests all stopped working – their Power Investiture was gone! After desperately hiring wizards to perform a divination, a group of Roshnu clerics and holy warriors found their dead god, a smoking hole in his stomach, in a desert oasis. What to do?

The priests (minus a few who went mad or killed themselves in despair) realized that the revelation of their god's death would mean the end of their theocratic rule of Var-Roshnu. As a result, his corpse (12' tall) was taken from the place where it fell and preserved in ice. To keep the secret of the god's death alive, the desperate priests have begun studying spells that mimic those that were once granted to them as clerics (e.g., Food and Water magic). Only the most trusted priests, of course, are permitted to learn these secrets. When rumors have gotten out, the cult's inner circle has been diligent in sending assassins after "heretics" who dare whisper the truth!

Unfortunately, Roshnu was also known to appear in his divine flesh every four years at the key festival of Var-Roshnu. There he would materialize, stride out of the temple, and bodily devour the great feasts sacrificed to him before pronouncing blessings upon his worshipers and the land, or doom upon their enemies.

Adventure Seed

The next festival is coming up soon – and if Roshnu does not appear, the gig may be up (and the enraged populace may massacre the priests). The high priest Donavari, however, has a plan. They have heard rumors of theo-necromantic rites. What if – heretical thought – they could raise Roshnu from the dead? Agents of Donavari are even now seeking a mage who might master a powerful enough Resurrection spell to do this. But in the short term, they have a more heretical notion: casting a Zombie spell upon the corpse of Roshnu, so that the god might appear to stride out, under their control, and show himself to the people.

This very notion strikes some of the priests as heresy of the blackest sort. But others feel it is the only way. They have reached a compromise: find a necromancer willing to cast the spell in exchange for a rich reward (who knows what sort of

hideous magical backlash might result from a failure?) – and then, after he has done their bidding, slay him for his heresy in order to appease their god! They just need to find an appropriate patsy. . . could it be a player character?

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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GOURMET ALCHEMY

BY MICHAEL KREUTER

In all my travels all over the world, I've found a lot of tasty stuff. Some of it was even edible. But nothing was quite as amazing as this recipe book I found when I was looking for new cookbooks in a library of a quaint old city with a charming gourmand district. Now I carry this book around with me, and it's got a ton of useful recipes in it! Some of them even seem like they might be alchemically meaningful.

Building spells as abilities can be leveraged for alchemists who can create new extraordinary potions and lotions using nothing but some reference material, alchemically meaningful ingredients, and time. Adventurers simply need to find the cookbook of the legendary Gaston the Gastronome, an alchemist whose first love is cooking. Well, eating, at any rate.

Gaston's Cookbook uses Modular Abilities to provide access to a foodie-style alchemy system. Elixirs are constructed as Afflictions, which are created from recipes memorized and then prepared from the cookbook. This method allows a "gourmet alchemist" to prepare Elixirs ahead of time that can then be used when needed, by anyone! The alchemist can give his allies strength potions, healing potions, or even Molotov cocktail potions, becoming a powerful supporting team member. Granted, he could also hoard all the potions to himself and become powerful in his own right, but given the preparation time that potions take, he's probably better off working with a team.

GASTON'S COOKBOOK

To create an Elixir, the alchemist must first study the cookbook's recipes for two seconds per point of ability and make a successful Alchemy roll to determine the proper steps needed to produce it. If he succeeds, he may then proceed to brew doses of that Elixir (at +2 if he critically succeeded here). If the roll fails, he may try again, until he succeeds. If he critically fails, then he cannot create the alchemical effect he wants with the recipes he currently has available.

The alchemist can only memorize one Elixir recipe at a time. If he prepares several Elixirs with one recipe and then wants to prepare a new one, he must let the old formula slip away before beginning to memorize the new one. Any potions that he had already brewed remain available to use, though, thanks to the combination of "Cosmic, Does not become inert" and "Delay, Triggered." This allows the alchemist to create custom-tailored potions for different party members

by switching to a new potion after making one. The warrior might like a potion of Strength, while the wizard would enjoy a potion of Fatigue.

Example: Gaston and his cousins are about to fight their way into a zombie-infested city. He thinks that Strength potions would be useful, so he selects the 31-point Ox's Potion (p. 32) and studies his cookbook for just over a minute (62 seconds). He succeeds at his Alchemy roll – he's figured out how to use the recipe book to create the effect he wants. He spends five hours producing five potions, one for each of his cousins and one for the wizard. Then the wizard tells him that rather than Strength, she could really use extra Fatigue. Gaston selects the 27-point Poor Man's Paut (p. 31), studies his cookbook for another 54 seconds, and succeeds at another Alchemy roll. He spends another hour making the wizard a Fatigue-granting potion.

Statistics: Super-Memorization (Limited, Only Afflictions with Elixir modifiers, -50%; Physical Only, +50%; Requires Alchemy Roll, -10%; Takes Extra Time 1, -10%) [4 + 2.4 points per point of ability].

*For other takes on alchemy, consider the alchemy sections in **GURPS Thaumatology** and **GURPS Magic**, "Alchemical Elixirs" in **GURPS Thaumatology: Ritual Path Magic**, "Bottled Magic" in **Pyramid #3/43: Thaumatology III**, and "Dungeon Brewmasters" in **Pyramid #3/82: Magical Creations**.*

THE ELIXIRS

Elixirs come in the following forms, a few of which should be familiar from **GURPS Magic**: grenade, meal, ointment, pastille, potion, powder, and smelling salts. Most Elixirs are built as Afflictions to give the target a specific set of advantages, disadvantages, or conditions. Building the Elixir as an Affliction allows the alchemist to give it to someone else, essentially by "afflicting" the target with abilities that are triggered by something that the user does (e.g., drinking the potion).

Preparing any Elixir takes time, Alchemy knowledge, and alchemical ingredients:

Time: Each Elixir takes one hour to brew. *Time Spent* (p. B346) applies, but can at most halve the time taken (for -5 to skill).

Knowledge: Crafting an Elixir requires an Alchemy roll, which replaces the usual Will roll to determine an Affliction's potency and duration (once quaffed, thrown, etc.). When brewing a batch of several doses of the same Elixir, the alchemist must spend one hour per dose, but need only roll against Alchemy once.

Ingredients: In a typical TL3 fantasy setting, each Elixir requires alchemical ingredients valued at \$2/point of Elixir cost. These are assumed to be generic and can be used with any Elixir; if the GM prefers specific ingredients for each Elixir, \$1/point is a fairer price. In other settings, multiply these costs by (starting wealth)/\$1,000. See *Different Recipes and Ingredients* (p. 31) for more options.

ELIXIRS AS AFFLICTIONS

Most Elixirs are Afflictions, which either grant beneficial traits or impose negative effects. Each such Elixir has a *base cost* depending on the specific modifiers needed for its method of delivery. When creating a new recipe, all that remains is to add the *effect cost* for what it actually *does*. Figure effect cost by summing any of these which apply:

Adds one or more advantages. Add the cost of all advantages; e.g., an Elixir which bestows High Pain Threshold has an effect cost of 10 points.

Adds one or more disadvantages: Add 1 point for every -10 points (or fraction thereof) of total disadvantage value; e.g., disadvantages totaling -15 points add an effect cost of 2 points.

Adds something else from the Affliction options: Add 1 point for every +10% (or fraction thereof) of total modifier value; e.g., an ecstasy potion's effect cost is 10 points.

New Meta-Enhancement: Elixir

All Elixirs are built with this set of common enhancements and limitations. Duration is usually minutes equal to the alchemist's margin of success when crafting the Elixir.

Elixir: Cosmic, Does not become inert, +100%; Cosmic, Subject may waive resistance roll, +50%; Delay, Triggered, Used according to type, +50%; Melee Attack, Reach C, Cannot Parry, -35%; Preparation Required, Per Use, 1 hour, -25%; Requires Alchemy Roll, -10%; Trigger, Alchemical Ingredients, -10%. (+120%)

Grenade

24 points + effect cost

Grenade potions are thrown weapons which must break on their target to have an effect. The breakable nature is something that you need to worry about before you throw it.

Statistics: Affliction 1 (HT; Breakable, 0 DR, -20%; Elixir, +120%; No Melee Attack limitation, +35%; Uses Throwing Skill instead of Innate Attack, -0%) [24].

Meal

24 points + effect cost

An Elixir designed as a meal requires that the subject sits down to eat it. It takes the victim about an hour to eat the meal in order to gain (or suffer) the effects, but this increases the duration of the underlying effect as well – every minute of duration becomes 16 hours! This is also a decent way to disguise things such as poisons. Any roll to detect the Elixir is at -4.

Statistics: Affliction 1 (HT; Blood Agent, -40%; Elixir, +120%; Extended Duration 1,000x, +120%; Immediate Preparation Required, 1 hour, -75%; Low Signature, +10%) [24].

UNDER THE HOOD: GASTON'S COOKBOOK

"Cosmic, Subject may waive resistance roll" is based on other cosmic modifiers, particularly "No die roll required." The concept is also based on Malediction's option that allows a subject to waive the resistance. It's cheaper than turning the effect into a Malediction because this version doesn't grant it range, nor does it allow the user to force a Quick Contest of Will with the subject. (Innate Attacks don't need this modifier, but instead replace it with "Cosmic, Target may be designated when triggered.")

"Cosmic, Does not become inert" is priced relative to "Extended Duration, Permanent." Combined with Triggered Delay, the "Does not become inert" modifier is functionally equivalent to "permanent until condition met," the condition here being "the delay is triggered."

If finding or substituting ingredients is difficult (rather than easy, as is assumed), the Trigger could worsen to -20%, and any failure on the roll to memorize the right recipe might require gathering new ingredients or finding a new recipe entirely.

Ointment

16 points + effect cost

An ointment must be rubbed into a subject's skin, which takes about a minute, in order to affect him.

Statistics: Affliction 1 (HT; Contact Agent, -30%; Elixir, +120%; Immediate Preparation Required, 1 minute, -30%) [16].

Pastille

Variable

A pastille is a tablet of compressed powder, which smokes when lit on fire. It takes a Ready maneuver to retrieve and another to light. The smoke fills a two-yard-radius area in 2d seconds, and then lingers for 3d seconds.

Most pastilles are *respiratory* and cost 35 points + effect cost. However, some are *contact* agents, affecting anyone not in sealed armor; those cost 45 points + effect cost.

Statistics: Affliction 1 (HT; Area Effect 1, +50%; Elixir, +120%; Nuisance Effect, Takes 2d seconds to fill the area, -5%; Persistent, +40%; Respiratory Agent, +50%; Takes Extra Time 1, -10%) [35]. The variant replaces Respiratory Agent with Contact Agent [+10].

Statistics: Affliction 1 (HT; Elixir, +120%; Smell-Based, -20%; Takes Extra Time 1, -10%) [19].

ELIXIRS AS INNATE ATTACKS

Some Elixirs simply do damage. To create these, build them as Innate Attacks with the modifiers listed above for that type of Elixir. For example, a poisonous potion would be built as Toxic Attack (Blood Agent, -40%; Breakable, 0 DR, -20%; Elixir, +120%; Takes Extra Time 1, -10%) [6 points/level]. For simplicity, though, just use the precalculated meta-modifiers below.

<i>Elixir Type</i>	<i>Modifier</i>
Grenade	+135%
Meal	+135%
Ointment	+60%
Pastille (Respiratory)	+245%
Pastille (Contact)	+345%
Potion	+50%
Powder	+70%
Smelling Salts	+90%

Other modifiers may apply; e.g., many poisons have Cyclic, Resistible, or both.

DIFFERENT BASE SKILL

At the GM's option, this system can use a skill other than Alchemy, either partially or in whole. The roll to memorize a recipe could easily be Herb Lore instead of Alchemy, and this doesn't change the point cost. The roll to prepare an Elixir could even be Cooking, though (as an Easy skill) this would change the value of Requires (Skill) Roll to -5% rather than -10%, increasing most of the Elixir costs. Still, this has the benefit that potency will be based off of an Easy skill instead of a Very Hard one.

FINDING NEW RECIPES AND INGREDIENTS

Gaston's Cookbook is not written as an alchemical tome, but a collection of actual *food* recipes. Fortunately, a clever, properly trained alchemist can read "between the lines" in order to use it to create Elixirs with wondrous powers. As such, there isn't supposed to be a recipe that has a specified effect, but rather a recipe that the alchemist realizes can be adapted into something that has an effect, particularly given the ingredients on hand. This is why an Alchemy roll is required even to review a new Elixir recipe.

As such, the GM may allow a player to "invent" new Elixirs using the cookbook. This requires careful study (treat seconds as minutes, or minutes as hours) and an Alchemy roll at -4 plus another -1 per 5 points (or fraction thereof) of total Elixir cost. If the alchemist critically fails this Alchemy roll, he is incapable of coming up with this effect (make a note, GM!) and will have to acquire a recipe from someone else; a variant may be possible, but it has to be a *significant* change from the original, not just a minor tweak. Alchemy, like cooking, is part art!

NEW MODIFIERS

A few new modifiers are needed for this version of alchemy.

Cosmic, Does not become inert

+100%

After being prepared, the Elixir does not become inert even if the alchemist chooses to prepare a new kind of Elixir.

Cosmic, Subject may waive resistance roll

+50%

This allows the Affliction that the potion is based off of to be accepted by the subject, so that beneficial Elixirs can work without hassle.

Preparation Required, Per Use

see p. B105

As per Preparation Required, but multiple instances of the same ability can be prepared, given enough time. This halves the value of Preparation Required.

Potion

15 points + effect cost

Potions come in small, very fragile (DR 0) bottles. They take a Ready Maneuver to pull out – though Fast-Draw (Potion) can make this instant – and another Ready Maneuver to drink.

Statistics: Affliction 1 (HT; Blood Agent, -40%; Breakable, 0 DR, -20%; Elixir, +120%; Takes Extra Time 1, -10%) [15].

Powder

17 points + effect cost

Powders come in small jars or pouches that are less fragile than potions. They must be mixed with food or drink before being consumed, and effects have an onset of 2d minutes. Any attempt to detect the Elixir is at -4.

Statistics: Affliction 1 (HT; Blood Agent, -40%; Elixir, +120%; Low Signature, +10%; Onset, 2d minutes, -10%; Takes Extra Time 1, -10%) [17].

Smelling Salts

19 points + effect cost

Smelling salts are broken open or crushed, which requires a Ready maneuver, and then held under the nose of the subject. This usually requires a willing or incapacitated subject, but it could also be done in a grapple or as a non-damaging targeted strike to the nose.

The GM should give a chance for the adventurers to acquire new recipes. If the GM is going with the option of a predetermined list of possible Elixirs, new Elixir recipes make excellent loot, though discussing and trading recipes with other alchemists – or even cooks! – is another way the alchemist can acquire new Elixir recipes. Spending time discussing the recipes with others is a good occasion to permit rerolls on any critically failed Elixirs, because the adventurer may have gained new insight.

A situation can occur where an alchemist creates an Elixir, then switches to another Elixir, and upon switching back to the first, critically fails the roll. When this happens, it should be assumed that while the recipe was easy enough to find, he's out of some of the ingredients that had been used last time that recipe was created and can't figure out any substitutions to make. As such, finding new ingredients could cause to allow rerolls on critically failed Elixirs. This is an excellent chance for a rewarding side quest to acquire new materials!

DIFFERENT RECIPES AND INGREDIENTS

For a compromise between “finite list of Elixirs” and “the players can define anything they want,” the GM can give the player a set of tools with which to create a specific category of Elixirs in accordance with the above system. Finding new recipes could expand this the category. This category could be broad (“any Innate Attack”) or limited (“Burning Attacks,” “Toxic Attacks,” “Fatigue Attacks,” etc.). For example, someone could start with a selection of recipes for “Innate Attacks” and the means to design any Elixir that can be defined as an Innate Attack. Perhaps later, he might find a recipe that allows him to create Elixirs based off Regeneration, and still later, Binding.

The GM could define particular ingredients that are needed in order to add make certain kinds of Elixirs or to add certain modifiers. Perhaps Innate Attack is a general recipe, but requires chili peppers for Burning Attacks and deathcap mushrooms for Toxic Attacks. Perhaps alchemical sulfur is required to make pastilles. If the GM goes for this option, the Trigger on the Elixir should be increased, since substitutions will be less likely and the alchemist will have to keep track of specific ingredients. For suggested ingredients and their effects, see *GURPS Magic*, p. 22; *GURPS Thaumatology*, pp. 99, 247-252; and *The Material Difference* in *Pyramid* #3/66: *The Laws of Magic*.

Limited Recipe Examples

Cyclic Toxic and Fatigue Attacks: These recipes allow the alchemist to create Elixirs with a variety of Innate Attacks that are either Toxic or Fatigue attacks that deal cyclic damage. The ingredients required are poisonous mushrooms.

Regeneration: These recipes permit the alchemist to create Elixirs based off Regeneration. This requires honey. If the alchemist substitutes coffee beans, he can modify it to regenerate Fatigue instead.

Burning Attacks and Irritants: These recipes explain how to create Elixirs based off of burning attacks or Afflictions with

irritating conditions. Spicy foods are required ingredients for burning attacks and pain or choking. Poisonous mushrooms can cause retching.

Fortifying Elixirs: These recipes help the alchemist to create Elixirs with attribute buffs and resistances. With spinach or other high-iron foods, he can design Elixirs that add ST, including Lifting ST or Striking ST. With coffee, he can create Elixirs that add DX and Combat Reflexes. With ginseng, he can buff IQ or add Eidetic Memory or Lightning Calculator.

Protective Elixirs: These recipes permit the alchemist to make various defensive Elixirs. Ginger allows for Doesn't Eat (Cast Iron Stomach). Foods high in vitamin C can provide Resistant to Disease. Poisonous materials can offer Resistant to Poison. Foods high in iron can provide DR.

GOURMET ALCHEMISTS IN DUNGEON FANTASY

A gourmet alchemist in *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy* is basically a kind of specialized artificer. Instead of Gadgeteering, he has Gaston's Cookbook. Take the template in *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 4: Sages*, and replace Dungeon Artificer 4, Gadgeteer, and 6 points of other traits with Gaston's Cookbook 30 [76]. This will allow the gourmet alchemist to make 30-point Elixirs to start out with. Increasing this upper cap by 5 (for another 12 points) is a good investment when the alchemist has bonus character points to spend.

EXAMPLE ELIXIRS

These will find a home both in and out of fantasy.

Silver-Tongue Spirit

This Elixir goes down smooth and gives you the Voice advantage for the duration.

Statistics: Potion [15] + Voice [10]. 25 points.

Poor Man's Paut

In a jam, the alchemist can provide someone with extra Fatigue to burn. This grants +4 FP for the duration.

Statistics: Potion [15] + FP+4 [12]. 27 points.

Regenerative Ointment

After rubbing this ointment on a subject, that person recovers 1 HP per minute for the duration.

Statistics: Ointment [16] + Regeneration (Fast) [50]. 66 points.

Ox's Potion

Drinking this bitter-tasting, viscous fluid gives the imbiber two levels of Lifting ST and Striking ST for the duration.

Statistics: Potion [15] + Lifting ST 2 [6] + Striking ST 2 [10]. 31 points.

Magic Shield

A magic shield forms around the drinker of this potion, absorbing blows. It gives the subject ablative DR 13 for the duration.

Statistics: Potion [15] + DR 13 (Ablative, -80%) [13]. 28 points.

Poison Powder

The victim must make an HT roll 2d minutes after consuming the powder, with failure inflicting 3d toxic damage. This is then repeated once an hour for nine more hours (or until he successfully resists).

Statistics: Toxic Attack 3d (Cyclic, 10 one-hour cycles, Resistible, +90%; Powder, +70%; Resistible, HT, -30%) [16]. 28 points.

Fireball Elixir

Throwing this grenade causes a reaction much like the wizard's fireball. It deals 2d burning damage to a single target.

Statistics: Burning Attack 2d (Grenade, +135%) [14]. 24 points.

Get Outta Dodge

Drinkers of this light, airy potion feel that they can avoid attacks more easily for the duration. It gives them one level of Enhanced Dodge for the duration.

Statistics: Potion [15] + Enhanced Dodge 1 [15]. 30 points.

Catnip Elixir

Drinking this slightly minty-flavored Elixir gives the imbiber +1 DX for the duration.

Statistics: Potion [15] + DX+1 [20]. 35 points.

Choking Gas

After lighting this pastille and letting the smoke fill the room, it causes all who inhale it to start choking (p. B428).

Statistics: Pastille (Respiratory) [35] + Choking [10]. 45 points.

Healing Potion

The Healing advantage requires special consideration. It does not need to be built as an Affliction, because it already affects others, nor does it have a resistance roll to be waived. However, it also already requires touching, so Melee Attack must be removed, and it requires an IQ roll (which can be shifted to Alchemy) so Requires (Skill) Roll must go as well. Finally, elixirs should not require FP, necessitating Reduced Fatigue Cost and justifying Capped; to adjust the potency of a healing potion, adjust these last two modifiers.

This potion heals 6 HP instantly to anyone who consumes it.

Statistics: Healing (Blood Agent, -40%; Breakable, 0 DR, -20%; Capped, 3 FP, -20%; Cosmic, Does not become inert, +100%; Delay, Triggered, +50%; Injuries Only, -20%; Preparation Required, Per Use, 1 hour, -25%; Reduced Fatigue Cost 3, +60%; Takes Extra Time 1, -10%; Trigger, Alchemical Ingredients, -10%) [50]. 50 points.

Feast of the Victorious

A great feast fills those who take an hour to eat it with strength, skill, and courage. It removes Combat Paralysis and adds Combat Reflexes, +1 DX, and +2 ST for the duration (16 hours times the alchemist's margin of success).

Statistics: Meal [24] + Combat Reflexes [15] + remove Combat Paralysis [15] + DX+1 [20] + ST+2 [20]. 94 points.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

As far as anyone knows, Michael Kreuter is not attempting to learn how to create potions through cooking. Instead, he's working as a software developer. While he's married to his job, he cheats on it with his writing, running, and playing games, lately being particularly fond of those with a Gothic horror bend to them. He published a couple articles in *Pyramid* magazine, Volume 2, and has finally had time to sneak away to pick up the pen once more to inflict horror on the unwitting populace.

Special thanks to Jason "PK" Levine for his help with the game mechanics.

There will be no foolish wand-waving or silly incantations in this class. As such, I don't expect many of you to appreciate the subtle science and exact art that is potion-making. However, for those select few . . . who possess the predisposition . . . I can teach you how to bewitch the mind and ensnare the senses. I can tell you how to bottle fame, brew glory, and even put a stopper in death.

*– Severus Snape, in **Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone***

RANDOM THOUGHT TABLE

THIRD-REEL MAGIC

BY STEVEN MARSH, *PYRAMID* EDITOR

In a lot of ways, magic is inherently cinematic. However, sometimes spellcasters can do something even *cooler* than their standard extraordinary effects. Here is a look at a few magical tropes that are especially “film-quality” . . . including insight and advice for how to incorporate them into the campaign.

FIRST COMES . . . THE UNLEARNING

One reasonably common trope is the heroes who need to learn something different, because what they thought they knew was incorrect, not as powerful as believed, or is otherwise rapidly becoming unavailable. Some examples in a magical mindset include:

- The source of the magician’s powers has become tainted, and can no longer be used without exposing the spellcaster to peril (of body, mind, and/or spirit).
- Each use of the magician’s power actually empowers an evil entity (who may either have somehow killed or supplanted the original source of energy, or who may have been the source of energy all along).
- A new threat becomes primary in the campaign world – one the magician’s powers are ineffective against.

When this happens in movies, television shows, or comics, often the empowered individual finds a new focus of some sort. In *GURPS*, this may be as simple as switching from one form of magic to another (say, from the stock spells-as-skills system of *GURPS Magic*, to a more free-form system like *GURPS Thaumatology: Sorcery* or *GURPS Powers: Divine Favor*).

This can form an epic adventure or even campaign arc of its own, as the person attempts to gain some new source of power. (If the GM routinely does solo or small-group adventures with players between full-group meetings, this is an especially interesting subplot for such a session. “I’m back, gang . . . better than ever.”)

From a game standpoint, it’s actually fairly trivial to “re-stat” such a character in *GURPS*; just add up the points that were spent on the magical type that’s being phased out,

and “respond” them on appropriate abilities in the new magic system. If, for some reason, the points end up skewed toward making the new system overpowered, simply siphon off some of the points in an Unusual Background. (This especially makes sense if the form of magic is much rarer than the previous version.) Conversely, if there just aren’t enough points to make the alternate form of magic viable, maybe some new disadvantages can be added to balance out the campaign’s power levels; Enemy (Some Bad Folks Who Want This New Form of Magic) is a reasonable choice.

WE’RE DOING IT ALL WRONG!

The original *Fiend Folio* supplement for *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* had a monster called the nilbog, which is actually *healed* by damage (attacks, combat spells, etc.) and only harmed through the use of *healing* magic (healing potions, curative spells, and the like). Though it’s a pretty crazy concept for a monster, the nilbog doesn’t even make the Top 20 of my doofiest monsters from that hallowed hardcover.

Still it is a good representation of another cinematic trope that often appears in magical adventures, where the heroes realize that their standard effects aren’t working, and they need to do something outside the box. It’s especially useful for gaming groups where players have settled into a routine of what works – whether it’s a favored spell, attack method, or tactical consideration. It’s also a good way to mix up the players’ expectations and give them a chance to shine in a new way.

For *GURPS* magic systems with fixed effects – most notably, the core spells-as-skills of *GURPS Magic* – this is very easy to implement. Simply pick a spell or college that the hero knows but that hasn’t gotten much love lately, and then concoct a threat that is vulnerable to that flavor of magic. Thus if earth-based spells have been ill-used lately, maybe a fire demon thwarts the heroes’ standard fire-based spells.

This can even be kookier than that. For example, the heroes might face an entity that threatens to consume all the knowledge from the world; high-powered information spells might give the hero more than the thing can absorb, causing the creature to explode or retreat back to its own reality.

Ideally, you'll give the heroes an opportunity – either in the thick of battle or elsewhere – to discern what's going on and what might be effective. Offering quick information-gathering rolls in the midst of combat is fine for a low-stakes threat, but the usual cinematic trope is to have the heroes encounter the adversity; fail; retreat or be defeated; and then put the pieces together through research, questing, and/or experimentation . . . before the climactic final confrontation with the original enemy.

This can also be swiped for other magic systems. If one of the core skills from the Ritual Path magic system has been sorely neglected, maybe an anomaly or threat can only be worked against by incorporating that aspect. Or maybe a threat is vulnerable to *weaker* levels of power; perhaps any Ritual Path magic effect more than (say) 15 points of energy is automatically dispelled by the threat, but effects that are 14 points or fewer are completely effective – or even amplified!

In the broader sense, this idea pares well with the previous one. If something new and nasty has started growing in influence, then the heroes need something new to affect it. And that just might be an entirely innovative form of magic . . .

IT'S RISKY, BUT IT JUST MIGHT WORK!

Another cinematic trope when heroes are faced with an impossible situation is to do something crazy or impossibly risky. Whether it's trapping the celestial adversity in an ill-advised time loop or "crossing the streams" of the pseudo-scientific energy packs, heroes often do things that could either save the day *or* destroy the universe. Maybe both.

This is an easy idea to implement in a non-RPG story, since the author, screenplay writer, or other creator has control of all the pieces: what the crazy idea is, when the heroes use it, and if it'll work.

Of course, *none* of those components are usable by the GM. It's fairly unsatisfying to directly feed the players the idea of "do the crazy thing," and then they do the crazy thing. (And it'd be remarkably churlish if the heroes do the crazy thing the GM suggested and it *doesn't* work!)

Still, there are a few other ways the GM might incorporate this into the campaign.

Craziness Defined

If the game world is rigorously defined, then the players might have their own ideas for how to do something insane in a desperate situation. One example from the *Dungeons & Dragons* world is the widely known sphere of destruction that results from putting a portable hole into a bag of holding. This has resulted in some enterprising groups doing exactly this to destroy difficult enemies . . . with the ultimate utilization being the ludicrous "arrowhead of total destruction," which you should definitely research when you get a moment.

In this case, all that's needed is a well-defined system, and then let the heroes/players come up with their own ideas. *GURPS* is pretty well-suited for this, since most of its mechanics and effects are based on real-world values and ideas; if some enterprising player starts poking at the top ends of the system and comes up with an effect that is ludicrously

powerful and dangerous, then maybe the best thing to do is to let the heroes give it a shot . . . at least once.

Otherwise, the GM should try to make sure there are interesting corners of the world and system to exploit. Thus, maybe (say) any given spell or effect can only be used once per 24 hours, so the players need to realize that their best chance is to get the bad guys to exhaust their most dangerous effects suboptimally.

Craziness Revealed

If the GM *does* reveal that there is an insane thing the protagonists can do to save the day, then it can still be satisfying if the adventurers have a fun subplot tracking down the specifics, acquiring the components or pieces, and/or putting it together. So long as the heroes still have to work for their victory, "here's the exact crazy thing you can do, but you'll still need to be heroic and do it" actually works pretty well (as shown by the trench-run battle of *Star Wars: A New Hope*).

*Then we take some other course of action!
Stephen, he has my family! You weren't born
a sorcerer. Someone taught you. Teach me.*

– Reed Richard, in *Fantastic Four* #500

Craziness Claimed

As a truly alternate idea, let the players come up with their own wild theories. Smart GMs realize that it's often easier just to make the problems, sit back, listen to the players' musings, and then steal whatever idea they gravitate toward. "Oh, yes! How clever you heroes were! Somehow, you figured out how to win!"

But the GM can even be more explicit in this, giving players a chance to design their own solutions within a regimented framework. For example, maybe the heroes want to use their fire spells to (impossibly) burn through the barrier between dimensions; this isn't something the GM ever suggested was feasible, but – hey – it sounds pretty cool and vaguely fits with the storyline. The GM lets them know that – if the heroes can generate 100 points of magical fire damage in the same scene, it'll work. (Of course, the bad guy will continue to send his minions and machinations to thwart the heroes . . .)

The trick for this is to make it known ahead of time that any given solution will only work once. Doing something impossibly cool once is . . . well, cool. Doing it more than once is not as cinematic. Fortunately, once the GM has the framework sorted out – say, 100 points of [effects] in a scene – it can be repurposed for new, differently impossible plans.

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.

APPENDIX Z

LIGHTS! CAMERA!

MAGIC!

One fairly common idea in many movies is the hero who's super-competent for most of the film . . . until the final confrontation. The hero gets beaten, bloodied, and bruised, and everything becomes a knockdown drag-out fight where the hero barely prevails.

What if that happens . . . because of *magic*?

Here is one suggestion for attributing over-the-top cinematic action to magic with as little disruption as possible to the rest of the *GURPS* system.

THE BIG IDEA

All heroes have one of two 0-point traits: *Magical Hero* or *Mundane Hero*. (Villains have similar game features.)

Magical heroes have access to the one-shot table-turning effects the GM permits from *GURPS Power-Ups 5: Impulse Buys*. (If the GM has been using *Impulse Buys* all along, any player who used one of those effects is assumed to be a magical hero.)

Mundane heroes don't have access to any of those abilities; they're assumed to be bog-standard *GURPS* folks, playing by the standard rules of the campaign (not counting *Impulse Buys*, of course).

So why are both traits 0-point features?

Well, magical heroes are just that: *magical*. This means they need access to mana. Sure, the world may not even know what mana is, but it's somehow fueling the heroes' ability to alter the world to their liking. Most importantly, this means that – in areas of low mana – heroes have a greatly reduced ability to access their *Impulse Buys* abilities (see below). . . and in areas of no mana, they can't use them at all!

Secondly, all important villains are either mundane or magical as well. This means that magical villains have access to those same abilities as well (see *Villainous Impulses* from p. 16 of *Impulse Buys*).

Furthermore, magical characters can't use their *Impulse Buys* abilities directly against any mundane characters. Thus a magical character couldn't spend a point to turn a successful attack against a mundane character into a critical success, or turn a villain's failure into a critical failure. Indirect applications – faking one's own death, finding/creating items that are used against the mundane character, etc. – are fine.

Put together, this means that the bloody-knuckled fight at the climax of the movie might have been the result of two foes

accustomed to spending points to get the effect they want suddenly forced to battle in a no-mana area! They have nothing to ensure their survival but their own grit, determination, and luck . . .

MORE ON MANA

If the GM is using multiple options from *Impulse Buys* – especially heeding the *What Works and What Doesn't* advice from pp. 20-23 – it might be smart to classify each option according to what mana level it works at. For example, a hierarchy for *GURPS Action* (taken from p. 20's list in *Impulse Buys*) might resemble:

Very High Mana: Bullet Time

High Mana: Dramatic Death

Regular Mana: Flesh Wounds, Defense vs. Effect, Player Guidance, Dooming Foes

Low Mana: Buying Successes; Buying Failures

In addition, the GM might institute extra bonuses for areas of high mana and very high mana. For example, in a high mana area, maybe a roll of 1 on 1d means that any points spent aren't really spent . . . while in a very high mana area, that roll is a 1-3 on 1d! (Of course, this means that those bonuses would *also* be available to important villains . . .)

FINAL THOUGHTS

This whole option works best if the heroes start with a cache of points set aside for this purpose; see *Other Kinds of Points (Impulse Buys, p. 18)* for advice in that regard. Just remember that having too many readily accessible points might make the "magical/mundane" balance among player characters more difficult . . . although, if all the players choose the "magical" option, it's not terribly worrisome.

With these options, the GM can shake things up by choosing different levels of mana for different set pieces. A fight on a moving train is going to be very different in a high mana area versus low!

Finally, if using the same energy source – mana – would cause too many other disruptions in a campaign, it's perfectly fine to repurpose the "mana level" idea to something else – like "impulse level." This way, you could have a fight in an abandoned church that's high mana but low impulse.

ABOUT GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of **GURPS** players. We can be reached by email: info@sjgames.com. Our address is SJ Games, P.O. Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Resources include:

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