



# Playable PC Enchanters for GURPS: The Crossbow Method

by William J. Keith

One of the most difficult types of wizard to play in *GURPS* is the Enchanter, a specialist in creating magical items. The time and energy required for enchanting most items make useful creations on the time scale of the typical adventure virtually impossible. Multiple sets of alternate rules are available on *Pyramid* to spur this process, but a wizard working under the standard *GURPS* system can be at a severe loss.

The easiest answer is one or more huge Powerstones, and a few friends to help. Unfortunately, "huge" gets expensive, beyond the means of most PCs, and hirelings (or hired Powerstones) are not necessarily available, especially in the wilderness. Still, a mage with a size 20 or 30 Powerstone, within the reach of various Wealth Advantages or a few points in starting equipment, can do a surprising amount of worthwhile work for his friends; the bulk of this article is taken up with a different method, but these low-energy applications are emphasized in the options list below.

A route to fast enchantment does exist in standard *GURPS*, but it can be obscure, difficult to master, and risky. The basic necessity addressed is a great deal of energy available on short notice for Quick and Dirty enchantment. Beyond this, helpful skills and materials can ease the process. The amount of energy the method generates could quickly become abusable even for non-enchanters, so suggestions are offered for GM controls.

## The Crossbow Method

The core of the method is two spells from *Grimoire*: Draw Power/TL (any) at reasonable skill and Manastone at a minimum level of 17. The mage requires an energy source large enough to cast Manastone for the duration of the process. He also requires a stone of quality suitable for the Manastone spell, big enough to store the desired energy. The Repair spell is essentially a necessity; without it, hundreds of such stones are likely to be required, putting the process beyond the reach of all but the wealthiest enchanters in most game worlds.

Once these requirements are met, the method is simple. The mage casts Draw Power on the source, then casts Manastone repeatedly upon his chosen stone once per turn until it reaches the desired size. If a critical failure occurs and the stone is destroyed, he deals with any other consequences of the critical failure, casts Repair upon the shattered pieces of the stone, and begins again from scratch

(since Repair does not restore the stored magical energies). A manastone of the desired size having been created, the mage uses the Quick and Dirty enchantment rules. Unlike using a Powerstone, several hundred Fatigue can be available to one caster and the process may be repeated in hours or days rather than months.

The name refers to the concept of storing energy and releasing it rapidly: "the capacitor trick," "the crossbow method," "the coiled spring," or "the geyser" are all possible names to distinguish this process from regular Quick and Dirty enchantment.

## The Fine Print

Like everything in life, if it were that easy, everyone would do it. Most mages would enjoy hundreds of Fatigue to fling about, and enchanters that could do in a day what took another year would quickly crowd out the previous market. The method entails several difficulties for which a wise enchanter will prepare and which GMs may use as controls.

- The process is *hard*. Enchant, Draw Power, and Manastone are all VH spells, and Draw Power in particular has numerous prerequisites. The course of study for the crossbow method is thus quite long.
- In the modern day, access to 2.16 megawatts may require industrial-strength power connections (or, in a world where magic is nearly unknown, a willingness to commit an almost untraceable theft). Sufficient power may be within the budget of a private person at higher TLs. However, the lower-tech solution may be more palatable even at high TLs: a large waterfall, a windy day, a forest fire, or a volcano are all mentioned in Draw Power as suitable energy sources for lower Tech Levels, and probably will not have their energy legally claimed.
- A gem of sufficient size must be acquired. If the GM allows the use of flawless rock crystal or other semiprecious stones as manastones, stones of several hundred carats can be acquired at minimal expense. If precious stones are required, this rapidly gets expensive due more to rarity than weight: in the modern day, opals of several hundred carats, if for sale at all, go for hundreds of thousands of dollars, and diamonds even close to 100 carats are usually national treasures! The Wealth necessary to purchase these is far too point-costly for most games, though a Patron may provide such an opal (the "provides unusual equipment" trait) under strict conditions.

If a simpler solution is desired, magical methods of acquiring stones may affect their prices: the basic economic assumptions on the value of gemstones do not include methods of synthetic gemstone creation. If spells like Duplicate can create huge gems, any jeweler worth his loupe will check a large stone for magical creation. Such artificial stones may be considered effectively worthless as luxuries, and instead will be valued as magical objects based on the work and any raw materials it took to make them. Seek Earth spells may also aid mages of high skill to search for large stones suitable for manastones (and possibly too flawed for jewelry usage). The costs for basic Powerstones then assume that gem-quality natural jewels are used, and technical solutions may lower the raw material prices considerably. GMs interested in further research may wish to examine modern day news about technological syntheses of high-quality gems and their effect on gem prices, and decide how such stones may be suited for magic.

- The method will require time. Several hundred flawless castings of Manastone, of course, would require only a few minutes; the problem is that critical failures require the process to restart. Long runs will require good luck, in its guise as patience. Time for larger stones grows exponentially, and time saved over Slow and Sure shrinks.
- Critical successes are assumed to affect the job very little, but critical failures, using the standard table on p. B147, can cause damage, stun, cripple, or even summon demons. With

high enough skill, stunning and crippling can be absorbed into average predicted times. Damage and demons are much more serious problems. A mage will expect to take an average of 1 damage in 7 critical failures. For large jobs, he will either need to find healing or pause work to heal. Demons will be summoned on 1 in every 216 critical failures; eight hours of relentless work will average this twice a day! The demon will likely cause a substantially longer delay than a mere explosion. Nearby friends or guards will help out here, unless the mage can dispatch a demon on his own at low risk to himself (hint: most heroes can't, and this mage will have spent quite a few of his points in learning the crossbow method, rather than fighting).

Assuming Manastone cast once per second and some rest time during the day, eight hours of work suffers 448 critfails, leading to 64 damage and 2 demons a day. This table lists the expected values of time spent, damage suffered, and demons summoned in making one stone of a given size:

<b>Energy</b>	<b>Crit. Fails</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Damage</b>	<b>Demons</b>	<b>Comments</b>
50	<1	2.25 min	1 in 7 tries	1 in 216 tries	Enough to make small items
100	6	5.75 min	about 1 hit	1 in 33 tries	
150	16	14 min	about 2	1 in 13 tries	
200	42	37 min	6	1 in 5 tries	
250	107	1hr 35min	15	1 in 2 tries	Moderately powerful items; even odds of a demon; most mages will have to rest or heal.
300	272	4hrs	39	1.25 per try	Demon more likely than not
350	693	1day 4hrs	99	3.2	About 64 damage and 2 demons a day from here up
400	1766	4 days	252	8.2	

450	4498	10 days	643	21	Slower than Slow and Sure if the mage must heal mundanely at 1pt/day
500	11454	25 days	1636	53	
550	29163	60 days	4166	135	
600	74256	150 days	10608	343	
650	189073	422 days	27010	875	

A 687-point stone would average 691 days of work, pointless for most enchanters when Slow and Sure works. Mages who do not relish the prospect of demon attacks and magical healing being a regular necessity in their profession will probably stick to creating manastones of 250 points at most.

Costs for pre-made "capacitors" are up to the GM. Keep in mind that for big jobs you're not only paying the enchanter for risky work, you're also paying his doctors (likely mages themselves) and several guards. Even an enchanter who sticks to 50-point stones will still have to deal with a demon every now and then.

## GM Control Levers

Not many spells outside of the Enchantment College can use hundreds of Fatigue. Many can be maintained, though; having a battery of 100-300 energy can be handy when one needs to maintain a powerful spell for a long time without a Circle. One College which can use this much Fatigue to wonderful effect is the Weather College, wherein a single mage with 250 points of Fatigue can summon a storm to envelop a city (or a fleet) and lash it for hours. Other outlets exist. If such stones are available to your mage players, rest assured, they will find creative uses.

This sounds great for players, but can be wildly unbalancing for the game. The GM has several controls he can institute on the crossbow method, without changing any game rules.

1. **Availability of gems.** No 300-carat gems in the game world, no 300-point manastones. This implies that only *natural* gem-quality stones can be made into Powerstones and manastones. Smaller gems of 50-100 carats may still exist, and can still aid in several tasks an enchanter may find of game worth.
2. **The spells Draw Power or Manastone do not exist or are not widely known.** The interconvertibility of various kinds of natural energy, as in Draw Power, was a leap in physics theory which may not have happened in a fantasy world. Also, both of these are Grimoire spells, so they may not be well-known; the crossbow method may be a closely-guarded secret of a small circle of mages.

3. **Critical failures utterly destroy the stones.** The *Basic Set* does not describe just how a stone is destroyed. Perhaps a critical failure on Manastone or Powerstone turns the stone to vapor or energies that cannot be subjected to Repair. About the only way to get around this limit is by obtaining hundreds of stones at great cost. Still, manastones will be cheaper than powerstones of equivalent size, and an enchanter should be able to make a size 30 or 50 stone in a few tries. Happily, this much Fatigue can enable an interesting array of tasks for an enchanter.
4. **Demons get the hint.** An adventure-oriented plot twist: If a mage summons too many demons in a short time via critical failures, have new demons attack the caster hesitantly, or in subtle ways, with temptation and offers of service; or take one look at the caster and run away! Word about the enchanter has apparently gotten around whatever realm demons come from, or he has somehow colored the energies from which demons are created; use any suitable theory of demon arrivals. This should disturb any "decent" PC mage, who would hopefully respond by limiting his creation of large batteries to important situations. Even if it doesn't, demons that run away and attack innocents nearby will disturb all but the most jaded folk, and probably give the caster a reputation (somewhat true) of being a demon summoner . . .

## The Juicy Bits

So you've seen the theory and liked it, you've found the risks acceptable, your GM has pronounced the practice allowable, and your enchanter has sweated the training and taken all appropriate cautions (or just paid the money), and gotten his grubby little hands on a mouthwatering 250-point Manastone. What to do now?

One answer is, "make enchanted items." But which? There are enough options that an enchanter will still probably have to choose an area on which to concentrate; such a concentration results in a secondary area of ability where the enchanter can contribute to the party with normal casting. Spell Stones for these spells are one of the cheapest and most adaptable enchanted items an enchanter can make; carefully chosen spells given to one's friends can dramatically increase the party's versatility. Their single-use nature requires the mage to plan carefully to maintain the party's stock, but many take barely an hour to make with the crossbow method.

One last note: Even with a setting not suited for the crossbow method, the lowest-cost items allow a mage with a large Powerstone to enchant items of use to an adventuring group. (Thirty character points would buy a size 30 Powerstone in a medieval campaign, as would Filthy Rich.) Instead, a starting enchanter mage may want to quest for a Powerstone of sufficient size, truly coming into his profession when he obtains one.) With such a system, each large Powerstone would allow one 40-point item to be created each month, and a 1-Fatigue Spell Stone each 10 days. In civilized regions he may be able to "rent" the power from someone else's Powerstone: 30 points from a 30-point stone would cost \$1,200, as per the sidebar on p. B152.

Below are lists of services an enchanter mage can provide. The first list gives those services within reach of 40 Fatigue, such as a mage with a 30-point Powerstone and 10 Fatigue of his own. The second expands the first list and gives some selected tasks within reach of a 250-point Manastone. The first list is exhaustive, while the second is not; many moderately powerful spells can be enchanted into items with 250 Fatigue.

## Smaller Jobs

- **Scroll.** Requires no particular energy. Scrolls take several days to write but are not particularly expensive; 1 character point or \$500 (assuming a 20-day work month for an enchanter making \$25/day) will buy 20 base Fatigue's worth of scrolls. An enchanter personally can use these as one-time sources of spells he does not know but might find useful; a few days' work in a lull

- during an adventure will allow him to lend spells he knows to other mages in the party. Even non-enchanters can do this, but an enchanter might do it as a regular moneymaker.
- Suspend Enchantment. Not a real item, but occasionally handy and an appropriate spell for an enchanter, which can make good use of a size 15-25 Fatigue stone.
  - Hideaway for one-half pound and one cubic foot of space, with the item's weight still counting. A GM may insist that one pound is the minimum increment, however.
  - Accuracy and Puissance to +1 on a missile, one missile at a time.
  - Fortify and Deflect to +1 on armor, if the piece rules are used. Even such small missile and armor enchantments can perceptibly enhance the efficacy of fighters in the group over time.
  - Penetrating Blade can be cast to +1 on a missile.
  - Staff. Useful and a reliable moneymaker. Also makes a nice gift.
  - Powerstone, one level at a time. (One-College Powerstones as well.) Useful for small magical items. With luck, maybe you can better your own property!
  - Manastone. Useful even without the crossbow method.
  - Seek Water. Possibly handy in dry regions.
  - Inscribe.
  - Knots, on a 2-foot string.
  - Mystic Mark (permanent mark).
  - Pentagram (to protect up to 4 hexes).
  - Curse, to -1 on an item.
  - Dull Nose, to -1 as a cursed item.
  - Undo, immunity amulet version. Nice if magical thieves roam the streets.
  - Tangle Growth, permanent effect.
  - Voices (only 2 words, and no Link at this level. Could get irritating . . .).
  - Talisman, to +1 protection (+2 if the caster can shell out 5 Body Hits in life force). Might make the difference, especially with a villain who likes to cast subtle spells.
  - Spell Stone. With a 30-point Powerstone or Manastone and 10 points of his own Fatigue, an enchanter can create Spell Stones of spells with a 2-Fatigue casting cost or 1-Fatigue casting and maintenance cost. A wide selection of spells can then be used by non-mages in the party; appealing choices may include healing spells, protection spells, and many others.

## Bigger Jobs

An exhaustive list of Enchant College spells is included, as well as some selected other spells. Note that Power requires 500 energy, but may reasonably be assumed fairly well-known among enchanters, allowing the PC and a hireling with 250-point stones to work together for a day to make much more useful "always on" items with 1 or 2 points of Power.

- Fortify, to DR +3 on armor by the piece (doing the front and back of the torso separately, assuming the back can be enchanted at 30% cost or less).
- Deflect, to PD +2 on armor by the piece.
- Lighten, at 25%.
- Accuracy and Puissance may be cast to +1 to any weapon and +2 to missiles with a Manastone. Bane may increase these.
- Cornucopia, for ammunition of up to \$5 in value.
- Bane
- Name, with name written
- Password, with password written
- Limit
- Link
- Remove Enchantment (like Suspend Enchantment, not an item enchantment itself, but an appropriate skill for an enchanter; can remove enchantments up to 2500 energy)
- Lesser Wish (!)
- Wish (!!)

- Clay Golem
- Hideaway (with Manastone, up to 2.5 pounds/5 cubic feet of extra capacity, or double this if weighed)
- Talisman (to the full +4)
- Amulet (greatly boosting the party's magical defenses in specific areas)
- Malefice
- Ensorcel (though only for a 1-Fatigue spell)
- Leak
- Dancing Shield (for a 1-lb. shield; unlikely)
- Penetrating Blade (to +1 on a non-missile weapon, or +3 on a missile)
- Ghost Weapon (on a 1-lb weapon)
- Quick-Aim (to +2, and +3 with a second casting)
- Graceful Weapon (on a 1-lb. weapon, unlikely to need it)
- Weapon Spirit (with very low IQ and no Voices)

Some other spells that can be enchanted with 250 Fatigue (many others work):

- Sense Foes (popular moneymaker in distrustful society)
- Hide Emotion (another popular one, in certain circles)
- Spark Cloud
- Fire Cloud
- Create Water (a handy traveling item)
- Create Food (pot version; another for travelers)
- Preserve Food (salable, and/or useful to adventurers)
- Illusion Shell on a small object
- The Light & Darkness College is particularly heavy with low-cost items.
- Blur (great for defense)
- Sunlight
- Continual Sunlight (permanent effect)
- Wall of Light
- Animate Object (permanent effect, up to 10 lbs)
- Link
- Spell Wall
- Keen Eyes, to +1
- Keen Ears, to +1
- Stop Healing (missiles)
- Conceal
- Force Wall, one hex at a time
- Hush (good for sneaking about)
- Silver Tongue (staff version)
- Create Fuel (container, to 2 pounds per day)
- Propel (enchanted device, at 12.5 tons or less)
- Magnetic Vision

## Sample Enchanter PC

### Carrick Stonecutter

*100 points*

Carrick apprenticed under a stiff Guild enchanter in his hometown and graduated to a decent living. He lived a settled life, picking up a few Earth spells to help the business but nothing like a footloose adventurer would have. Then the crossbow method was invented, and enchanters suddenly had the

career of an adventurer opened to them. Carrick examined his life and found it wanting: excitement, luxury, and companionship. He spent a few years studying the method as well as some militant spells, to the dismay of his old teacher, and fell in with the first young adventuring group he found. He's rapidly learning that some fighting and woodlands skills were expected, and is doing his best to shake off a dangerous hesitation that grips him when violence threatens. Thank goodness the group hasn't journeyed by sea yet; Carrick is miserable when he doesn't have solid ground under his feet.

When starting out on a wilderness mission, he often brings a clay golem. He happily provides Spell Stones for Minor Healing and Stone Missile to his friends, and is considering expanding his repertoire of Earth spells and enchantments.

If creating a manastone away from his group, Carrick will summon an Earth elemental as an anti-demon guard, bargaining for services with Essential Earth. He'll use Minor Healing if badly damaged. Carrick's manastone is a magic-made 300-carat duplicate of an emerald from the monarch's crown with distinctive flaws added. Jewelers value it at \$7500 for magical labor; local laws forbid its resale and tax its possession at four days of work for the Crown each year.

Carrick is a 100-point starting character. Somewhat richer and older, with some of his ambitions for spells realized, he could be the Golem Master: a Patron to young mages, or a villain who emerges from seclusion with hundreds of soldiers to terrorize a region, then vanishes into the earth to flee if confronted.

Age 40; 5'7"; 150 lbs.; dusty brown close-cut hair; brown eyes; an angular middle-aged man with a mercurial face.

**ST** 9 [-10] **DX** 9 [-10] **IQ** 13 [30], **HT** 10 [0]

Basic Speed 5, Move 5

Dodge 5, Parry 3 (mace), Block 4

**Advantages:** Literacy [10], Magery 3 [35].

**Disadvantages:** Impulsive [-10], Combat Paralysis [-15], Motion Sickness [-10].

**Quirks:** Wants to learn the fabled Earthquake spell; seeks a Wish enchanter to learn more about wishes; hopes to regain the respect of his former master; looking for a wife as well as a fortune; occasionally talks to rocks fondly. [-5]

**Skills:** Sculpting-9 [2], Mace-7 [1/2], Shield-8 [1/2], Geology/TL3-11 [1], Survival (Woodlands)-11 [1/2], Merchant (enchanted items)-11/17 [1].

**Languages:** Common (native)-13 [0].

**Spells:** Enchant-17 [12], Seek Power/TL3-14 [1], Conduct Power/TL3-13 [1], Steal Power/TL3-13 [1], Draw Power/TL3-13 [1], Manastone-17 [12], Find Weakness-14 [1], Weaken-14 [1], Restore-14 [1], Rejoin-14 [1], Repair-14 [1], Delay-14 [1], Spell Stone-14 [1], Detect Magic-14 [1], Identify Spell-14 [1], Analyze Magic-14 [1], Golem (Clay)-15 [4], Puissance-15 [2], Seek Earth-14 [1], Shape Earth-14 [1], Shape Stone-14 [1], Walk Through Earth-14 [1], Earth to Stone-14 [1], Create Earth-14 [1], Earth to Air-14 [1], Stone Missile-15 [2], Essential Earth-14 [1], Summon Earth Elemental-14 [1], Ward-14 [1], Sense Foes-14 [1], Sense Emotion-14 [1], Ignite Fire-14 [1], Extinguish Fire-14 [1], Sound-14 [1], Silence-14 [1], Hush-14 [1], Create Air-14 [1], Purify Air-14 [1], Death Vision-14 [1], Summon Spirit-14 [1], Animation-13 [1], Lend Strength-14 [1], Lend Health-14 [1], Minor Healing-15 [2]

**Equipment:** Standard traveling equipment, mace, small shield, large manastone (weight 2 oz, value \$7,500, details above) [7.5].



## Adventure Seeds

- **The Diamond Eye of the Hurricane:** A national treasure (one of the few usable gems in this setting) is stolen by a circle of mages who threaten to wreak havoc on the countryside using devastating weather spells if their demands are not met. PCs may be tasked with recovering the stone, capturing the mages, protecting the populace, or many other roles.
- **The Golem Master:** A recluse emerges from years of isolation with a golem battalion of hundreds and revenge on his mind. The army will deal with the golems while you find and kill him so the threat will cease . . . but how did he do it? Many mysterious figures would like to know, or already seem to know and seem to want to keep the PCs out of it. Will the players learn the secret of his power? Will learning it empower their mage, or make him a target?
- **Environmentalists:** Down with demons! Down with explosions! Down with exploding demons! One too many horrors has been loosed onto an unsuspecting town, and a political movement is underway to make the crossbow method illegal due to its polluting side effects. Which side will the characters take? What will a crossbow-method enchanter do if his profession is criminalized? Consider using "[Playing to the Crowd](#)" to roleplay a referendum on the matter for some non-combat gaming.

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