



Spellslinger

A Fantasy Western with Spell-Slinging Rail Guns for *GURPS*

by Eric Funk

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"The Orcs circled again, riding their fearsome wolves. Both wolf and rider howled as they charged. Blast! They know our stage has to follow the 'line or we can't use our best guns. 'Zeke fired another bolt at them and started enlarging another, while that Elf boy we hired for the trip started chanting some fool elaborate spell. We probably don't have another minute. Our Halfling guide was keeping us on track, so she's no use in this fight. Oh oh, the Orcs are raising their spears to throw them. I raised my Dancing axe and hurled it into their midst . . ."

As presented, this setting is a modestly mundane timeline with magic subtle enough that any effects on history are mostly canceled out. In "The West," wherever it may be, little is said of "civilization out East," other than as a crowded, decadent place. "The West" is seen as a place where individuals can make a difference. This is an age of discovery, of human, Dwarf, and Halfling settlers and explorers charting new territory. The indigenous Orc and Elven populations meet these efforts in a variety of ways. The newcomers to this land bring firearms, locomotives, and science, while the natives have a sense of the land, its spirits, and a connection to the foundations of magic.

A Quick Timeline (Dates relative to Present, see also pp. OW19-20)

*Unless otherwise noted, page references to Basic, Fantasy, Lite, and Magic are for **GURPS**, Fourth Edition. All other references are for **GURPS**, Third Edition.*

- 300** "New World" continent discovered
- 200** Trading and colonization in the New World starts. Many tribes' lands are "bought" and settlements start. Some less ethical human leaders trick or wipe out small groups of Elves and Orcs.
- 150** Elves put up organized resistance to human incursions. Their superior magic and knowledge of the area sabotage human supply lines. Many Orc groups are wiped out, others retreat, reinforcing other tribes, bringing human ideas. The first steam engine arrives from across the ocean. Estimated population of the colonies: 50,000
- 125** First Dwarven Mine/town starts in rough hills 50 miles from the largest human settlement.

- 100** Small pockets of Independence start as third and fourth-generation humans see the new land as their homeland. Some ally with native tribes to try and force out less "environmentally friendly" colonies. The first steam-boats sail rivers.
- 95** The first rail roads start hauling ore from a Dwarven town to a nearby port. Ancient ruins are discovered.
- 75** Dwarven settlements have internal rail systems installed when they can. 500 miles of rail line crisscross the East coast.
- 50** The first museum is founded in the New World. Ruins of a different ancient culture are found. A hoard of Orcs swarm toward the largest human settlement. There are mass casualties on all sides. Elves are mostly neutral, but a few help one side or the other. Following this, the dominant human government makes a Treaty to preserve the far West half of the continent, making it free from cities and settlements.
- 35** Mining disturbs the slumber of a pair of angry dragons. They ravage half the town before an agreement is reached. They will receive a royalty/tax of all profit made within 50 miles if they protect it. The dragons help rebuild the town and use magic to help find new ore deposits away from the main mine (see also Etiquette and Treaties, pp DR42, DR44)
- 25** The Treaty is broken by rogue settlers and then corporations and finally the government admits the treaty is void.
- 15** A group of "Dark" Elves is caught sabotaging supply lines to a deforestation operation. They all immolate themselves rather than be caught alive. (It is suspected some escaped -- it is difficult to count ashes . . .)
- 10** Orcish inter-tribal warfare endangers several towns. The towns are fortified in response, but warfare cuts off bulk supplies and travel.
- 5** A shipment of powerstones by rail is hijacked at night. The large crate of gold nuggets is the only thing taken.
- 1** An Orc horde is predicted to form soon. (Or so say oracles and sociologists . . .)

The Present brings . . .

Human towns contain classic "Western" buildings such as a assay office, bank, a blacksmith, a rail/spellagraph office, a saloon/hotel, a school, a sheriff's office/jail, and a manasmith/healer/chemist (see p. OW11). Most valuable buildings will be made of worked, magic-resistant stone (likely the jail, bank, alchemist's and assay office). The walls will likely be enchanted with spells like Magic Resistance, Spell Shield, Spell Wall, Pentagram, Drain Mana, Force Dome, Force Wall, Utter Dome, Utter Wall, depending on the size and value of items being protected (see pp. M123, M170). For added security, some buildings even have the equivalent of Divert Teleport, Teleport Shield, and Scrywall. With the presence of magic, towns will be less dirty than in history, perhaps as clean as portrayed in movies. Hospitals are rare -- most use the first aid skill and seek native/herbal treatments as well as magic. Traditionally, many barbers were trained in First Aid as well. Food/rations purchased at general store are generally less likely to be stolen than expensive Create Food items. (All costs presented hereafter are in TL5 dollars, as per pp. B27.)

A new idea that is gaining popularity with many groups is the large-scale reclamation of arid land. A corporation (or government) starts by creating multiple artificial springs, which fill water tables and create arable land. The new land is then allocated to dedicated farmers, cattle ranchers, and urban sprawl. Away from towns, homesteaders must sometimes fight fiercely to protect their property and families from bandits, be they human or Orc. Inhabitants of desolate areas often have many hunting long arms ready, and some set traps for the unwary. Thus it is typically wise to announce one's self at the gate.

Any sort of (literally) outlandish speech, mannerisms, or dress can make a person stand out, be they dressed in the latest fashion from the East, or wearing ethnic garb from another region. Anyone not wearing appropriate "Western" outfits will be remembered, and may experience a Reaction modifier from +1 to -3 (from curiosity to shunning). Newcomers that appear to have money may even be approached in the streets by tailors! Intra-species "racial" tension is almost non-existent due to golems and undead servants that perform the most dangerous tasks.

Science, Travel and Communication (see also p. OW 51)

In general, little scientific research is done in the West (GM willing, barring the odd Mad Alchemist). Calculation Engines may be possible, but are not practical in the dusty West.

Electricity is known, but has not yet established itself outside of large towns. Some local factories have small generators for lights and mechanical apparatus (such as newspapers), but their electrical output is insignificant, enough for 100 soft light bulbs. This output is insignificant to Draw Power. Most mages seek large natural sources such as [waterfalls and hot springs](#).

The availability of medium-range high-speed travel, such as a railroad, is required to avoid a slow sprawl. In a broad sense, the trains bring raw goods and food to cities, and take people and manufactured goods out to the frontier. They also bring newspapers, catalogs, journals, and books slowly westward. To aid in this, power plants and steam engines enhanced with TL4 Elemental Furnaces and mana engines are available (see p. VE 86). There are a few areas where golems are used to extend rail lines all day and night. Typically they are employed along side Earth and Plant mages, laying the heavy rune-laden rails. In low-mana regions, they are replaced with chain gangs and Enlarged workers.

Rails artificially cordon and restrain [ley lines](#), which are pulled away from their previous location. (This displeases both Elves and Orcs.) The effect of ley lines is to raise the ambient mana by one level within it. This allows mana-dependent creatures such as golems to travel through otherwise mana-poor areas, and powerstones to recharge more quickly. Freeing a ley line requires removing the rails completely, or turning them perpendicular to the ley line. At this point most lines slowly return to their original location, although some move very quickly. Some human companies buy land with a ley line on it, move the line, and then sell the land.

A successful Vision+Magery roll allows mages to perceive ley lines . . . as long as they Concentrate. As soon as the mage stops Concentrating, things return to normal. Most can assume that train tracks will contain a ley line, but its usability may be restricted . . . The glowing area of a ley line (on average a yard in diameter, but two yards in rails) is an area of higher mana. Mages working near the lines should remember that trains are often much wider than the rails . . .

Communication comes in many forms, from bulk mail on trains, to the "PonEx" messengers to "Spellagraph" lines, in increasing speed and cost (see "Pony Express," below). Between smaller towns, "rail mail" and spellagraph are usually both possible, although many towns are without one, the other, or both. Communication between large cities is done between dedicated Telepathy agents who can send messages without range limits (they just have to meet each other once). Messages may have to be routed between several hops and stops, even if the towns are close -- most message and rail systems run East to West. Spellagraph lines use the spells Scribe and a variant of Telecast to send messages instantly and users pay by the word (see pp. M128, M47, and M174, respectively). If the delivery destination is away from a town, paying an extra fee up front can charter a PonEx delivery agent to get the message there (see also p. OW52).

Pony Express

PonEx is a Halfling corporation that has significant holdings in the "New World" as well as in "civilization." It employs more Halflings than any other organization. It allows the small folk to see the world relatively safely, and get paid for it (while not involving any magic rings or dragons). Their specially trained ponies can travel quickly (using the Hiking skill with Move 14, Light Encumbrance, see pp. B460, 426, 357) for up to two hours before slowing (63 miles in 2h, 168 miles per 8h day on "Good" terrain, as per p. B351). Two hours is also the interval between a typical Halfling's meals. Due to semi-Literacy, each district/small country has its own symbols and marks, identified with a specialization of the Heraldry skill.

Some special delivery options include:

- "Air Mail": letters and small parcels can be sent by homing pigeon and trained avian (see also shoulder dragon, a.k.a "Petty Drake," pp. DR54, FB83).
- "Priority Overnight" is a ceremonial casting of "Teleport Other" with extra energy traded for skill. One can save cost if there are several packages going to the same PonEx distributor in that town. Costs increase dramatically if the target is not a PonEx outlet (with a known, permanent Teleport Beacon; see p. M83), and again if they are not allowed to scry there first . . . (Note that Magery is not necessarily required to cast Teleport; see p. M147). For loads from 50 to 120 lbs, packages are sometimes sent by "Mail Mage" to personally deliver important cargo (120lbs is Heavy Encumbrance for a ST 10 Mage, double if he is wearing a Lighten Burden 2 item). Most such mages have Magery with the +10% enhancement "Solitary Ceremonial Casting" (see p. F129-130) or a familiar that can aid in Circle casting for a [higher effective skill](#). Popular familiars are those that are both light and can cling without hurting the caster (so cats are out). Mail mages are often seen with shoulder dragons, climbing lizards such as geckos and chameleons, as well as birds such as crows and hawks. Loads 50 lbs and above are likely to be carried by these mages instead of Teleport Other (see also Practical Astromancy, p. TM107).

Example 1: Letters and small packages: (<10lbs 1/2× energy costs), 900 miles (10 energy, skill -7), halved again for Beacon: net 2 energy, -3 to skill. This can be performed Ceremonially by a skill 12 caster with one unskilled observer (or familiar) for 8 energy (+6 to skill), giving an effective skill of 15, the highest effective skill for a Ceremonial casting (as per p. M12). For a regular shipment, this comes to \$10. If sent on "lower" priority, the cost may only be \$1 per letter if they are bundled every 9 lbs or so.

Example 2: A Chest of Money (150lbs, 3× energy costs), 150 miles (9 energy, skill -6), halved for Beacon: net 13 energy, -3 to skill. Ceremonially, a skill 12 mage (9 energy) with 43 energy of people can cast this at skill 15. The cost for hiring the people is at about \$50 for the hour (\$32 for the mage, and \$0.50 per person), plus beer. Beyond the level in this example, each 2 penalty increase the cost by \$7 and number of spectators by 13. Thus large items are rarely teleported more than a few miles.

Riding Animals

The favorite mount of most humans is the horse, although some groups have imported camels and llamas for use in arid and mountainous regions. Dwarves prefer low-built lizards capable of withstanding more extreme heat and cold as well as some breeds are able to grip sheer surfaces (albeit with almost no Encumbrance). Halflings are most comfortable with ponies. The favored mount of Elves is a life-extended breed of diatryma (see pp. BE49, STE120, RS112). This creature can leap great distances and glide to land on a dime. There are rumors that some can actually fly. The fearsome Orcs often keep huge semi-feral wolves that they use as mounts.

These "wargs" instill fear in most opponents. If someone's first encounter with wargs is against them in combat, a Fright Check may be in order! (See Penetrating Call, a common lupine ability, pp. BE112, Update 4e 10, and CI63.) Riders wearing real spurs will receive a -1 reaction (or worse!) from those with Animal Empathy, doubled for Beast Kin. For the lizards, use the Megalogryphon template from F212, without the skull DR or Berserk. There also exist lighter versions (half mass and ST, but add Clinging). Use the below table for costs in Human lands. Double the cost of horses in foreign lands, and halve the cost of the "ethnic" animal.

Mounts

Horse*	\$60
Pony*	\$50
Diatryma	\$300
Lizard	\$80
Warg	\$200

* From p. OW119.

Bridges & Water

Train trestles may also be popular places to store Powerstones to recharge. In addition, the grid work of metal lattices has a tendency to accumulate a magical charge during high winds (similar in appearance to "[St. Elmo's Fire](#)"). The local mana level will be increased by one with a range of one yard for every five degrees of wind in the Beauford scale (see p. M194). There are some reports of unusual creatures making their nests in these higher mana areas . . .

Rafts made of cut timber are floated downstream from mountains carrying other raw goods for sale. Riverboats are popular as a fast cargo conveyor where there are no roads (see keel boats, p. OW51). Some boats are pulled by seahorses, removing the need for a riverside track (see p. F211, FB43). There are rumors of aquatic races living in the rivers and oceans, but there has been no reliable contact as of yet.

Magic Items

Retail enchantment costs are typically \$10 per energy up to 128 energy, and then \$33 per energy after that. The most popular items will be created Industrially for \$3.30 per energy. Many major retail stores can charge 25% less than that through bulk purchases and still make a hefty profit. These follow the TL7 Industrial Magic rules from pp. TM41-42, MIiii20-21 in TL5 dollars.

A standard part of most civilized (and Elven) employment is the Bless spell (see p. M129). For only one hour and \$100 or \$500, each employee will receive the equivalent bonus of several years' study in addition to safety from accidents! Many companies require that a worker sign a one or five-year contract before the business will pay for this. It is a mark of prestige for one to be considered for a level 3 Bless. This spell will still be common as "life insurance."

Example Potion: Enhanced Time Sense (ETS)

For the purpose of this potion, there are four stages a person's reaction time can be classified as: Combat Paralysis, Normal, Combat Reflexes, and Enhanced Time Sense.

A popular type of weapon is a "rail gun," a weapon that can be used by anyone in the higher mana area on which trains run. They are enchanted with the spell "Throw Spell" and are usually shaped like rifles (for their high Accuracy) (see p. M128, B279). Many Elven bows have this enchantment upon them, as all Elves can cast spells.

The generic counterparts to a "rail gun" are rifle shells and arrowheads enchanted with "Blank Spell Arrow" (see p. M66). Used by a mage or anyone with a scroll and manastone, they can also carry magical effects using ordinary bows and rifles.

Scrolls are in great demand, as most citizens are at least partially literate, and in some need of spells that don't require Magery. Such spells can be loaded into "rail guns" even away from trains, and powered by one-college manastones! (3 energy, \$7 per energy capacity in industrial bulk!) Scrolls cost \$33 per point of energy (see p. M 57).

Missile Wands are less popular, since only mages (and Elves) can use them. The technique of charging, and then Quick-Drawing in a duel is popular. They are also used for hunting and target practice. Ice Sphere is the most popular Missile spell, as flame spells can easily spark wildfire in the dry grasses. Elves are especially fond of jet wands as they aid in the close-quarters fighting they often find in the forests, scrub and tall grasses. Jet wands that are exported include mud, water, and wind. Both types of wands are collectively called "Elf-guns" by those without Magery.

In native-style magic, shamans enchant non-gems with fatigue like powerstones. It requires a critical success on a craft skill, and it can store a number of points up to the degree of success. It is prepared by a mage (with Magery) using an appropriate Religious Ritual + Magery skill, and then enchanted with the Powerstone Enchantment, as usual (including quirks and stunting). It is part of the ritual skill that determines whether an item has the capacity to hold Fatigue. The IQ+Magery Sense roll from M 66 can only detect items *after* they have been Enchanted.

Spellstones come in the shape of sling stones, arrowheads, and rifle shells. While they are relatively expensive, they hold their own energy and can be activated in one second, unlike scrolls, which can take from two seconds to minutes (or longer) to activate. Spellstones are marked in ways relating to their enchantment. If not obviously labeled, it requires a IQ-based weapon roll to identify them in combat (modified by Magery or Magic Resistance). This roll should also be made (in secret) if they are *mislabeled*. A few popular examples are "Bullets of Immolation" (Create Fire), "Bang Bullets" (Destroy Air), "Bullets of Fouling" (Stench), and smoke bombs that cause

Each dose moves one up a level. Note that it is the concurrent number of effective doses that determines how many levels' increase the subject experiences. (e.g. dose #1 lasts 2 min, dose #2 lasts 3 min. The subject experiences a two level boost for 2 min, which drops to a one level boost for one more minute). After a subject has the benefits of Enhanced Time Sense, extra doses only help extend the duration. This is not without risk, however, as in any case, each dose imbibed requires a roll against the Potion brewer's skill -- a Critical Failure causes a Heart Attack (see p. B429)! (It is up to the GM whether it is more dramatic to have the heart attack at the moment the potion is imbibed or at the end of its effect.) Despite the risks, this potion is popular among young gunslingers. The converse potion, "Buck Fever," can stop any heart attack (but not cure damage suffered), and lowers the subject's reaction time one level. The two potions taste the same to the untrained tongue. Alchemists are at -1 to differentiate them. If a dose of each are mixed

Mystic Mist for quick camp setups. There are also "Plugs" (Create Earth), "Drops" (Earth to Air), "Toasters" (Create Fire), and "Unbullets" (Healing with paint shot, see p. MF8). These are collectively called "Elf-shot."

together, they cancel each other out.

Artificial gems are commonly available. With no "real" value in the commercial gem market, they have become the staple for commercial spell casting! Use the material cost from Magic as if they were TL5 dollars. This is evident in the Spellstone costs:

Duration: 3d×2 minutes

All other costs as per Speed, p. M 214

1 energy	\$100
2 energy	\$250
3 energy	\$400
4 energy	\$600
5 energy	\$800
6 energy	\$1,000

People (see pp. F107-110 for nonhuman racial templates)

Humans

Humans are the race that forms dense cities and even create service villages adjacent to Halfling and Dwarven cities, to cater to those things that the shorter races do not develop. It is found that if the human "half" of a community actually out-grows the non-human "half," the non-humans tend to drift away, leaving only a remnant of the previous population. This causes many towns to die out, leaving it open for the original population to return. This process annoys the longer-lived races who may see several cycles in their lifetime.

There are, of course, human poachers that kill rare animals for their trophy parts (e.g. pelts, horns) and leave the rest. They are disliked by tribes, homesteaders, and most honest city folk, while cattle owners quietly encourage the hunting of predators and dangerous wildlife. Some humans build wooden homes on the frontier made from clear-cut forest. Both poachers and clear-cutters are disliked by Halflings, Elves, and Orcs! By contrast, there are a few human settlements that have learned to respect the Elves' ways and plant more trees than they cut down. Rumors roam that such woods are magical (bandits would say "cursed"). A few towns have let such forests surround them like a shield . . .

Human exports include: white hats of Bright Vision, black hats of Night Vision, magic bullets, 1-, 2-, and 3-point Manastones, and "Lock-on Locketts" (Beacon + Seeker)

Religion: Any.

Magic: Golems, Industrial.

Common roles and stereotypes: Merchants, city dwellers, cattle herders.

Dwarves

Dwarven communities are all underground, "where the minerals are," and many individuals go their entire lives without seeing the sky. The most adventurous Dwarves are seen prospecting for new sites for mines, but are otherwise uninterested in the overworld. The Dwarves favor tools

that last, and thus purchase Halfling cooking implements over their own or humans'. Dwarves never make items of a Quality less than Fine. For 100× cost, Super Fine (+3) weapons are available (see *Ultra-Tech Third Edition*, page 62). Dwarves export distilled products of all sorts, even alchemical. Dwarven magical exports include ovens, forges, metal weapons, heat resistance items, with products like pendants of "stoking the fire," a self-heating oven, and "hair-splitting" axes (see p. B274).

Religion: Works.

Magic: Energy, Heat, Melee Weapons, Metal.

Common roles and stereotypes: Prospectors, Miners.

Elves

Holding a deep love and respect for the natural world, Elves have done some trade with more balanced human communities, and their natural magical ability has created developments in technology for both races, allowing more radical Elven factions to take up a guerilla war against the more aggressive settlements. Due to cultural precedents, most Elves encountered are assumed to be between 70 and 170 years old. This is an age of wanderlust for Elves, and as such are considered to have a quirk-level of Reputation ("Reckless Youth," among Elves)[-1]. Older wandering Elves have a similar Reputation ("Can't Settle Down," among Elves).

Elves are rumored to have the expertise to create new ley lines. For this reason, if nothing else, many individuals want good relations with organized Elven tribes. Elves are the only characters that could normally start with spells from the [Ley Line College](#). Learning these spells requires an oath of secrecy (perhaps even a Geas), and Unusual Background of 10cp, 25cp for non-Elves. Despite the proliferation of firearms, Elves still make bows of Fine Quality (p. B277), usually enchanted with Essential Wood, Shatterproof, and a Fireproof variant that keeps them from burning (see pp. M164, 118, 73). This is in addition to any other enchantments like Loyal Sword, Quick-Aim, Puissance, and Accuracy (see pp M63, 65). Beyond this, Elves have the same penchant for Quality as Dwarves. Elven magical exports include natural tools, bows, spell arrows, and items of flame resistance. Some brand names include: "Everlast" Bows, "Flamewash" capes.

Religion: Communion with nature.

Magic: Healing, Meta, Plant.

Common roles and stereotypes: Forest and plains dwelling nature-lovers.

Halflings

Halflings prefer to live in harmony with nature, building their homes under hills. Farming using careful crop rotation to keep the soil in balance, they only keep enough animals to sustain their communities. The largest Halfling communities might match what humans call "towns." They are interested in the small-scale digging tools the Dwarves sell. Halflings export farm implements, kitchen utensils, pipes, walking staves, sling spellstones, self-lighting pipes, staff of the extra mile, self-filling maps, kegs of preservation (for milk, cheese, properly aged alcohol, and so on), and kitchen tools and utensils.

Religion: Holism.

Magic: Food, Motion.

Common roles and stereotypes: Farmers.

Orcs

The Orcs respect power, and a single Orc tribe will generally avoid a walled fort-town, and generally assume that any larger town will have a sufficient force to keep them at bay. Anything smaller might be at risk, including travelers, herds, and wagon trains. Most are not crazy enough to damage the rails, as some tribes have been virtually wiped out in retribution for that criminal act. Some less ethical groups have placed an unofficial open bounty on Orc-heads. Law enforcement in those areas has been paid . . . encouraged to take a blind eye to the "protection" of property in the region. As is understandable (and predicted), Orc tribes in the region have grown more hostile toward travelers. Orcish magical specialties include flame weapons: The "Consuming Sword" (Flaming Weapon), The "Gorget of the Dragon" (Flame Breath), and the "Spinning Fire Wheel" (war boomerang with Flame Jet).

Religion: Sacrifice.

Magic: Body, Breaking, Fire, Harming.

Common roles and stereotypes: Roaming tribes.

Varmints and Hazards

- Many magic-using bandit groups fast-grow trees in the center of rail lines to derail the train. While the passengers and crew are disoriented, the thieves can make off with valuables. It is becoming a "poplar" trick. Thus many new engines' cowcatchers have spells similar to Reshape and Shape Plant on them. Bandit groups are typically made up of outcast humans and Orcs, although the occasional disgruntled Elf is reported. Gangs vary in motive, be it unity, politics, religion, or just boredom.
- Dragons are powerful beings with alien intellects. Generally feared, they are becoming vulnerable to high-tech gadgets. Thus a few are beginning to know fear for the first time. Some become reclusive tinkers and alchemists, dedicated to understanding modern magic and science. Others lash out against these new threats, trying to remove points of advanced technology and magic. Conspiracy theorists believe that dragons are responsible for the popular dislike of the thought of air travel.
- Corrupt officials may be found in any locale -- money isn't the only commodity being traded.
- The wrenching of many ley lines in a short time can destabilize mana in some Western parts. Cartographers are adding many kinds of aspected mana to the charts. Areas of Very High Fire mana can cause paper to catch fire in the sun, and ammunition can overheat!
- Ghosts are not an uncommon sight in these wild areas, as adventurers, prospectors, and messengers have a strong sense of purpose. This is especially true in High Necromancy zones.

Adventure Seeds

To Catch A Train: The adventurers happen to encounter a group preparing to sabotage a rail line. They are spotted and offered money to not have seen this. (As a variant, they might be

pleaded with to help them release the ley line to help a dying forest.)

The Circle Ends Here: The party is hired by the most prominent Halfling in the area with a top secret mission: the Halflings want an adjacent human town (on their land) to die so they can live in peace. The adventurers are authorized to do anything to disrupt traffic and human commerce, as long as no people or animals are hurt.

The Dauphin: An impetuous young Elf noble wants to "relive the glory days of his people"; he has found an ancient suit of armor and barding and wants to "rid the world of despoilers." His family wishes to keep good relations with the local human groups, and for the princeling to tire quickly, be safe, yet feel like he accomplished something (in descending order of priority).

Eagle Down: A young plains Elf approaches the group and asks for help. He needs to get to the nearby mountain summits to collect eagle down to complete a test of adulthood. Near the base of the mountain live a particularly nasty, but small, Orc tribe that lets its pet wolves roam around at night.

For added spice, there is a small group of Dwarven prospectors that could be used in any way to balance the party's successes. If they trounce the Orcs, the Dwarves could be antagonistic against "claim-jumpers," friendly if the Orcs are bothering them.

As a possible complication, the test of adulthood could restrict the Elf from using:

- Magic
- Weapons
- Climbing gear
- Food (he must fast)
- Time (he has a certain number of days to complete his test)

Eagle Has Landed: A company approaches the group and indicates that there is a rebel Elf attending a party tonight. The company has been subcontracted to help provide a deniable distraction. They want to hire the PCs to relocate the Elf's mount to a nearby warehouse so the officers can make an arrest while the Elf is confused as to its disappearance. The diatryma will be slipped a sleeping potion/drug. For extra spice, the Elf might really be a noble, and the patron is the criminal!

Hunting the Hunter: A prominent Orc Hunter is coming into an area where pro-life interests are in power. The PCs are hired to investigate the Hunter and expose evidence regarding his Orc-hunting. Quick to brag, he will exaggerate tales of his exploits in a casual setting. If their mission becomes known, he will become antagonistic.

Ley of the Land: Rumors abound of a ley line nexus near where a company wants to establish a mining/trade town. Since the party probably includes several characters with Magery, they are hired to find and chart it: "There's a Nexus in them thar hills." If none of the PCs have the Cartography skill, or they seem too organized, a bookworm NPC with the skill could be sent along.

Ley to Rest: The daughter of a local land owner's approaches the party, and offers to hire them to go looking for her fiancé. He set out to survey a new area of land purchased by her father, about four to seven days' ride from here. She gives the party a picture of him and a letter with her own seal (she hand-made a rubber stamp). In the vicinity the party will discover a ley line nexus, and inside it the remains of a camp, seemingly destroyed by wild creatures. As they investigate,

a ghost matching the description of the lost man will attack them. Still disoriented from the experience, he believes that the party is sent to kill him by his future father-in-law, whom he believes never truly accepted him. Pointing out to the young man that he is already dead will cause him to pause, and showing him the letter will convince him only that the party is not his enemy.

The GM has two possible outcomes and solutions. First, the future father-in-law might be guilty. If so, the party must find proof, and bringing one of the most powerful men in the area to justice will not be easy, but it will be the most humane way to get this ghost to rest. If the future father-in-law is innocent, then the first step is finding who -- or what -- killed the young man, and then to get a magic-assisted statement of non-complicity from the older man. As an added complication, this adventure can be made more interesting if the ghost is anchored to the promise ring he received from his beloved.

Lost in the Maize: While deep in a mission, the party encounters a lost mail mage pulling a heavy 100-lb mailbag adorned with symbols that do not seem familiar. He does not have any language in common with the party. As a further complication, he could require immediate first aid to stabilize his life, and surgery later. (In this case, the language barrier could become apparent if they revive him.)

The Mail Must Go Through: A pony express rider missed their rendezvous. The heroes are the closest troubleshooters to the area. They must find the rider and provide aid; if the rider is dead, the party must complete the mission themselves.

Oh, Ley: If there was a struggle between railroad companies and settlements, it is doubly fierce in the Spellslinger world. To a town, a free ley line running through it means higher mana areas, which facilitates a more powerful magical industry, faster recharge rates, and permits non-mages can cast spells. If there is only one line in a town, a rail company passing through corrals it, and thus it no longer can pass through buildings. It also becomes modestly dangerous to cast in the area. Thus many towns fight to keep rail companies out, while others (with multiple lines) fight to get one in.

In this adventure idea, the PCs could be hired by the rail company to calm the locals, distract them with a scapegoat. The townsfolk might wish the rail building diverted by a landslide, river, or Orcs. Another option is that the hapless adventurers might just be caught in the middle, each side firmly convinced that the PCs are working for the other side.

Rung Turn: Ladders are being stolen in a multi-level human mining town. Hearsay points to a local group of mischievous youths. Alone, they are uncooperative. If cornered at their "base," they will reveal that they have seen "creepy dark forms" leaping from rooftop to rooftop . . .

Tenderfoot Ticket: The job is to protect a politician, landowner, or tourist from "out East." The guards may even be asked to stage "Western" events so the dignitary rounds up a fulfilling trip. It's then that the real bandits arrive . . . As a future sequel to this scenario, the PCs might be hired to "discourage" a different delegate from hanging around a county or state (without killing him). The troubleshooters must also deal with a small group of mercenaries protecting him from troublemakers . . .

To Catch a Dragon by the Tale: Dragons have begun to arrive in large numbers. Rumor has it that there will be a council of dragons being held this year on a nearby mountain plateau to discuss what to do about "the human situation." It is also said that there are a few parties of nonhumans invited. The heroes could be hired by practically anyone with the means to try to get

the job of bodyguards, interpreters, or the like to find out what the exact agenda and decisions are . . .

Under the Gun: As private citizens can arm themselves with whatever weapons they want as long as they don't commit crimes, large landowners have been known to procure weapons from the militaries of the East. Some large weapons may include cannons, gatling guns, and war golems (officially to fight cattle rustlers or cause rain . . .). These weapons, themselves, are very attractive targets for bandits . . .

Unmarked Bells: The adventurers come across a lone mount in their travels. It seems unmarked; do they claim it as their own? (Later, they may learn of an invisible magical brand on the creature, designed to keep the beast pristine while marking it as belonging to someone). Regardless, roping it is only the first step!

The Unwanted Man: The mercenaries must hunt down a dangerous criminal with a bounty on his head. He has hidden among a tribe of Orcs, passing the preliminary rituals for membership. If the hunters are fast, they can get him away before his membership is finalized; if the villain succeeds in joining, the rest of the tribe will die to protect him. If the heroes aren't fast or clever enough, there remains one other way to get him out of the tribe: One (or more) of the PCs must also join the tribe, and then challenge him!

X Marks the Spot: A mastermind is creating an artificial nexus by dragging two ley lines together to a specific point, thus changing the area to high mana . . . The archfiend will try to escape by riding a line back as it "snaps" to its original location.

Useful Resources

Pyramid

- "[Circus Maximus](#)" by Stephen Dedman
- "[The Cursed Gold Mine](#)" by Brian Rogers
- "[Great Rope Bridge](#)" by Brian Rogers
- "[High Noon](#)" by Brian Rogers (*GURPS Third Edition* dueling)
 - "[Ley Line College](#)" by Joshua Roby
 - "[Martial Arts of Yrth](#)" by David Moore
 - "[Necktie Party](#)" by Dylan Craig
 - "[Roadkell](#)" by Loki Carbis
- "[The Treasure of the Golden Hills](#)" by Aaron Rosenberg

Media

- *Outlaw Star* (for the "Caster" spellguns)
- *Trigun* (A futuristic western, involving a man with a bounty on his head)
- *The Adventures of Brisco County, Junior* (A Steampunk comedy television series with Bruce Campbell and John Astin)
- *Iron Dragon* ([Board Game](#)) ([PC Game](#))

Article publication date: October 14, 2005

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