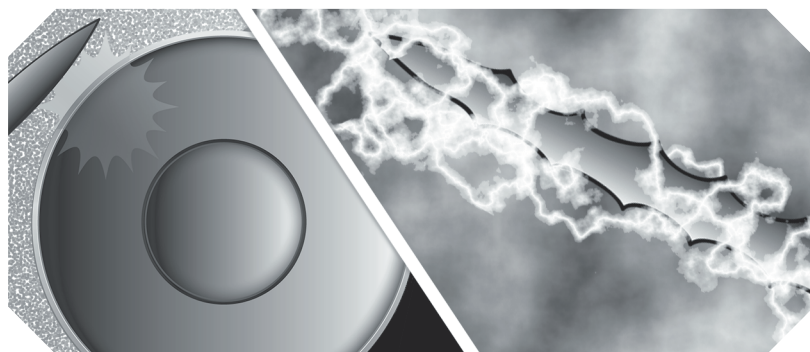


# GURPS®

Fourth Edition

# DUNGEON FANTASY TREASURES™ 4

# MIXED BLESSINGS™



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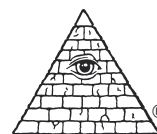
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## STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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# CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION . . . . .	2
About the Author . . . . .	2
A BAKER'S DOZEN . . . . .	3
Beast Suit . . . . .	3
Changeling Blanket . . . . .	3

Crackling Blade . . . . .	4
Devil's Horns . . . . .	5
Faerie Britches . . . . .	5
Headsman's Hood . . . . .	6
Lifesaving Scalpel . . . . .	6

Ouch! . . . . .	7
Mixing a Nice, Strong Blessing . . . . .	7
Plodding Plate . . . . .	8
Ring of Degeneration . . . . .	8
Rod of Resuscitation . . . . .	9
Shield of Sacrifice . . . . .	9
Ultimate Weapon . . . . .	10

INDEX . . . . .	11
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# INTRODUCTION

*An object that destroys its owner without providing them with some benefit is a trap, not treasure.*

– **GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 8: Treasure Tables**

Every delver loves artifacts that aren't standard magic items – treasures that cannot be explained solely (or perhaps at all) in terms of common enchantments. Adventurers take pride in owning something rare or unique: “Yeah, yeah, *you* have a fine broadsword that glows. *I* own the Flashing Sunblade!” Bragging rights have a power all their own.

The problem is that while standard enchantments are part of a system with numerous built-in controls – starting with “requires mana or sanctity to work” and “costs a fortune to commission” – one-off artifacts raise the specter of special cases and its nasty cousin, the Demon of Ultimate Power. In the hands of players pursuing the path of the munchkin, such things can lead to power creep that starts out fun but quickly spirals out of control. Though this is to some extent expected in dungeon-crawling games, it's usually checked by another tradition . . .

*One-off artifacts don't always play fair.*

Sometimes, they're outright *cursed*. That's a perilous path as well, though. Throw too many purely vexatious items at the delvers and the players will take to running a battery of tests on every treasure the heroes find (which disrupts the flow of the game), avoiding loot other than coins and gems they can exchange for standard, “safe” magic items back in town (which is boring), or quitting (which is of course worst of all).

**GURPS Dungeon Fantasy Treasures 4: Mixed Blessings** offers an alternative: One-off items that are definitely useful and not strictly cursed . . . but that come with built-in checks and balances that *also* exist outside the standard enchantment system. Everything here can be handed out “as is,” varied, or used as inspiration for the GM's creations.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sean Punch set out to become a particle physicist in 1985 and ended up as **GURPS** Line Editor in 1995. In that capacity, he has written, edited, or contributed to hundreds of **GURPS** releases, revised

the game into its fourth edition (2004), and been a regular contributor to *Pyramid* magazine. From 2008, he has served as lead creator of the **GURPS Action** and **GURPS Dungeon Fantasy** series; work on the latter led to his design of the **Dungeon Fantasy Roleplaying Game**, released in 2017. Sean has been a gamer since 1979, but devotes most of his spare time to Argentine tango. He lives in Montréal, Québec with *son amour*, Geneviève.

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Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the **GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition**. Page references that begin with B refer to that book, not this one.

# A BAKER'S DOZEN

Here are an unlucky (?) 13 artifacts that – though not cursed – aren't problem-free. They use the format established in *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 6: 40 Artifacts*. In brief:

**Power Item:** How many FP the artifact holds if designated as a power item (*GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 1: Adventurers*, p. 28).

**Suggested Origins:** What empowers the artifact. This is largely self-explanatory, but for details, see *40 Artifacts*, pp. 3-4 or *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 8: Treasure Tables*, p. 50.

**Properties:** The artifact's capabilities, mundane and supernatural. Read carefully, as some benefits and drawbacks are so inextricably entangled that they're defined together, not as separate list items. Weight appears at the end.

**Variations:** Notes on switching things up to fit the artifact into your game or surprise players who've read this supplement.

No cash value is given, however. Selling one-of-a-kind artifacts uses the rules in *The Problem of Price* (*40 Artifacts*, p. 20) – if the heroes can find a buyer willing to live with the downsides!

*Adventurers take pride in owning something rare or unique. Bragging rights have a power all their own.*

## Beast Suit

**Power Item: 9 FP**

**Suggested Origins:** Druidic, Materials, Racial, or Spirit.

Most sapient races other than elves, faerie folk, and the occasional (though not every!) furry species kill animals and wear their fur. The primary reason for this is obvious: fur is warm. Beyond this, it's often viewed as aesthetically pleasing. Yet there are superstitious motivations as well, notably the belief that wearing a beast's pelt lets one shapeshift into that creature – or at least borrow its qualities, which is the aim of this furry, one-piece bodysuit.

### Properties

- *Power of the Beast:* The wearer becomes exceptionally tough, like a bear, wolverine, or similar aggressive animal.

They gain DR 2 all over; this counts as Tough Skin on areas not covered by the Suit (the face and, if leaving the mittens dangling to avoid -2 to wield weapons, the hands). They also acquire Hard to Kill 2, Striking ST 2, and Temperature Tolerance 2, all three cumulative with any personal levels – and of course Fur (p. B101).

- *Rage of the Beast:* The wearer becomes dangerously savage, too, suffering from Bad Temper (12), Berserk (12), and Bloodlust (12). If they already have one of those traits, reduce its self-control number: (15) or (12) becomes (9), (9) becomes (6), and (6) grows so bad that the behavior can't be controlled – whenever it *can* trigger, it *will*. If the user gives in to any of these traits, they further become Bestial; for simplicity's sake, treat this as behavior giving -3 to reactions while the triggering disadvantage is in effect.

**Weight:** 18 lbs.

### Variations

- Beasts differ. Some are more or less strong, resistant, savage, etc., and so their hides might bestow different traits.

What's crucial is that there are at least *some* disadvantages to accompany the advantages, so that heroes have to decide what's more important: being a combat monster or being socially acceptable.

- On that last point, the Beast Suit isn't all *that* troublesome in many ways, as it can be taken off to avoid socially unacceptable disadvantages in social situations – and most of those traits are minor drawbacks when shredding foes in combat. But certain Suits might bear Hex (*GURPS Magic*, p. 57), which can become a problem. Use the higher of 15 and the origin beast's ST to determine the Hex's effective Power.

## Changeling Blanket

**Power Item: 4 FP**

**Suggested Origins:** Magical, Materials, or Racial.

Children are drawn to soft, fuzzy things. Faerie enchanters sometimes exploit this in schemes to steal babies and leave behind changelings. One example is a colorful blanket that fascinates infants, bearing a glamour to soothe their crying and render them invisible once their abductor swaddles them within. Yet the complex rules and conditions of faerie magic mean that items intended for children affect adults differently.



## Properties

● *Googoo Gaga*: The effects below require the user to assume a sitting, crawling, or lying posture *on the ground, in a cradle/crib, or in someone's arms*. Standing, kneeling, or crouching won't work; neither will any other location. The Blanket must be pulled completely over them and tucked beneath, with nothing protruding (a Ready maneuver once the Blanket is in hand, which takes another Ready maneuver, or two if it's worn as a cape, kilt, etc.). A being of SM 0 can manage this, as can two of SM -1, four of SM -2, nine of SM -3, 16 of SM -4, 36 of SM -5, or 81 of SM -6. Up to 50% more people can squeeze in (e.g., 24 of SM -4) – or *one* SM +1 character – but everyone must roll vs. Escape, with any failure meaning everybody spills out.

● *Hear/Speak No Evil*: With the Blanket in place, anyone it hides is unable to *hear* or *be heard*, per Silence (*Magic*, p. 171). This property resists spells like Converse, Message, and Noise with effective skill 20; it doesn't block Far-Hearing (*Magic*, p. 173) for those within, but that's *useful* only if they have some way to see (see below). Those within have +3 to Stealth rolls vs. Hearing – they can't make noise, but the Blanket still rustles.

● *See No Evil*: With the Blanket in place, it and anyone under it are invisible, per the spell (*Magic*, p. 114). They can be attacked like any invisible target – but the previous effect means Hearing rolls to locate them suffer an *extra* -5. Those within can still see the Blanket, and are effectively blind unless they have magic like Glass Wall (*Magic*, p. 103) or an advantage like Penetrating Vision (p. B74).

*Note*: The Blanket *doesn't* stop the user(s) from acting! They simply can't do anything that involves standing up without losing its concealment powers, nor that involves seeing or hearing without Glass Wall, Far-Hearing, etc. Physical attacks always involve sticking *something* out, which also ends concealment.

*Weight*: 4 lbs.

## Variations

● Most variants differ not in powers but in underlying quality, affecting value and thus power-item capacity. In terms of *Treasure Tables*, pp. 53-54, the basic model is a \$20 blanket (*Adventurers*, p. 23) with +14.5 CF from fine material, average dye, a resist pattern, a cheap fringe, and extensive embroidery. A faerie masterpiece could easily have +40 CF or more and hold 7+ FP.

● Children are often dirty. Some Blankets add *Smell No Evil*: Users are protected by No-Smell (*Magic*, p. 24), but suffer from No Sense of Smell/Taste (p. B146).

## Crackling Blade

**Power Item: 14 FP**

*Suggested Origins*: Divine, Druidic, or Magical.

Many a delver has found Flaming Weapon, Icy Weapon, or Lightning Weapon a tad underwhelming and wished that “elemental” weapons had more, well, *oomph*. And many a spellcaster has tried to deliver by jamming in more magic. For talented enchanters, the results might not be half bad – see, for instance, the Flaming Blade (**40 Artifacts**, p. 13). Overambitious ones end up with something closer to the Crackling Blade.

## Properties

● *Blade Quality*: The Crackling Blade is a thrusting broadsword of “flamberge” design (the blade has an undulating pattern, like a stylized flame, which is just for looks – call it ornate, for +1 to reactions) and fine quality (+1 to damage and -1 to breakage).

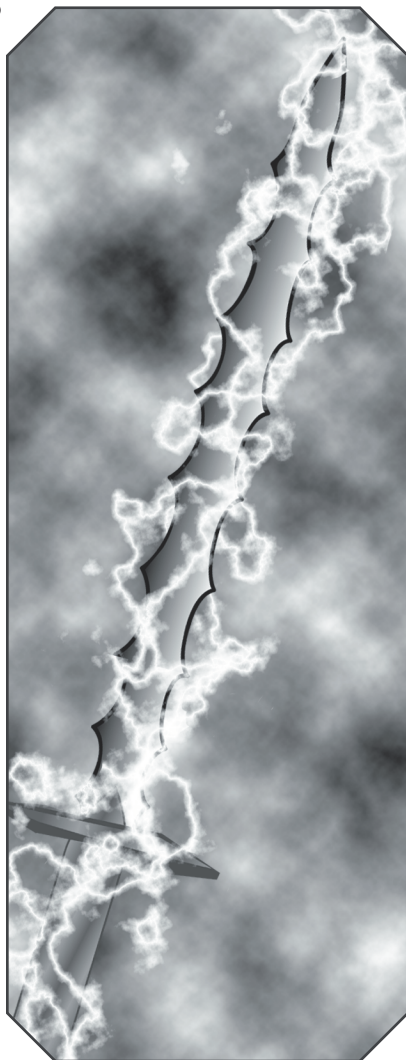
● *Crack!* On striking a target with enough force to do at least 1 point of damage, the Crackling Blade fairly *explodes* with lightning. Divide the basic damage rolled by three and round *up* to find the resulting electrical damage (minimum 1 point); e.g., if a mighty warrior who dishes out 3d+5 damage rolls 16 damage, that's 6 points. The target takes this damage ... but so does the wielder! For both, this is a separate attack that inflicts large-area injury (p. B400). Remember that metal armor counts as DR 1 in the DR calculation. Thus, there's considerable risk if the wielder has no way to resist lightning.

*Weight*: 3 lbs.

## Variations

● As with all magical weapons, this one might be of a different type. But for thematic reasons, it should be *metal*, ideally a sword, and preferably a flamberge – though a hefty hammer (mace) is nicely Norse. This may have a slight effect on the electrical damage – but really, the difference between even very light (swing-2 or -1) and heavy (swing+3 to +5) weapons is typically just a point or two, making this effect safely “portable” in the sense that it won't get out of hand due to the weapon's innate properties.

● Why electricity? Well, its tendency to bypass heavier armor, most of which is metal, keeps the effect suitably double-edged; the user can't simply strap on plate armor to blunt the downside. But there could be a Cold Snap that blasts cold damage, Thunder Blade that causes crushing damage like a Concussion spell, Wildfire that deals fire damage, etc. And Dragon's Breath might deliver contact poison that affects anyone not wearing fully sealed armor, or even acid that inflicts armor-dissolving corrosion damage; either would be interesting and relatively balanced.



## Devil's Horns

**Power Item: 11 FP if carried, N/A if worn**

*Suggested Origins:* Divine, Racial, or Spirit.

This is, as the saying goes, “exactly what it says on the tin”: a set of horns – the point count depends on the original owner – left behind when a demon had everything beneath them blasted out of existence by potent magic or godly force. A destroyed demon usually vanishes to Hell, leaving nothing behind, but some things slam the dimensional door shut before The Devil can yank its servant home.

### Properties

- *Durability:* Pressed against a *hornless* mortal's bare head (hair doesn't interfere, but an artificial covering keeps the Horns from working, as do existing horns of any size), the Horns take root. They can be removed briefly by at least 2/3 of the wearer's HP (round up) in injury – the subject *does* suffer this! – but a second later the severed Horns vanish and new ones grow back. Only godly might can uproot them for good. Barring that, Remove Curse works, but must defeat effective skill equal to the *wearer's* ST + Will. If the Horns are successfully removed, the subject loses the traits below and someone else can use the artifact.

- *Horridifying Disfigurement:* The Horns are unsuited to mortal tastes and bodies. Add Unnatural Features 4 [-4]. The maximum level of this disadvantage is five, but those who already have two or more levels *still* lose 4 points; the GM can make this up with reduced Appearance or quirks, perhaps from **GURPS Power-Ups 6: Quirks**, that reflect the Horns being heavy (e.g., Aches and Pains, or Bad Posture), disturbing (Dishonest Face works), or evil (usually giving Damned). The Horns also mean the wearer must wear headgear adapted to horned beings, which is a 0-point feature – such things are easy to make or find.

- *Terrifying Weapon:* The Horns give Striker (Impaling; Limited Arc, Straight Ahead, -40%) [5]. See p. B88.

- *Weight of the World:* The Horns are *heavy*. They count as encumbrance equal to the subject's Basic Lift/2 lbs., which can't be put down. This is the Dead Weight quirk (**Quirks**, p. 22).

*Weight:* 2 lbs. if carried; see above once attached.

### Variations

The Horns above produce a 0-point change in the user: Dead Weight [-1], Striker [5], Unnatural Features 4 [-4] (or equivalent), and some 0-point features. The GM is free to adjust this:

- Drawbacks could be more severe; e.g., the wearer could lose Appearance, *and* gain Unnatural Features, *and* suffer from Bad Posture, Damned, and Dead Weight.

- Benefits could be more pronounced. Perhaps the Striker gains Long, +1 SM, +100%, increasing value by 8 points. Maybe the user acquires Damage Resistance (Partial, Skull Only, -70%) [1.5/level]. The wearer could even get Striking ST (One Attack Only, Horns, -60%) [2/level]. *Several* of the above might apply.

- Both! The GM can tweak the upsides and downsides to keep the Horns' value at 0 points, but the benefits don't *have* to balance the drawbacks.

## Faerie Britches

**Power Item: 11 FP**

*Suggested Origins:* Materials or Racial.

Despite their name, these garments consist of not just britches, but also a hooded-and-sleeved tunic and long stockings, covering everything while weighing close to nothing. Nobody knows for sure whether faeries *really* make the Britches – some people attribute them to a mysterious guild of tailors who've mastered the art of weaving garments from giant insect silk. Whatever their origins, they're popular with travelers who are willing to overlook their downside.

### Properties

- *Adaptability:* The Britches' most wondrous property, in many ways, is that they *look* like they're for pixies (SM -6), yet can stretch to clothe any humanoid (two arms, two legs, a head) without being less effective. If there's an upper limit, it's at least SM +5 – even 45'-tall giants have tried them on. Moreover, they can deform to accommodate unusual proportions at any SM, and wings and tails can “poke through” and function without damaging them.

- *Comfort:* The Britches also adapt to climate. Against heat, they keep the sun off and wick away sweat, cooling the wearer for +3 to HT rolls. As things grow colder, they keep the wearer warm, giving +5 to HT rolls for cold, equivalent to (but not cumulative with) arctic clothing despite their light weight. The Britches also resist soaking: ignore the -5 vs. cold for *wet* clothing. They provide all the mundane benefits of clothing, too – notably protection against sunburn. For more on harsh climates, see **GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 16: Wilderness Adventures**, p. 30. The Britches *don't* provide DR, protect against acid or contact poison, and so on – the benefits are specifically against climate effects.

- *Slipperiness:* The Britches are slick, granting a level of Slippery (p. B85) if worn as the outside layer. If worn *inside* other clothing or armor, this benefit is lost and the wearer has -1 to DX, as if wearing an extra layer of armor – even if they have an ability like the knight's Armor Mastery power-up. The Britches can be stretched *over* armor to give the benefit of Slippery 1, but that feels like being caught in a web, restricting movement for -2 to DX *except* when trying to break free (where they give the usual +1 instead). Thus, the Britches are primarily of value to explorers who need protection from the elements, not from weapons.

*Weight:* 1 lb.

### Variations

Britches might come in varying degrees of slipperiness and stretchiness:

- The Britches could have upper or lower SM limits – although SM -2 to SM +1 will accommodate most delvers.

- The Britches can be slipperier. Each level of Slippery gives its usual benefits if the Britches are worn alone or stretched outside other clothing, but -1 to DX if the Britches are worn as an inner layer. The -2 to DX for pulling them over armor doesn't change – meaning that high levels of Slippery might be attractive to high-DX heroes who face grappling, spiderwebs, etc.

## Headsman's Hood

Power Item: 5 FP

*Suggested Origins:* Divine or Spirit.

This black “executioner’s hood” is blessed by the Death God or holds the spirit of a legendary executioner – possibly both. While *extremely* potent in the hands of (well, on the *head* of) an assassin or warrior, it has a pronounced downside.

### Properties

- *Blind Man's Bluff:* When donned (three Ready maneuvers once the Hood is in hand, plus another to pull it out if not), the Hood attempts to afflict the wearer with Blindness (p. B124). If the user chooses, they can attempt an uncontested HT roll to resist; no standard traits modify this roll (not even Magic Resistance), but the GM may rule that some variety of Resistant (pp. B80-81) related to the artifact’s origins helps. If the user successfully resists, nothing happens until the Hood is removed and put on again; they can see normally through the Hood’s eyeholes. If they fail or don’t try to resist, they lose all visual senses – including Penetrating Vision, the vision aspect of Clairsentience, and most forms of Scanning Sense – but not Sonar, Vibration Sense, or anything involving hearing, touch, smell, or taste. Spells are affected similarly; e.g., Glass Wall (*Magic*, p. 103) is blocked, but Sound Vision (*Magic*, p. 171) isn’t. The *only* way to remove the affliction is to take three Ready maneuvers to fully remove the hood, or to destroy it (see below).

- *Blind Man's Buff:* Anyone currently blinded by the Hood gains a potent gift. They can spend 1 FP before rolling to attack (at the usual penalties for fighting blind) with any *swung melee weapon*; with multiple attacks, this costs 1 FP per attack. If such a blow hits, figure damage as usual, accounting for ST, Striking ST, ST-enhancing magic, and special abilities such as Weapon Master; weapon type, quality, and magic; and conditional modifiers like Mighty Blows or All-Out Attack (Strong). But don’t roll dice, because the attack does *maximum* damage; e.g., a 2d+1 attack deals 13 points! Critical hits for maximum damage do 1.5 times the maximum; critical hits for double or triple damage multiply the maximum.

- *Killer Style:* The Hood won’t accommodate a helmet but can go *under* other headgear without giving a penalty for layering. Those who do this should be aware that taking off and putting on a helmet also takes three seconds; e.g., someone who pulls on the Hood, is blinded, and then dons a helmet needs *six* Ready maneuvers to remove everything and get their sight back. The Hood provides its wearer with no DR, but attempts to destroy it – say, by slicing it off – must overcome DR 12, HP 6.

*Weight:* 0.5 lb.

### Variations

If the GM finds the “buff” too powerful, it could be almost anything useful to an executioner. A flat ST or damage bonus is simplest.

## Lifesaving Scalpel

Power Item: 8 FP

*Suggested Origins:* Cosmic or Divine.

The scalpel symbolizes healing. It can excise problems directly, open the body to reach sickness, facilitate medical bleeding, and more. Many clerics carry sacred scalpels (*GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 7: Clerics*, p. 34), some more sacred than others.

### Properties

- *Cut:* Invoking the Scalpel’s healing powers necessitates bathing it in the patient’s *fresh* blood: The healer must use it to inflict 3d HP on the subject! On someone willing and unarmored, or the wielder themselves, roll 3d injury and skip to the next paragraph. Under other circumstances (say, the patient wants to stay armored), roll 3d to determine *needed* injury and then slash away – the blade is a weapon that does swing-1 cutting (maximum 2d, regardless of ST) – until the target injury is reached or exceeded. Either way, these wounds are completely mundane; they force HT rolls to avoid unconsciousness at 0 HP, to avoid death at -1xHP, -2xHP, -3xHP, and -4xHP. At -5xHP, most subjects die before they can be healed.

- *Paste:* Once blood is shed, the user can heal twice the HP inflicted; thus, the Scalpel repairs the wounds it caused and that much again, *if* it doesn’t kill the patient. This does *not* restore an unconscious subject to consciousness – that takes the usual 15 minutes or more (*Recovering from Unconsciousness*, p. B423). Also, healing works only on beings that bleed. It doesn’t matter what color they bleed, but Injury Tolerance (No Blood or Diffuse) means they’re out of luck, though they can still be butchered as an attack or by someone unaware of the Scalpel’s limitations.

*Examples:* Rolling 3d for “activation injury” gives 13 HP on a patient with HP 12. If they were missing 1 HP, they’d be down 14 HP briefly, requiring a HT roll to remain conscious; then they’d be healed 26 HP, and so finish at full HP (though possibly unconscious). If they were missing 11 HP, they’d be down 24 HP; that’s -1xHP, so they’d have to roll to avoid death, but if they lived, healing 26 HP would restore full HP. If they had sustained 59 HP, they’d end up with 72 HP of wounds; as that’s -5xHP, they’d be killed!

- *Some Skill Required:* The Scalpel’s *first* use on a given person each day simply works – if the subject isn’t killed, they’re healed regardless of the wielder’s abilities. Later uses require Surgery rolls, at a cumulative -3 per roll after the first; thus, the sequence is no roll, Surgery, Surgery-3, Surgery-6, and so on. Any failure means the scalpel stops working on that person for the day, *after* it does injury and *before* it heals.

- *Weapon Quality:* The Scalpel is a very fine *sacred* scalpel (which counts as a high holy symbol).

*Weight:* 0.25 lb.

*Our life is made by the death of others.*

– Leonardo da Vinci



## Variations

- The basic Scalpel inflicts 3d and then heals twice that, restoring on average 3d HP at modest risk of death for the badly hurt. Variants may require and heal other amounts – the greater the healing, the higher the risk of killing the injured!

- The Scalpel needn't work for just anybody. It may require a Surgery roll even the first time each day, restricting use to skilled healers. It could be nothing but a sharp blade in the hands of those without Power Investiture. Maybe both.

- There's reputedly a Sickle of Life: a very fine sickle that works only for those with Power Investiture (Druidic). This requires Esoteric Medicine (Druidic) or Veterinary rolls for repeated applications. It does swing+2 cutting, weighs 2 lbs., doesn't count as a holy symbol, and holds 7 FP as a power item.

## Ouch!

**Power Item: 7 FP**

*Suggested Origins:* Magical.

Not all novel enchantments work *quite* as intended. The enchanter of this magical knife originally dubbed it "Amputator," but an unfortunate experience while showing it off to a potential customer ended in him shrieking, "Ouch!" That's the name that stuck.

## Properties

- *Blade Quality:* Treat Ouch! as a very fine large knife for all purposes (+2 to damage and -2 to breakage).

- *Limb-Seeker.* Attacks on enemy *arms* and *hands* ignore the usual penalty to hit that body part.

- *Overwhelming Riposte.* Ouch! was designed to be the "ultimate parrying dagger," a main-gauche that doesn't merely ward off attacks, but also disarms the attacker – literally and permanently. On the user's turn immediately after successfully using Ouch! to parry an attack, they can attack any arm or hand their attacker used in the parried attack, still at no penalty for hit location. If the attack roll succeeds and the target fails to defend, roll damage as usual. If even 1 point of damage penetrates DR, the body part is crippled; if this would require more injury than was inflicted, increase the wound to that level. For instance, if the target has HP 22, the "injury over HP/2" needed to cripple the arm is 12 HP, so Ouch! would do at least that much injury when retaliating against an arm.

- *Paid for in Blood:* Ouch!'s affinity for arms and hands can get, er, out of hand. On *any* critical failure while attacking or parrying with it, don't roll on the *Critical Miss Table* – the result is always "5." Roll 1d: On 1-4, Ouch! inflicts its usual cutting damage (even if making an impaling attack) to the wielder's other arm; on 5-6, it does this to their other hand. If this damage penetrates DR, it works as above, crippling the body part. Oh, and Luck cannot affect any aspect of this!

*Weight:* 1 lb.

## MIXING A NICE, STRONG BLESSING

Double-edged artifacts offer upsides entangled with downsides. The good ought to be attractive enough that at least *some* players are willing to put up with the bad, which in turn shouldn't be easily circumvented – although that doesn't necessarily mean there are no workarounds! Exploiting loopholes is a hallowed munchkin tradition, but doing so should have a cost more serious than just spending FP (which might also be necessary); e.g., learning a rarely used spell and spending FP on *that*, or investing points in other abilities.

Upsides and downsides needn't balance. The two may differ so much that any comparison is apples to oranges. Even when balance can be defined, there's the question of "For who?" – utility varies from user to user. Indeed, clear, universal balance isn't the best goal. Treasures that are *almost* worthless but frustratingly handy enough to keep, or *almost* wondrous but annoying enough not to be used full-time, are the most interesting ones, because they force adventurers to plan and make choices!

Some examples, which are by no means mutually exclusive:

*Benefits the user's foes as well as the user.* The Changeling Blanket (pp. 3-4), for instance, provides invisibility that also blinds the user, and two-way silence. The owner of such an artifact generally controls it, allowing them to "cherry pick" moments when it benefits *them* more. That's fine!

*Confers advantages alongside disadvantages.* The Beast Suit (p. 3) and Devil's Horns (p. 4) are examples. If the advantages aren't "always on," it's fairest if the disadvantages apply only when the advantages do. Fairness isn't mandatory, of course.

*Does more harm than good if the user isn't careful, skilled, or just lucky.* For instance, the Lifesaving Scalpel (pp. 6-7) can kill in the act of healing, especially in the hands of a non-surgeon; Ouch! (below) is dangerous to those who critically fail often, like risk-taking and low-skill users; and the Shield of Sacrifice (pp. 9-10) saves allies, but is hazardous to bearers without excellent active defenses.

*Grants assistance at a high price, paid by whoever benefits.* Like the Ring of Degeneration (pp. 8-9), which heals the wearer but slowly kills them unless they occasionally spend character points on HT. Or the Rod of Resuscitation (p. 9), which resurrects the dead but leaves the patient permanently weakened.

*Hard to use.* Consider the Ultimate Weapon (p. 10), which provides significant benefits but forces the wielder to fight at a penalty and without the aid of several useful combat advantages.

*Indiscriminate.* The Crackling Blade (p. 4) offers a classic example, zapping target and wielder alike! Savvy users will take steps to immunize themselves.

*Makes it difficult or impossible to benefit from other equipment.* For example, the Devil's Horns and Headsman's Hood (p. 6) make wearing a helmet tricky, while the Faerie Britches (p. 5) complicate wearing *any* armor.

*Requires the user to accept some other inconvenience to gain benefits.* The Changeling Blanket depends on assuming a tactically unfavorable posture; the Headsman's Hood aids only those who accept blindness; a fighter in Plodding Plate (p. 8) must shlep extreme weight; and so on.

## Variations

• Lighter and heavier versions are possible. The effects grow progressively less useful as the blade gets bigger – most *serious* weapons need little help to cripple what they hit, and are more effective targeting the torso, neck, or skull. Conversely, this magic would be a nasty surprise on a small knife, straight razor, etc.! Whatever the weapon, it's very fine.

• Enchanters rarely give up on an idea. What about versions that target legs? Necks? These would ignore hit location penalties for those body parts for sure. An overwhelming riposte might be *underwhelming* if it works only against relatively uncommon attacks like kicks (the leg) or headbutts and horns (the neck) . . . so it goes. But there could be a serious payoff – a riposte against a neck might always do enough injury to force a HT roll to stay alive, reducing the target to -HP, -2xHP, or worse. Just remember: On a critical miss, it does this to the *user*, and Luck can't help!

## Plodding Plate

**Power Item: 19 FP**

*Suggested Origins:* Alchemical, Magical, or Materials.

How do you make any armor tougher? Make it thicker, which perforce makes it heavier. Thick armor can be crafted finely or from orichalcum to enjoy higher DR without *as much* weight – and the Lighten enchantment is usually an option – but there are mundane technological limits to how thick armor can become while still permitting movement, and even to how thick it can be at all. Plodding Plate uses wizardry or alchemy to achieve *excessive* thicknesses that remain flexible where it counts.

## Properties

• *Toughness:* This suit – a monolithic artifact that hinges open at the back to let any SM 0 wearer step in, and which *must* be worn in its totality – gives an epic DR 12! This is true even on hit locations where thick armor “makes no sense,” notably for joints; the neck can rotate enough to avoid causing No Peripheral Vision, while the gauntlets inflict only the usual penalties for armored gloves. Consequently, the armor has no chinks to target and counts its full DR against large-area injury (both p. B400); attacks that normally reduce DR either way *still* encounter DR 12. Plodding Plate doesn't count as “sealed” because of its eyeslits (targeted at the usual -10) . . . but that's its only weakness.

• *Weight:* The figure below speaks for itself. The armor is already as “fine” as it can be – no trick of mundane craft can shave off weight. Worse, the magic used to thicken the armor is practically the opposite of the Lighten enchantment, actually adding weight to achieve protection. Someone *could* add Lighten; the enchantment would have to win a Quick Contest against Power 20, and doing so would reduce DR by the same percentage as weight: DR 9 at -25% weight (164.25 lbs.), DR 6 at -50% weight (109.5 lbs.). Lighten Burden affects it the same way.

*Weight:* 219 lbs.

## Variations

The GM might permit Fortify on Plodding Plate, but if they don't want delvers soliciting every enchanter they meet for this – because DR 12 (plus any “innate” DR or DR from layering) seems generous enough – they can rule that the magic the armor uses interferes with this. Or maybe Fortify keeps DR fixed while replacing some of the weight with weightless magic: Fortify 1 gives DR 12 at 11/12 of the weight (200.75 lbs.), Fortify 2 gives DR 12 at 10/12 of the weight (182.5 lbs.), on down to Fortify 5 giving DR 12 at 7/12 of the weight (127.75 lbs.) for anyone who can afford the cost and long wait for an 8,000-energy enchantment.

## Ring of Degeneration

**Power Item: 12 FP**

*Suggested Origins:* Cosmic or Divine.

The legendary “Ring of Regeneration” is one of the most storied and sought-after of artifacts. It is said to accelerate natural healing to the point where its wearer can recover from the very worst beatings, burnings, stab-bings, and impalements in the time it takes to stagger from one battle to the next. And it does so without interfering with other healing, making it every delver's dream item!

This isn't that – but it comes close, and may be the origin of the legend.

## Properties

• *Healing:* Worn on a finger (not merely carried or worn in another fashion), the Ring heals the wearer, who recovers 1 HP per minute as if they had Regeneration (Fast). This costs no FP, and doesn't inhibit healing spells or items. As well, if the wearer loses body parts, these regrow in the time it takes to heal to full HP, as explained for Regrowth. For both advantages, see p. B80.

• *Perpetual:* The Ring cannot be stolen or destroyed. Treat it as bearing a cosmic Hex (*Magic*, p. 57); Remove Curse *can* remove it, but the spell is cast at -5 owing to the Ring's uncanny origins (which aren't traditional magic) *and* the Ring resists at Power 20. Cutting off the Ring is impossible – it's made of a metal tougher than orichalcum, and those who try to slice off the finger will discover that this specific injury regenerates even as it's inflicted!

• *Perpetual Healing:* Unfortunately, the Ring never *stops* tissue growth, giving rise to tumors throughout the body. A wearer who doesn't possess both Immunity to Metabolic Hazards *and* Injury Tolerance (Unliving, Homogenous, or Diffuse) must roll vs. HT-3 each month, with any failure (17-18 always fails) reducing their HT by a level, and thus their point total by 10 points. There's no cure for this – neither spells nor temples can do anything about it. It's possible to offset it by spending earned points to buy HT, and those who don't will find their losses accelerating! Should HT ever reach 0 due to the Ring, the wearer dies forever; they are beyond resurrection and cannot even return as undead.

*Weight:* Negligible.

*ARMOR, n. The kind of clothing worn by a man whose tailor is a blacksmith.*

– Ambrose Bierce,  
*The Unabridged Devil's Dictionary*



## Variations

The Ring of Degeneration might not be unique. There could be several versions, all of which work *exactly* as above except as noted:

*Minor Ring of Degeneration:* Heals 1 HP every 12 hours, like Regeneration (Slow). The monthly roll to avoid HT loss is against HT+2. This is *almost* risk-free – but even if only a roll of 17-18 would fail, such weak healing makes the risk hard to justify if healing spells and potions exist.

*Lesser Ring of Degeneration:* Heals 1 HP every hour, like Regeneration (Regular). The monthly roll to avoid HT loss is against full HT.

*Greater Ring of Degeneration:* Heals 1 HP every second, like Regeneration (Very Fast). The monthly roll to avoid HT loss is against HT-6. This is *potent* on the finger of a high-HT character – and for anyone, it's worth raising HT in return for near-immortality. Handle with care!

## Rod of Resuscitation

**Power Item: 2 FP**

*Suggested Origins:* Cosmic or Divine.

Rumors persist of a magic wand that can bring the dead to life without requiring a vast quantity of magical energy from the user. The Rod of Resuscitation might be the origin of some of these stories. This potent artifact *can* raise the dead, but not without a heavy cost.

### Properties

- *Resuscitation:* To use this power, the wielder must touch the Rod to a dead mortal – who must be within one yard – while taking a Concentrate maneuver. At the end of that turn, if the subject isn't decapitated, injured to -10xHP or worse, or slain in some manner that specifically prevents resurrection (digested, liquefied, any attribute reduced to 0, soul destroyed or devoured, etc.), they return to life with HP 0 and FP 0, but all limbs intact, disease and poison cured, etc. However, they lose one level each of ST, DX, IQ, and HT, and thus are worth 60 fewer character points. The losses reduce secondary characteristics and skills as well, and abilities with minimum attribute, secondary characteristic, or skill levels as prerequisites are *lost* if the relevant score falls below that level.

- *Rod Quality:* The Rod is made of rare hardwood, and counts as a fine *jo* in combat. For those without **GURPS Martial Arts**, it has Reach 1 and is wielded one-handed with Broadsword (swing or thrust crushing, Parry 0, ST 9), or two-handed with either Staff (swing+1 or thrust+1 crushing, Parry +2, ST 6†) or Two-Handed Sword (swing+1 or thrust+1 crushing, Parry 0, ST 8†). Although fine and therefore harder to break, it *isn't* indestructible – smart owners won't use it as a weapon!

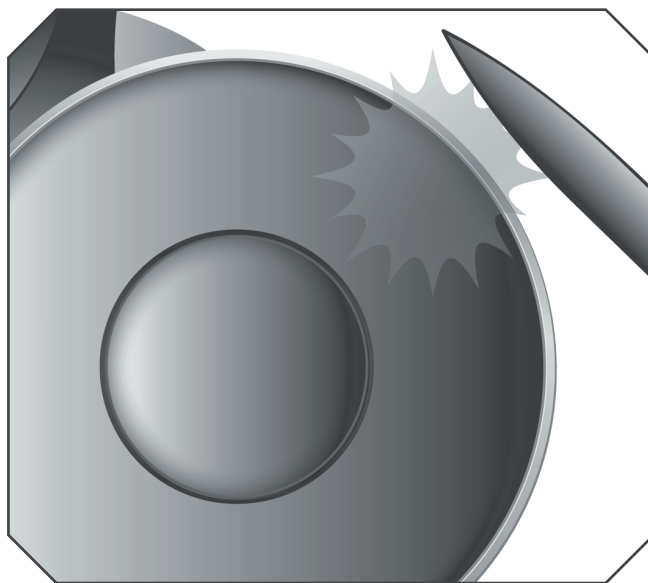
*Weight:* 2 lbs.

## Variations

Even given the Rod's high cost to those it revives – 2.4 times the character-point loss they'd suffer if they burned an Extra Life – the GM should carefully weigh whether they want the Rod in the game. In a campaign where every adventure earns dozens of points, losses are easily replaced, which can

lead to a “life is cheap” attitude. Ways to prevent this yet put the Rod into play include:

- The Rod has limited “charges” – from a magic number (e.g., lucky seven) down to just one per Rod, if it isn't unique but merely uncommon.
- The Rod's cost to those it restores is steeper. Even -2 to all attributes is liable to be seen as a fate worse than death; it's hard to claw one's way back from a 120-point hit.
- The Rod lowers the attributes of both those it restores *and those who use it*. While two characters can replace 60 points twice as fast as one can replace 120, it's the rare munchkin who's willing to make such a sacrifice.



## Shield of Sacrifice

**Power Item: 23 FP**

*Suggested Origins:* Divine or Magical.

If Defense Bonus (DB) is all that matters, enchanted shields are useful without effort or even skill! Wizards equipping bodyguards – and temples blessing items for defenders of the faith – sometimes subvert this in the interest of protecting individuals besides the wielder. The resulting bulwarks are still valuable to large adventuring parties.

### Properties

- *Pick Me! Pick Me!* The Shield draws blows away from the carrier's allies . . . and to the bearer. Whenever the bearer is visible *and* within reach or range of a *foe's* melee or ranged attack, that enemy's attack roll against others must succeed by 4+ to hit the intended target. Success by 0-3, or failure by 1, means it hits the wielder. For instance, if an orc shoots an arrow at the carrier's friend but could have shot the carrier, and has effective skill 11, a roll of 3-7 hits the friend, 8-12 hits the carrier, and 13+ misses. The Shield's ability requires the attacker to be hostile to the bearer; the GM judges “friend” and “foe.” This property overrides magic like Missile Shield and Reverse Missiles on the bearer – such spells still protect against direct attacks, but never against projectiles the Shield attracts!

- *Right in the Shield*: On the upside, the Shield offers enhanced protection against the attacks it attracts. It provides no bonus beyond its mundane DB 2 to the wielder's active defenses against attacks specifically aimed at them. But against attacks on someone else that are drawn to it, it gets double DB. Thus, the user has DB 2 against attacks intended for them, but DB 4 when the Shield pulls an attack off a friend and onto them.

- *Sacrificial Defenses*: Defenses the Shield's bearer makes to avoid attacks it attracts do *not* count as uses of *Sacrificial Dodge* (p. B375), *Sacrificial Parry* (**GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 11: Power-Ups**, p. 11), *Shield-Wall Training* (**Power-Ups**, p. 12), or similar. The defender isn't obstructing the attack's path, but warping it. If an attack succeeds by 4+ and would hit its intended target, however, the carrier *can* still attempt such a "sacrificial defense." If so, the Shield's "bonus" DB applies even if regular DB wouldn't; thus, the roll is at +4 if DB would usually apply or +2 even if it wouldn't.

- *Shield Quality*: The Shield is an orichalcum medium shield.

Weight: 10 lbs.

### Variations

- A small Shield would draw in attacks unless they succeeded by 2+; success by 0-1, or failure by 1, hits the carrier. It would offer the bearer DB 1. This would double to DB 2 – or give +1 to sacrificial defenses where DB doesn't apply – when defending others. 5.3 lbs.; 19 FP power item.

- A large Shield would draw in attacks unless they succeeded by 6+; success by 0-5, or failure by 1, hits the carrier. It would offer the bearer DB 3. This would double to DB 6 – or give +3 to sacrificial defenses where DB doesn't apply – when defending others. As a large shield, it still gives someone without Shield Wall Training -2 to attack. 16.7 lbs.; 27 FP power item.

- Deflect and Defending Shield are normally meant to protect the user. When placed on the Shield, these do nothing when the *bearer* is attacked expressly. The Shield subverts them and applies the bonus (*not* doubled) only to defenses against diverted attacks and "sacrificial" defenses!

## Ultimate Weapon

Power Item: 28 FP

*Suggested Origins*: Cosmic or Magical.

Delves constantly try to "improve" melee weapons with spikes, serrations, mercury-filled compartments, and more. Such efforts rarely yield positive results without some magical assistance. Ultimate Weapon is the ultimate example: a spiked, bladed, flanged, semi-flexible *thing* that alters balance

and aerodynamics mid-attack, and adjusts shape and possibly *composition* upon landing a blow. Even out of combat, it constantly shifts form.

### Properties

- *Jack of All Trades*: Ultimate Weapon requires ST 10 and can be wielded using *any* one- or two-handed Melee Weapon skill – the user selects one as a free action at the start of each turn. The wielder also chooses their maneuvers (Attack, Feint, All-Out Attack, Move and Attack, etc.), options (e.g., Deceptive Attack, Rapid Strike, or hit location), and whether to thrust or swing. Whatever its appearance, Ultimate Weapon can extend to engage any target within two yards (treat as Reach C-2). On a hit, damage is swing+2 on a swing or thrust+2 on a thrust, +1 in two hands; at Reach C, treat all attacks as thrusts. Swings are either crushing or cutting, whichever would injure that particular target more (roll damage, apply it both ways, and keep the highest injury); thrusts are either crushing or impaling (ditto). Finally, against a victim who's supernaturally weak to a specific *mundane* material (wood, stone, iron, even silver, but never weirdness like orichalcum or meteoric iron), Ultimate Weapon counts as being made of that!

- *Master of None*: Ultimate Weapon's transformations make it hard to master: -4 to attacks and -2 to parries with it, and parries get no skill benefits (e.g., Rapier parries don't count as *fencing* parries). Weapon Master generally provides *no* help, but the 45-point version is broad enough to halve these penalties (-2 to attacks, -1 to parries), and to halve Rapid Strike and repeated parry penalties as usual, though it still gives no damage bonus. Weapon Bond and combat power-ups specialized by skill or weapon are unavailable for Ultimate Weapon. Those facing it find it no more predictable: All active defenses against it are at -2, and when used to Feint, the user has +2 instead of the -4 for an attack.

- *Weapon Quality*: Ultimate Weapon breaks as if very fine: -2 to breakage odds. This has no *direct* effect on damage – that's always as given above.

Weight: 4 lbs.

### Variations

For obvious reasons, Ultimate Weapon doesn't absolutely need "variations." Still, for a party of single-weapon specialists who don't even require a large power item, the GM might sweeten the pot. Adding Puissance for a damage bonus never hurts; neither does Accuracy, to offset skill penalties. Reach C-3 would make it more attractive, especially to those whose weapons of choice are very short! Extending the transformational abilities to let Ultimate Weapon count as fire, ice, lightning, etc. as needed would make it valuable to monster-hunters – though letting it count as meteoric iron against magical protection is probably *too* good.

*But that was the trouble with ancient artifacts – no one really knew what they did.*

*– Patricia Briggs, Wolfsbane*

# INDEX

Armor and clothing, 3, 5, 6, 8.  
Beast Suit, 3; *as example*, 7.  
Changeling Blanket, 3-4; *as example*, 7.  
Crackling Blade, 4; *as example*, 7.  
Creating new artifacts, 7.  
Devil's Horns, 5; *as example*, 7.  
Double-edged artifacts, *creating new*, 7;  
    *overview*, 2.  
Faerie Britches, 5; *as example*, 7.  
Format overview, 3.

*GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 1: Adventurers*,  
    3, 4; *Dungeon Fantasy 6: 40 Artifacts*,  
    3, 4; *Dungeon Fantasy 7: Clerics*, 6;  
    *Dungeon Fantasy 8: Treasure Tables*,  
    3, 4; *Dungeon Fantasy 11: Power-Ups*,  
    10; *Dungeon Fantasy 16: Wilderness*  
    *Adventures*, 5; *Magic*, 3, 4, 6, 8; *Martial*  
    *Arts*, 9; *Power-Ups 6: Quirks*, 5.  
Headsman's Hood, 6; *as example*, 7.  
Healing items, 6-9.

Lifesaving Scalpel, 6-7; *as example*, 7.  
Ouch!, 7-8; *as example*, 7.  
Plodding Plate, 8; *as example*, 7.  
Ring of Degeneration, 8-9; *as example*, 7.  
Rod of Resuscitation, 9; *as example*, 7.  
Shield of Sacrifice, 9-10; *as example*, 7.  
Ultimate Weapon, 10; *as example*, 7.  
Wands, 9.  
Weapons, 4-10; *boost*, 6.

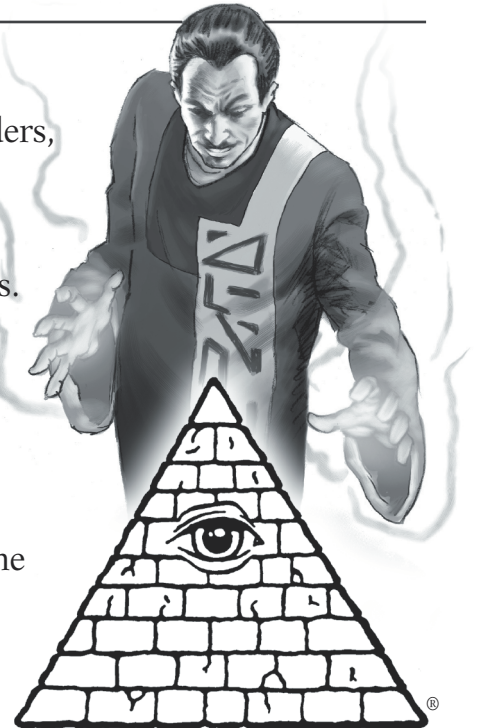
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