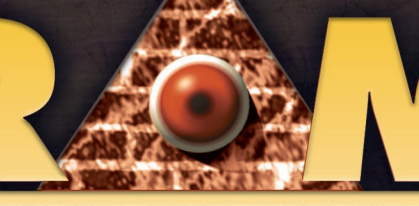


# PYRAMID<sup>®</sup>



Issue 3/91 May '16

## THAUMATOLOGY IV

### TECHNOMYSTICISM

by W.A. Frick

**THE THAUMATURGY  
OF METALLURGY**  
by Ted Brock

**TECH SUPPORT**  
by Matt Riggsby

**DARK ALCHEMY**  
by David L. Pulver

**THE TOME OF THE BLACK ISLAND**  
by J. Edward Tremlett

**CODEX DUELLO**  
by Christopher R. Rice

# STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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# CONTENTS

FROM THE EDITOR . . . . .	3
TECHNOMYSTICISM . . . . .	4
by W.A. Frick	
THE TOME OF THE BLACK ISLAND . . . . .	13
by J. Edward Tremlett	
EIDETIC MEMORY: DARK ALCHEMY . . . . .	19
by David L. Pulver	
THE THAUMATURGY OF METALLURGY . . . . .	22
by Ted Brock	
CODIX DUELLO . . . . .	30
by Christopher R. Rice	
RANDOM THOUGHT TABLE:	
THE POWER OF A GOOD REPUTATION. . . . .	37
by Steven Marsh, <i>Pyramid</i> Editor	
SHORT BURSTS: TECH SUPPORT . . . . .	39
by Matt Riggsby	
ABOUT <b>GURPS</b> . . . . .	40

## ARTICLE COLORS

Each article is color-coded to help you find your favorite sections.

*Pale Blue:* In This Issue

*Brown:* In Every Issue

*Green:* Columnist

*Dark Blue:* **GURPS** Features

*Purple:* Systemless Features

### COVER ART

Aaron Panagos

### INTERIOR ART

Brandon Moore

# IN THIS ISSUE

Magic should never be boring! If you're looking for something new to add a *spark* to your games, then this *Pyramid* is for you. Believing is seeing.

With the rise of technology, strange spirits have come into existence, thriving in the wonders of the modern world. Harness their power with the secrets of *Technomysticism*. Get a strange, powerful new lens for the **GURPS Monster Hunters** techie template, information on available abilities, and **GURPS** stats for sample tech spirits. As a bonus, learn how to use these mechanics with alternate tech levels, weird science, and the netrunning rules from *Pyramid* #3/21: *Cyberpunk*.

If your fantasy setting has some unexplored faraway areas, then that might be where *The Tome of the Black Island* was created. This systemless article presents lore on how this most dangerous grimoire was created and the mad wizard who compiled it. It also includes suggestions for rituals contained therein as well as several adventure ideas.

Crazy wizards who want to fill their shelves with strange brews should turn to *Dark Alchemy*. This month's Eidetic Memory brings you 11 potions from the workshop of David L. Pulver, author of **GURPS Banestorm: Abydos**. Dabble in artificial blood, quaff some liquefied memories, or fall victim to corpse powder . . . if you dare!

Broaden your understanding of the intersection of magic and metal by learning about *The Thaumaturgy of Metallurgy*. Unleash the Metal spells of **GURPS Magic** into their own college with dozens of new and updated spells – from Walk through Metal to Celestial Shotgun – plus other tidbits such as stats for metal elementals.

When wizards disagree, there must be a codified system to resolve those powerful clashes – and thus there must be the *Codex Duello*. Frequent *Pyramid* archmage Christopher R. Rice discusses what's necessary to have mages duel, how magic works when participating in a duel, plus relevant character traits and useful new equipment. Get tips for how to apply the rules to **GURPS Magic** spells, **GURPS Thaumaturgy: Ritual Path Magic** castings, **GURPS Thaumaturgy: Sorcery** abilities, and even **GURPS Psionic Powers**.

This issue also includes a Random Thought Table where it's not what you know but who knows you, as well as a **Car Wars** article that's all about the tech. Whether you're clashing atop a tower, unearthing an island tome, or taming the ghost in the machine, this issue of *Pyramid* is bound to have something that makes your game magical!

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# FROM THE EDITOR

## WHAT-IF MAGIC

A couple of times a week on Twitter, we post short campaign, adventure, or story ideas under the hashtag #GURPShook as a way to showcase the creativity and do-anything spirit of **GURPS** (and maybe the opportunity for Your Humble Editor to occasionally slip in a terrible pun). This month, we did one story hook in particular:

*On this world, magnets fail to work in a no-mana zone, as does anything magnetic.*

Of course, the idea is that magnets are somehow magical. But the larger implication works in reverse: What if magnetism is just another expression of a greater magical force?

It's this kind of lateral thinking that allows the "what ifs" that make the arcane-themed issues of *Pyramid* so special, where we look at the magical possibilities of technology or metal or fortune.

The amazing thing is that **GURPS** is robust enough to handle just about anything you can throw at it. The core and

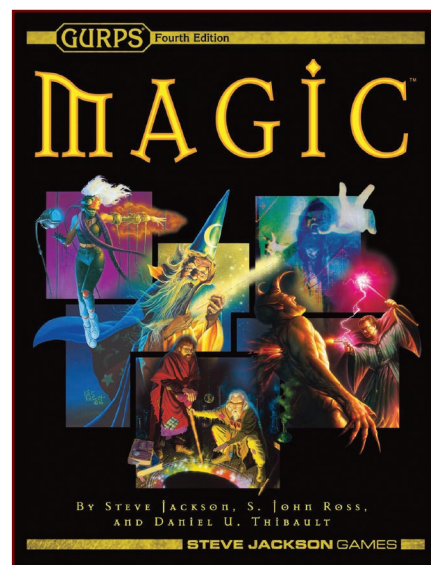
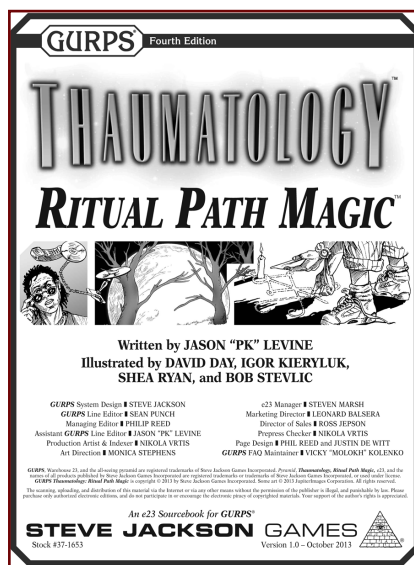
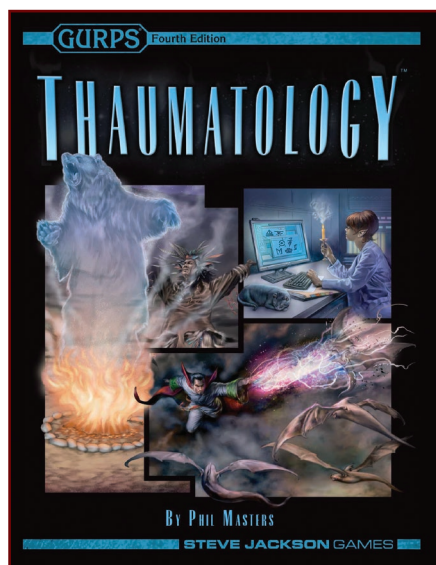
add-ons allow for considerable creativity, and the forums become hotbeds of activity when they're faced with a challenge.

Many campaigns have spawned around a certain flavor of magic or magical variant, while other settings have thrived on having lots of smaller, tangentially related forms of magic, where alchemy and Ritual Path magic mingle with strange one-off mystical types only practiced by a few.

Magic is all about possibilities. With this issue of *Pyramid*, the realms of the impossible just became very doable indeed.

## WRITE HERE, WRITE NOW

How magical was this issue of *Pyramid*? Did we pull a rabbit out of our hat that you weren't expecting? Are any of these offerings going to be part of your bag of tricks from now on? Or did any of our efforts at sawing someone in half work out a bit squishier than you would have liked (metaphorically)? Let us know via private missives to [pyramid@sjgames.com](mailto:pyramid@sjgames.com), or through the talking spirit boards at [forums.sjgames.com](http://forums.sjgames.com).



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# TECHNOMYSTICISM

BY W.A. FRICK

Not all spirits are ancient or wild. New technology creates new possibilities, and those possibilities echo through the minds and dreams of humanity and into the spirit world, giving birth to novel breeds of spirits. From the prototypical images of avant-garde technologies and their inventors to the gremlins that haunt complex machinery, these spirits fall outside the purview of traditional religions, but can hold great power in an increasingly technical world.

This article focuses on the *technomystic*, a new kind of champion for **GURPS Monster Hunters**, whose abilities are geared toward the spirits of technology and artifice. This archetype is a variant of the techie from **GURPS Monster Hunters 1: Champions**. Also included is a small selection of those spirits, complete with basic game stats. The material here refers to and develops ideas from **GURPS Psionic Powers**, but that supplement isn't required to use it.

## TECHNOMYSTIC

The technomystic will almost certainly fill the same role on the team as a standard techie would, but he will do so with a certain eccentric flair. A few of his abilities overlap ever so slightly with the crusader, though the technomystic is mostly limited to dealing with tech spirits. He also has a few abilities reminiscent of the psi, though again they're more focused on machines and technology. All in all, a technomystic can share the stage with just about anyone except another techie.

*Monster hunters can now  
influence new kinds of spirits that can  
hold great power in a technical world!*

### Techie Lens: Technomystic

0 points

Part holy person, part technophile, you're a true believer in the miracles of modern science. Your mystical practice blends old ways and new – coding while chanting, VR-induced trances, and arcane communion with finicky electronics and emergent net entities. Although most laypeople have a hard time telling you from a regular techie (**Champions**, pp. 18-19), you drive mundane technicians and rational skeptics crazy with your “machine whispering” and other unconventional approaches to technology.

A rogue technomystic could vex innocents and champions alike with a wide range of technological terrors, from co-opted strike drones to constant surveillance to interfering with

identities and bank accounts – anything stored in a computer, and what *isn't* nowadays?

To create a technomystic, apply the following lens to the techie template.

**Advantages:** Replace Quick Gadgeteer [50] and Versatile [5] with Machine Empathy (p. 5; Specialized, Electronics\*, -50%) [5], Technomysticism Talent 1 [5], and 50 points† in Technomysticism abilities (pp. 5-9); put leftovers in template advantages. • Add the following to template advantage options: additional Technomysticism abilities, Charisma [5/level], Technomysticism Talent 2-6 [5/level], Versatile [5], or remove (Specialized, -50%) from Machine Empathy for 5 points.

**Disadvantages:** Replace Compulsive Gadgeteering [-5] with Disciplines of Faith (Ritualism) [-5]. • Add Odious Personal Habits (Weird technical rituals) [-5] as a disadvantage option.

**Wildcard Skills:** Replace Inventor! with Tech Wiz!\* (p. 5) IQ+2 [48]-18. • Replace the second list with: One of Inventor!, Science!, or Talker!, all IQ-1 [12]-15, or 12 points to raise Tech Wiz! by one level.

**Primary Skills:** Replace this section with: Research (A) IQ [2]-16; Scrounging (E) Per [1]-16; and Weird Science (VH) IQ [8]-16. • Two of Diplomacy (H) IQ-1 [2]-15‡; Exorcism (H) Will-1 [2]-15; Fast-Talk (A) IQ [2]-16‡; Intimidation (A) Will [2]-16‡; Sex Appeal (A) HT [2]-12‡; Savoir-Faire (any) (E) IQ+1 [2]-17; or spend all 4 points on one skill at one level higher.

**Secondary Skills:** Add any unchosen primary skills to the first optional list (“Three of Hazardous Materials . . .”).

\* This assumes a modern technomystic who specializes in computers and electronics; for alternative technologies, see *A World Without Microchips* (p. 8).

† Math note: the extra 5 points come from skills.

‡ Overlaps significantly with Talker!

### Customization Notes

Although your approach is quite distinct, you accomplish similar feats and fill a similar role to the standard techie. What he accomplishes with Gadgeteering, you can do with mystical powers. This makes your selection of abilities important – rather than repurposing devices to accomplish your goals, you bargain with and cajole their spirits to do what you want.

Another important decision is *how* you prefer to influence tech spirits, as manifest in the Influence skills you choose. An angry mystic who uses Intimidation is likely to have an Odious Personal Habit (Swears and threatens machines when they misbehave), while a sweet-talker using Diplomacy or Fast-Talk won't stand out much.

Sex Appeal might appear normal at first, then it gets either *steamy* or *creepy*, depending on who's doing it (and who's watching – beauty is in the eye of the beholder!).

## TECHNOMYSTICISM

Where mystics command the spirits of people and places, technomystics command the spirits of *things* – specifically, those of artificial devices. All Technomysticism abilities have the power modifier below, and receive a bonus to all activation or usage rolls (but *not* the reaction or Influence rolls required by the Technomysticism PM) equal to the character's Technomysticism Talent level. All require Machine Empathy (below), in addition to any other listed prerequisites.

### Power Modifier: Technomysticism

-10%

Your supernatural abilities come from communing with the spirits of technology. This entails assuming certain ritualized behaviors when dealing with technical problems (“To start her up, you have to jingle the keys three times and say ‘Come on, baby!’ before you turn the ignition.”), which counts as Disciplines of Faith (Ritualism) [-5].

Every time you use a particular ability, the GM makes a reaction roll with all applicable modifiers (thanks to Machine Empathy) or you may choose to make an Influence roll using an appropriate social skill. On a reaction of Neutral or better, the ability works; a Very Good reaction gives +1 on all rolls to use it, while Excellent gives +2. A reaction of Poor or worse means the ability fails; Very Bad or worse also means the spirits are offended and the ability turns on you in a potentially dangerous way! You may retry a failed ability, but at a cumulative -1 to reaction/Influence rolls until you wait a full hour.

### Technomystical Talent

5 points/level

Your attunement with the fickle spirits of technology. Adds to rolls to activate or use a Technomysticism ability, including tech skill rolls, but *not* the reaction or Influence roll made to see if the spirits heed your request.

### Technomystical Skills

Those with *any* points in Technomysticism can learn Exorcism (p. B193), and use it normally against tech spirits, or any spirit inhabiting a technological device, but not against spirits inhabiting a living being, haunting a house, etc.

### Technomystical Abilities

Technomysticism is similar to ordinary Mysticism (*Champions*, pp. 42-45) in many ways, but quite different in others. Technomystics can learn Blessed (the ritual might involve surfing the Internet or basic cable channels, with a roll against Current Affairs (Pop Culture) or Research to interpret), Ghost Weapon, Mind Shield,

Mystic Coincidence (replace “Aid will never violate spirit’s tenets” with “Technology-aspected,” -10%, to miraculously find spare parts, guess passwords, etc.), Prayer (call for help from a powerful AI or tech god), Spirit Channeling (add Specialized, Tech spirits, -50%) [9], Spirit Communication (add Specialized, Tech spirits, -50%) [9 or 19], and Turn Evil (add Specialized, Tech spirits, -50%) [16], all as for the Mysticism abilities of the same name except where noted; as well as Psychometry, as for the ESP ability (*Champions*, p. 45).

The power likewise cribs several ergokinesis abilities (*GURPS Psionic Powers*, p. 30). In fact, those abilities can add more depth and variability to the ones presented here. All abilities trade their listed PM for Technomysticism. Though not listed with each ability, Machine Empathy is required to learn *any* of the power’s abilities.

Technomystics also can learn the new abilities on pp. 6-9.

### New Advantage: Machine Empathy

10 points

Like Spirit Empathy (p. B88), but works on machines and technological spirits, including artificial intelligences. An IQ roll gives you a general sense of the “disposition” of a machine – working order, broken but fixable, broken beyond repair, etc. – though not its intended function. You get +3 to Detect Lies and Psychology when dealing with tech spirits and AIs; when dealing with nonsentient machines, you instead get +3 to any technical skill roll made to determine a machine’s function or diagnose problems – but *not* to activate, repair, or otherwise use the machine.

Technomystics use Machine Empathy to apply their regular reaction modifiers and make Influence rolls when invoking their powers, allowing them to more easily get good reactions from the spirits. Technomysticism abilities notwithstanding, nonsentient machines are unlikely to respond to social skills such as Diplomacy, Intimidation, or Sex Appeal . . . though this doesn’t stop many otherwise sane people from attempting them.

Like Spirit Empathy, Machine Empathy can be specialized to certain kinds of machines – automobiles, clockwork, electronics, etc. This is a -50% limitation, though a flexible GM might allow larger categories with smaller cost reductions.

### New Wildcard Skill: Tech Wiz! (IQ)

You’re a natural at tinkering with wires, circuits, computers, and cybernetics. This skill replaces Computer Hacking, Operation, and Programming, as well as Electrician, all specialties of Electronics Operation and Repair, Engineer (Electrical, Electronics, or Robotics), Mechanic (Cybernetics or Robotics), and any other skills that you might need to operate, repair, or modify any electronic, cybernetic, or computerized device you get your hands on – though *not* to invent completely new devices, nor to work with alien, occult, or otherwise unfamiliar tech. For that, use Inventor!

This assumes a modern tech wiz who specializes in computers and electronics. For alternative technologies, see *A World Without Microchips* (p. 8).



## Ally (Awakened Device)

**Varies; see p. B36**

You have a personal device that is inhabited by a helpful spirit. It may be your laptop (see *Awakened Laptop*, p. 10), your smartphone, or even your car or gun. Age and apparent condition or quality aren't relevant; an old car that looks and sounds like a rattle-trap is as reliable as the spirit within. You must purchase the equipment normally (often as Signature Gear), including any quality modifiers you want – again, you're paying for *how well it works*, not *how it looks*. As long as the spirit is happy, the device will function normally and reliably.

If you want it to do something extraordinary, you must make a reaction or Influence roll as normal. "Extraordinary" includes anything the spirit would view as "extra effort" (exceeding the normal capacity of a device of that type), "extreme risk" (a fancy car doesn't want to get scratched, and computer doesn't want to catch a virus), operating on its own (car driving itself, computer doing research for you, etc.), or using any *supernatural* abilities it may possess to benefit you.

Assuming you get at least a Neutral reaction, it will cooperate to the best of its abilities. Better reactions apply the resulting skill bonus to *all* rolls made using that device for the duration of the scene; e.g., getting a Very Good reaction from your gun gives +1 to all attack rolls made with it for the rest of the fight. An unfriendly reaction means it stops working *altogether*, or works only sporadically. It will only attempt to do you or your friends harm on a Very Bad or worse reaction; in that case, it will do so in insidious and apparently accidental ways. To get it working correctly again, you need to a few minutes to win it back, by attempting another Influence roll at a cumulative -1 per successive failure.

**Statistics:** Ally (Constantly; Built on 25%; PM, -10%) [4], (Built on 50%) [8], (Built on 75%) [11], or (Built on 100%) [18].

### *Technomysticism and Tech Level*

As a wildcard skill, Tech Wiz! ignores penalties for tech level (**Champions**, p. 28), but a champion's *other* /TL skills are subject to *Tech-Level Modifiers* (p. B168) when working with devices or spirits from a different TL. When using one of these /TL skills to invoke or control a Technomysticism ability, apply the listed penalty both to the reaction or Influence roll *and* to the skill itself.

## Ally (Tech Spirit)

**Varies; see p. B36**

You can summon a particular tech spirit at will – see pp. 10-12 for some examples. You must take a Concentrate maneuver and make *both* a frequency of appearance roll to see if the spirit answers your call, *and* a reaction (or Influence) roll to determine its disposition. Assuming it shows up and isn't upset with you, it will typically arrive in 1d seconds and do your bidding for the duration of a particular task – which can be relatively complex, such as "watch the web for any possible mention or hint of large shipments coming from the vicinity

of Area 51." You can call on it as often as you like (one task at a time, please; reassigning will cause it to abandon an unfinished mission), until you fail a frequency of appearance roll *or* get a Poor or worse reaction. If that happens, the spirit won't help you for the rest of the adventure, or until you have some downtime to ritually appease it.

**Statistics:** Ally (12 or less; Built on 25%; PM, -10%; Summonable, +100%) [4], (15 or less; Built on 25%) [6], (12 or less; Built on 50%) [8], (15 or less; Built on 50%) [11], (12 or less; Built on 75%) [11], (15 or less; Built on 75%) [17], (12 or less; Built on 100%) [18], or (15 or less; Built on 100%) [27].

## Contact or Contact Group (Tech Spirits)

**Varies; see p. B44**

**Prerequisite:** Spirit Communication.

You can consult one or more tech spirits or net entities for information within their realm of expertise. A web spider might be able to tell you about trends on the Internet, a office gremlin can tell you about corporate politics, etc. Spirits always qualify as having supernatural talents, and can indeed get information unavailable to mortal informants. They can have any level of reliability; the bribes that entice them may not be cash, but relevant offerings of an equivalent value. Figure the cost of spirit contacts normally, and apply the power modifier.

**Statistics:** Contact (Tech Spirit; Supernatural; PM, -10%) [Varies] or Contact Group (Tech Spirits of a particular domain; Supernatural; PM, -10%) [Varies].

## Data Retrieval

**12, 20, or 30 points**

You can search a computer's storage for particular pieces of data. Roll vs. Computer Operation (or Tech Wiz!) with a penalty equal to the computer's Complexity to find what you want, if it's there. You can read files, watch or listen to media, and so on, but can't *install* or *execute* programs, run scripts, edit files, etc. – you have read-only access. Nor can you open encrypted files or anything that requires password access.

At level 1, you have to touch the computer (physically, or by finding it across a network with Netrunning, p. 8); at level 2, you can "wirelessly" access any computer you can see, applying normal range penalties (p. B550). At level 3, you *can* access encrypted files and even run programs as a basic user, though you still can't do anything that alters the content of the computer.

**Statistics:** Mind Probe (Cybernetic Only, -50%; PM, -10%; Sensory, +20%) [12]. Level 2 adds Ranged (+40%) [20]. Level 3 adds Universal (+50%) [30].

## Glitch

**25 points**

With a glare, you can cause a computer or electronic device to lock up, taking it out of commission for at least 30 seconds while it reboots. Take a Concentrate maneuver, choose a device you can see (or are aware of through a network), and make a Quick Contest of your Will (plus power Talent, minus normal range penalties, p. B550, unless you can access it across a network) vs. the device's HT (plus bonuses for Hardened, etc.).

If you win, it glitches out, effectively stunned for 30 seconds. At that point, an operator or automated system can attempt a normal operation roll to get it working again; failure means another 30 seconds before the next attempt, which has +1 to the roll, and so on.

**Statistics:** Affliction 1 (HT; Cybernetic Only, -50%; Extended Duration, x30, +60%; Malediction 2, +150%; PM, -10%) [25].

## Hazy Readings

5.8 points/level\*

Electronic sensors of all kinds have trouble getting a fix on you or those near you. When this power is active (you can turn it off at will, but must make a reaction/Influence roll to turn it on), digital images and videos of you are pixelated, recordings are muffled or static-distorted, scanner fixes are indistinct, and so on. Each level (up to 10) gives -1 to all rolls to sense or detect you or anyone within two yards of you with any kind of electronic sensor. Living creatures can see you *in person*, old-fashioned cameras can capture your image, but any attempt to scan, record, or transmit any sound, image, or sensor-reading as an electronic signal suffers the penalty.

**Statistics:** Obscure 1-10 (Sensors; Extended, All types of electronic sensors, +100%; PM, -10%; Stealthy, +100%) [5.8/level\*].

\* Figure the total cost and then round fractions up to the nearest point.

## I/O Tap

18 or 33 points

You can monitor input and output traffic of a single computer or device. Roll vs. Computer Hacking (or Tech Wiz!), with a penalty equal to the computer's Complexity. Unless you can touch the target or connect to it across a network, apply normal range penalties (p. B550). If successful, you're aware of the device's interface output, what commands are being issued, and network or telecom traffic into, out of, or *through* the device. At level 1, you can only understand things like unencrypted text, media, and other data as it appears to the end user. At level 2, you can understand encoded or encrypted network traffic at the binary level.

**Statistics:** Mind Reading (Cybernetic Only, -50%; PM, -10%; Sensory, +20%) [18]. Level 2 adds Universal (+50%) [33].

## Machine-Jinx

20 or 39 points

You can consciously influence any attempt to activate or use a technological device that you *personally* witness. You must declare the jinx *before* the roll, though this is a free action.

The individual taking the action, friend or foe, must roll three times, and *you* get to choose which result they must use. At level 1, you can do so once per hour of *real world* time.\* At level 2, you can do so once per 30 minutes.

**Statistics:** Luck or Extraordinary Luck (Active, -40%; Aspected, Technology, -20%; PM, -10%; Wishing, +100%) [20 or 39].

\* If desired, use the *Game Time* (+0%) modifier (**GURPS Powers**, p. 108); in this case, level 1 is usable once per game day, and level 2 usable twice per game day.

## CONSOLE MYSTICS AND CYBERSPACE SORCERY

In a campaign that uses the netrunning rules from *Console Cowboys and Cyberspace Kung Fu* (in *Pyramid* #3/21: *Cyberpunk*, pp. 4-12), a technomystic (or cyberpsi) using the Netrunning ability to project his consciousness into the web is effectively using a Total VR Interface (*Pyramid* #3/21, p. 5), even in settings where that kind of interface isn't otherwise available.

Although a mystical netrunner doesn't need a cyberdeck for this, no cyberdeck means he can't use hacking programs as a normal netrunner would. However, several Technomystical abilities can substitute, allowing the person to use his computer skills (or Tech Wiz!) to roll against a particular program's default as if he had a cyberdeck loaded with that program. Where computer Complexity would matter (how many "programs" he can run concurrently, sequence of actions in a round, etc.), use Technomysticism Talent + 2; otherwise, use the rules as written. Power Talent also adds to all "program" (ability) skill rolls, allowing powerful mystics to compete with advanced, high Complexity systems.

- **Alter:** Remote Control.

- **Analyze:** Data Retrieval to get specific information from a computer or user; Network Sense to get details about network topography, anomalous signals, net entities, etc.

- **Breach:** Netrunning itself permits the user to make a brute force attack on ICE, using IQ-2 (+ power Talent) if better than the normal default.

- **Control:** Netrunning enables the user to take "possession" of a computer by projecting his consciousness into it; Remote Control lets him attempt it wirelessly.

- **Damage:** Power Spike. Black ICE and power spikes *can* affect a mystic or psionic netrunner, exactly as if he were connected to the system with a cyberdeck.

- **ICE:** A technomystic's Will (+ Mind Shield, if any) provides the equivalent of "personal ICE."

- **Jam:** Glitch.

- **Listen:** I/O Tap.

- **Search:** Data Retrieval to search a hard drive or database for a particular file; Network Sense to search across a network.

- **Spoof:** Remote Control.

- **Stealth:** Hazy Readings.

- **Trigger:** Either Netrunning at level 5 (Compartmentalized Mind) or an appropriate Ally – e.g., awakened laptop or web spider – who can wait and execute the command at the appropriate time.

## A WORLD WITHOUT MICROCHIPS

The technomystic and his abilities are presented here with the assumption that he lives in the computerized world of a TL8+ society, and most technology that he's apt to encounter has at least some kind of embedded microchip which can significantly affect its function. If this isn't the case, either because of a different setting or because the technomystic is a stranger in a strange land, a few adjustments are necessary.

First, he should take a different specialization of Machine Empathy (or buy off Specialization altogether). Second, he should ask the GM for a relevant variant of the Tech Wiz! wildcard – Mech Wiz! for someone who can fix any *mechanical* problem, whether a car, plane, boat, gun, or appliance (but might not be able to program the clock on a VCR), and so on. Finally, he needs to make sure the Technomysticism abilities he buys are useful. Some don't

care if the machine is a computer – Ally, Jinx Machine – while others are useless with anything *but* a computer – Network Sense, those with Cybernetic Only.

The simplest approach for most of these is to adjust them to the new technology – replace “Cybernetic Only” with “Mechanical Only” or something similarly limiting, corresponding to the mystic's Machine Empathy and Tech Wiz! variants. It's also possible to replace Cybernetic Only (-50%) with All Machines (+0%), increasing the cost of all relevant abilities. In either case, make sure the resulting ability makes sense. . . computers have a “mind” (hard drive) that's useful to probe or read; most other machines don't. Possession *does* make sense, allowing the mystic to “be the car,” etc.; this could use the rules for “interface pilots” in *One With the Ship* (on pp. 11-17 of *Pyramid* #3/30: *Spaceships*).

### Machine Whisperer

6 points

You can communicate even with electronics that don't have an awakened spirit, in much the same way that Speak With Plants (p. B87) works. In addition to the secrets that may be known to the programmable coffee maker at a powerful law firm, the cell phone of a downtown pimp, etc., a Very Good reaction when attempting to operate or repair the device gets +1 for its cooperation (+2 for Excellent). This can backfire, though; a Poor reaction means the device becomes finicky and unreliable for you, while Very Bad or worse means it refuses to work altogether when you're anywhere nearby.

*Statistics:* Speak With Machines (Cybernetic Only, -50%; PM, -10%) [6].

### Netrunning

30, 80, 105, 140, or 160 points

You can project your consciousness directly into a computer and control it as if you were logged on at a console, running programs, reviewing files, even browsing the web if it has an Internet connection. Achieving control requires a Computer Hacking (or Tech Wiz!) roll, at a penalty equal to the computer's Complexity.

At level 1, you must touch the computer *or* some device that can connect to it across a network. Establishing control requires four successive Concentrate maneuvers, rolling for success on your fourth turn. Your control lapses after 10 minutes, though you may attempt again, if desired, after resting for five minutes.

At level 2, you can connect “wirelessly,” applying standard range penalties (p. B550) to the *nearest* network node on all rolls. Connecting requires only two turns of Concentration.

At level 3, you can remain connected for up 30 minutes. At level 4, you need only one second to connect, and can remain online indefinitely (biological needs notwithstanding). At level 5, you can Concentrate on Netrunning *at the same time* as doing other things, or undertake two Netrunning actions concurrently.

*Statistics:* Possession (Cybernetic Only, -50%; Full Memory Access, +10%; Maximum Duration, Up to 10 minutes, -50%; PM, -10%; Takes Extra Time 2, -20%; Telecontrol, +50%) [30]. Level 2 adds Ranged (+40%) and reduces Takes Extra Time to 1 (-10%) [80]. Level 3 increases Maximum Duration to 30 minutes (-25%) [105]. Level 4 *removes* both Maximum Duration and Takes Extra Time [140]. Level 5 adds Compartmentalized Mind (Limited, Netrunning, -30%; No Mental Separation, -20%; PM, -10%) [160].

### Network Sense

18, 38, or 58 points

You can “peek into” a computer network, either by touching something physically connected (a port or device), or “tuning into” a wireless signal if present (with standard range penalties, p. B550, to the nearest access point). By so doing, you can make Computer Operation (or Tech Wiz!) rolls to search for specific computers or devices on the network, and receive basic information about them (network address, make/model, and anything they automatically “announce” about themselves) – though you need Data Retrieval to get at specific data *on* a computer, or I/O Tap to “listen in” on conversations, etc. At level 2, you automatically get basic information about a target, and can find more detailed information (hardware and software specs of their computer, user name and privilege level, etc.) with a Computer Hacking (or Tech Wiz!) roll. At level 3, you also can pinpoint the *physical* location from which the target is accessing the network.

*Statistics:* Detect (Computers and Networks; PM, -10%; Signal Detection, +0%) [18]. Level 2 adds Analyzing (+100%) [38]. Level 3 adds Precise (+100%) [58].

### Power Spike

11 points/level

You can create a power surge in a nearby electrical device, potentially damaging the circuitry. Roll a Quick Contest of your Will (with normal range penalty, p. B550, unless you're connected across a network or otherwise in electrical contact with it) vs. the target device's HT.



If you win, it takes 1d burning damage per level of Surge. See *Electrical* (p. B134) for details on the results.

**Statistics:** Burning Attack 1d (Based on HT, +20%; Cybernetic Only, -50%; Malediction 2, +150%; No Incendiary, -10%; PM, -10%; Surge, +20%) [11/level].

## Power Supply

8 points/level

You can power an electrical device just by touching it. You must Concentrate for a second and spend 2 FP to establish the current. After that, you can sustain it for as long as you remain in electrical contact with the device you're powering. Once you stop touching it, it loses power after 10 seconds unless it has a rechargeable battery; in that case, giving it power charges the battery to last for *twice* as long as you maintained contact, up to its normal full capacity.

Higher levels enable you to power more devices at once, provided they're all in electrical contact with one another (all plugged into outlets on the same circuit, etc.). At level 1, you can provide enough power to use a single computer, complete with console and standard peripherals (monitor, speakers, desktop printer, etc.). Higher levels increase the amount of devices exponentially – level 2 powers four times as many devices (a small server room or DJ booth). Level 3 powers nine times as many (the offices in a small building); and so on.

**Statistics:** Create Electricity (Accessibility, Only to power electrical devices, -50%; PM, -10%) [8/level].

## Remote Control

20 points

By making an appropriate operation skill roll (Computer Operation, Electronics Operation, or Tech Wiz!), you can issue remote commands to any computerized or electronic device you can see. You take a penalty equal to the controlling computer's Complexity, as well as normal range penalties (p. B550) if you aren't in contact with the device (physically or across a network), and -1 per device already under your control.

Your influence is complete – you can order the device to do anything of which it is normally capable – and lasts for as long as you continue to Concentrate. Unless someone comes in to reset it (or it has some automated system that does so periodically), it will continue operating indefinitely with any programming changes you make; if you turned it off, it will stay off until someone switches it back on, and so forth.

**Statistics:** Mind Control (Cybernetic Only, -50%; PM, -10%) [20].

## Repairing Touch

18 points

You can fix a computer or electronic device by praying over it. This works exactly as for normal healing (p. B59), but repairs damage, malfunctions, burnouts, short circuits, and so forth, to restore a machine to working condition. The GM determines the FP cost and/or skill penalty (use an appropriate repair skill, or Tech Wiz!, in place

of IQ) to fix a particular device, depending on size, types of components, and what's wrong with it.

**Statistics:** Healing (Faith Healing, +20%; Cybernetic Only, -50%; PM, -10%) [18].

## Spirit of Necessity

4 points/level

You can pull a minor electronic device, battery, spare part, tool, or other electronics-related gizmo out of your pocket, even in spite of not mentioning having it before. Each level allows one such miraculous pocket-pull per gaming session; you may take as many levels as you like.

**Statistics:** Gizmo (Accessibility, Small electronic device or electronics-related object only, -10%; PM, -10%) [4/level].

# WEIRD SCIENTIST

Those with access to *The Power of Weird Science* (on pp. 4-6 of *Pyramid* #3/46: *Weird Science*) or **GURPS Powers: The Weird**, and the will to do weird, can use the rules there to design a *weird scientist*. Make changes to the techie template as for the technomystic lens, save that all Technomystical talents and abilities are replaced by Weird Science equivalents. It's an even bet whether the character will benefit more from Inventor! or Tech Wiz!, as neither is necessary to use his powers; he might opt for Science! instead of either. And without the need for Discipline of Faith, he's more apt to be Curious or Oblivious.

## Bits and Pieces and Magic From My Hand

The weird-science rules could potentially apply to any number of abilities, limited only by a player's imagination and a GM's patience – an “etheric scientist” might select from Mysticism (**Champions**, p. 43), a “psychotronic engineer” might simulate certain Psionic abilities (**Champions**, p. 45), and an expert in “animal magnetism” might activate Bioenhancement abilities (**Champions**, p. 40). In any case, the normal power modifiers are replaced with Weird Science (*Pyramid* #3/46, p. 4) or Weird (**The Weird**, p. 19), both also -10%.

Which abilities, and how many a particular weird scientist may have, is up to the GM. He may wish (or allow the player) to create a list of around 20 Weird Science abilities, mixed and matched from other powers. He could allow different abilities based on the scientist having IQ or better in relevant skills – Engineer (Psychotronics), Expert Skill (Psionics), and/or Physics (Paraphysics) to focus psi-energy; Biology, Esoteric Medicine, and/or Physiology (Human) to use Bioenhancement; and so on. Alternatively, the GM may allow a weird scientist to select *any* 18 abilities, +1 per level of the Weird Science skill he has above IQ.

In cases where the Weird Science power ends up covering a large number of widely varied abilities, it would be fair to raise the cost of Weird Science Talent to 10 or even 15 points/level.

# TECH SPIRITS

Like technology itself, the spirits that rise from human artifacts are mercurial and ever-changing things, from archetypal technologies and awakened devices to the spirits of inventors and invention itself. What follows is but a tiny selection of examples from a vast realm of possibilities. None of these beings present much of a direct threat (or combat challenge) to champions, but all can cause a great deal of chaos in the right circumstances.

## Possessed and Haunted Things

The spirit inhabiting a device may not be its own, but could be the soul of a departed human, or even something *else*. Such devices generally conform to the stats of an awakened object, but are often *spookier*. . . many get around using Warp (Only when unobserved, -20%); things like cars and toys may actually be able to move on their own, having non-zero ST, DX, and Move. The more malevolent ones have abilities capable of frightening or even harming people in their vicinity – Maledictions, unfortunate (even lethal) Serendipities, and other subtle effects are most common, though some spirits like to throw things around with Telekinesis, make the walls bleed, etc.

## AWAKENED DEVICES

Even if it can be said that every object has a spirit, most are relatively passive, dimly aware of their surroundings in the way a sea anemone is, and capable only of subtle control even over the device itself (fast or slow, glitchy or stable).

And then, some just “wake up,” attain sentience, possibly even *sapience*. This isn’t a technological singularity, but a supernatural event – and more common than rationalists want to admit (which would be never). The spirit’s personality and disposition depend on the device and its history; tech used in criminal activities might have a mischievous or larcenous streak, and so on. Such a device seldom gains *overt* supernatural abilities (though this isn’t unheard of), but more often the ability to “operate itself.”

### Awakened Laptop

200 points (built on 50%)

This is a common laptop (Complexity 3 at TL8, Complexity 4 at TL9, etc.; portable console is -1 to skill on long tasks), with secure Wi-Fi, ethernet jack, built-in speakers, webcam, mini-mic, an impressive eight-hour battery . . . and a mischievous spirit with the propensity to hack into *other* nearby electronics.

ST: 0 [-100]	HP: 10 [20]	Speed: 3.00 [0]
DX: 0 [-200]	Will: 13 [-5]	Move: 0 [-15]
IQ: 14 [80]	Per: 13 [-5]	
HT: 12 [20]	FP: - [0]	SM: -4
Dodge: N/A	Parry: N/A	DR: 4 [20]

**Fright Check:** 0 (seeing the computer operating by itself might scare some)

**Advantages:** AI [32]; Accessory (Computer; Display) [2]; Compartmentalized Mind 1 (Controls) [25]; Compartmentalized Mind 1 [50]; Computer Brain (20, 4, 4) [130]; Enhanced Time Sense [45]; Filter Lungs [5]; Injury Tolerance (No Neck) [5]; Machine [25]; Possession (Cybernetic Only, -50%; Full Memory Access, +10%; Ranged, +40%; Telecontrol, +50%) [150]; Quick Gadgeteer (Limited, H4xx0r, -50%) [25]; Telecommunication (Cable Jack; Video, +40%) [7]; Telecommunication (Radio; Secure, +20%; Video, +40%) [16].

**Disadvantages:** Compulsive Hacking (12) [-15]; Electrical [-20]; No Legs (Portable) [-30]; No Manipulators [-50]; No Sense of Taste/Smell [-5]; Restricted Diet (Electrical Current; 8-hour battery) [-10]; Social Stigma (Valuable Property) [-10]; Trickster (12) [-15]; Wealth (Dead Broke) [-25].

**Skills:** Tech Wiz! IQ+2 [48].

## GLITCHES AND GREMLINS

If credible scholars debated such things, there might be a controversy about the origins of the gremlin – are they a new spirit of the Industrial and Post-Industrial Ages, or are they evolved faeries, tommyknockers and boggin trolls adapted to the modern world?

There are hundreds if not hundreds of thousands of varieties of gremlin, each with its own special obsession for manipulating reality into calamitous outcomes – car trouble, network lag, whatever it is that makes an airplane sit on the runway for 90 minutes . . .

*“There are different sorts of gremlin skilled in different sorts and grades of evil,”*  
*Ward-Jackson explained.*

*– David Clarke, Britain’s*  
*X-traordinary Files*

### Office Gremlin

300 points (built on 75%)

A single, tiny office gremlin (about the stature of a doll or puppy, though naturally invisible) can cause considerable havoc in a place with lots of electronics. Some like to follow a single person around for days, weeks, months, or years, leaving a trail of computer crashes and locked-up smartphones in his wake. Others undertake specific missions of malicious mischief for a tech-shaman who makes an amusing offering.

**ST:** 0 [-100]      **HP:** 7 [14]      **Speed:** 5.00 [0]  
**DX:** 10 [0]      **Will:** 16 [30]      **Move:** 5 [0]  
**IQ:** 10 [0]      **Per:** 11 [5]  
**HT:** 10 [0]      **FP:** 10 [0]      **SM:** -4  
**Dodge:** 8      **Parry:** N/A      **DR:** 0 [0]

**Fright Check:** -2

**Glitch (16):** Quick Contest of gremlin's Will (-1/yard away) vs. electronic device's HT; if the gremlin wins, the target is stunned for 30 seconds.

**Gremlin's Curse (16):** Quick Contest of gremlin's Will (-1/yard away) vs. (human) target's Will; if the gremlin wins, the victim acquires Total Electronics Klutz\* for minutes equal to the gremlin's margin of victory.

**Jinx (N/A):** Once per 30 minutes of game time, the gremlin can force anyone he can see who is attempting to use a computer or electronic device to reroll three times and use the *worst* result.

**Static Zap (10):** 1 point of electrical (burning surge) damage by touch. Reach C.

**Advantages:** Affliction 1 (HT; Affects Substantial, +40%; Cybernetic Only, -50%; Extended Duration, x30, +60%; Malediction 1, +100%) [25]; Affliction 1 (HT; Affects Substantial, +40%; Based on Will, +20%; Disadvantage, Total Electronics Klutz\*, +15%; Malediction 1, +100%) [28]; Burning Attack 1 point (Affect Substantial, +40%) [2]; Doesn't Breathe [20]; Doesn't Eat or Drink [10]; Extraordinary Luck (Accessibility, Bad luck only, -20%; Aspected, Computers and electronics, -20%; Wishing, Others only, +0%) [18]; Immunity to Metabolic Hazards [30]; Injury Tolerance (Diffuse) [100]; Insubstantiality (Affect Substantial, +100%; Always On, -50%) [120]; Invisibility (Substantial Only, -10%) [36]; Warp (Limited Range, 100 yards, -40%; Reliable 10, +50%) [110].

**Disadvantages:** Appearance (Monstrous) [-20]; Distractible [-1]; Frightens Animals [-10]; No Manipulators [-50]; No Sense of Taste/Smell [-5]; Social Stigma (Monster) [-15]; Trickster (9) [-22]; Wealth (Dead Broke) [-25].

\* Every time the victim tries to use a computer or electronic device, even for a routine task that wouldn't normally require a roll, he must make an operation skill roll. If he fails at all, he suffers a calamity as if he'd rolled a *critical* failure.

## NET ENTITIES

The World Wide Web is a reality unto itself, a dynamic and prolific evolutionary pressure cooker for creating strange and unique entities. From massive bot-net hive-minds to individual free-roaming intelligences, these beings have no physical bodies, existing entirely within the network. As a rule, they

*We can "go beyond" the "ordinary" powers of the material world through the power of patterns.*

– Ray Kurzweil, *The Singularity Is Near*

## TECHNOLOGICAL ARCHETYPES

Just as animals and plants have spiritual archetypes that manifest as idealized versions of their earthly forms, technological archetypes make their way from design schematics and engineering notes into the Ideal Realm. These idealized forms can then be reflected back into the material world – often because they were invoked by a technomystic. Too powerful to be Allies, such entities are generally called upon to grant a particular boon; any Technomystical ability could be seen as an invocation of some archetype, but Prayer is the most obvious and direct example.

The default Technomysticism power intentionally leaves out Quick Gadgeteer, mostly to give the techie some hope of clinging to his niche. In a game where the GM isn't concerned about this (if no one chooses to play an ordinary techie, or there's enough tech-ing to do that neither will feel left out), he can make the following additional ability available.

### Spirit of Invention

40 points

By invoking the iconic spirits of those who invented a particular technology, you can tap into the creative spark that allows amazing feats of invention and artifice. Each use of this ability (including the required reaction/Influence roll) permits you to accomplish one specified task as if you had Quick Gadgeteering – generally to repair, modify, or build a single device.

You don't work alone, however . . . the spirits lurk around to make themselves "useful," looking over your shoulder, offering advice, moving tools around the workspace, possibly even raiding the fridge, messing with the TV, and otherwise making a spectral nuisance of themselves. This can be mildly disconcerting and inconvenient to you and anyone in the vicinity; those unaccustomed to the supernatural will react to the situation with -2.

**Statistics:** Quick Gadgeteer (Nuisance Effects, -10%; PM, -10%) [40].

know a lot about humanity from what we post in their home – and not always our best aspects.

### Web Spider

400 points (built on 100%)

Web spiders mostly just lurk and watch what humans do on the Internet. Insatiably curious, they love to peek out from webcams, eavesdrop on open mics, read chat logs, and browse Internet histories. Usually anything but malicious, they're generally happy to undertake interesting research missions for a friendly net shaman. However, if angered, they have a dangerous "bite" in the form of an electrical power spike.



**ST:** 0 [-100]      **HP:** 5 [10]      **Speed:** 2.50 [0]  
**DX:** 0 [-200]      **Will:** 12 [0]      **Move:** 0 [-10]  
**IQ:** 12 [40]      **Per:** 12 [0]  
**HT:** 10 [0]      **FP:** 10 [0]      **SM:** 0  
**Dodge:** N/A      **Parry:** N/A      **DR:** 0 [0]

**Fright Check:** 0

**Power Spike (12):** Roll a Quick Contest of the spider's Will (-1/yard if not in electrical or network contact, to create an arc) vs. the target system's or interfaced hacker's HT (+3 if Hardened). If the spider wins, the victim takes 2d burn surge damage (to the *brain* if a human netrunner). Ignores DR.

**Advantages:** Absolute Direction (Web-Crawling\*) [5]; AI [32]; Burning Attack 2d (Based on HT, +20%; Affect Substantial, +40%; Cybernetic Only, -50%; Malediction 1, +100%; No Incendiary, -10%; Surge, +20%) [22]; Detect (Computers & Networks; Analyzing, +100%; Precise, +100%; Signal Detection, +0%) [60]; Doesn't Breathe [20]; Doesn't Eat or Drink [10]; Doesn't Sleep [20]; Enhanced Time Sense [45]; Immunity to Metabolic Hazards [30]; Injury Tolerance (Diffuse) [100]; Insubstantiality (Affect Substantial, +100%; Always On, -50%) [120]; Invisibility (Substantial Only, -10%) [36]; Mind Probe (Cybernetic Only, -50%; Sensory, +20%; Universal, +50%) [24]; Mind Reading (Cybernetic Only, -50%; Sensory, +20%; Universal, +50%) [36];

Possession (Cybernetic Only, -50%; Full Memory Access, +10%) [60]; Warp (Accessibility, Only to inhabit networked computers or electronics, -40%; Reliable 10, +50%) [110].

**Disadvantages:** Attentive [-1]; Compulsive Web-Surfing (12) [-5]; Curious (9) [-7]; Dependency (Electricity; Constantly) [-25]; Low Empathy [-20]; Mute [-25]; No Manipulators [-50]; No Sense of Taste/Smell [-5]; Wealth (Dead Broke) [-25].

**Skills:** Current Affairs (Headline News, People, Pop Culture, Science & Technology, Sports), all (E) IQ [1]-12; Observation (A) Per+2 [8]-14; Research (A) IQ+2 [8]-14; Tech Wiz! IQ+4 [72]-16.

\* The web spider can retrace the nodes or systems that it has visited, and can automatically find any website or network address it has visited or has a link to.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The L.E.X. Anomaly (Latency Error eXternalization) is a glitch in the system, seen in aperiodic cycles manifesting around an as-yet unknown strange attractor, somewhere in the bistables and back servers of the Wild Internets. Accepting mail under pseudonyms such as "W.A. Frick," "A.J. Hiddell," and "C. Armitage," the Anomaly mostly keeps a low profile, occasionally entertaining itself by causing dropped cell-phone calls, Internet video buffering, and progress-bar lag.

*TechnoMystics are a collective of artists collaborating to create with true light and sound forms that resonate with the frequencies of the universe and alignment of consciousness.*

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# THE TOME OF THE BLACK ISLAND

BY J. EDWARD TREMLETT

*As we approached the black sand shores of our destination, a hue and cry came from our long-suffering crew. They had spied the islanders, standing on the rocks above the shore, and were sore afraid at what they saw.*

*Where there had been nothing, a mere swivel of the spyglass before, now stood a long line of silver-haired, half-naked men and women. They wore skirts woven of kelp and human bone, and their hands were filled with spears made from similarly disturbing materials. The islanders were deathly silent, but smiled like the toothiest predators of the sea – their teeth filed to points.*

*Our guide shouted a greeting to them, and as one they shouted back. Their loud and harsh language filled the others with dread, but, as I knew the rudiments of the language by now, I did not fear. Perhaps I should have.*

*When our guide had said, "I have brought supplies," I thought he meant the ship's stores. I soon learned he meant its crew, save for myself.*

*They had something very different and special in mind for me.*

– Maldrick Udelhofen

Some tomes of magic rightly inspire dread and fear at the mere mention of their existence. *Das Buch Der Dämonen*, *The Words of the Fallen King*, *Ab Serpentum*, even the dreaded *Kniga Ad* – such are their reputations that only the most evil, mad, and depraved of wizards would seek them out. Even those who must consult their horrid pages for information, or to construct a counter-spell for some hideous working, must do so with caution and care, lest they fall under the malign spell of this sort of evil work.

One such book of magic is the notorious *Tome of the Black Island* – the product of a tragic, disgraced sorcerer who, if his story is to be believed, went somewhere truly off the map. What he became there, and did and professed after, was such that, following his killing by shocked authorities, they had his entire estate burned to the ground, and the soil sown with salt.

Sadly, they did not destroy everything. Some of his possessions were not in his home when it was consigned to the flames, and his spellbook is among those cursed objects. Who knows just where it might turn up?

The article gives the true story of the creation of the tome, the sad story of the mad wizard who penned it, and a look at the island culture that birthed it. It also explains its hideous contents and gives a generic rundown of the foreign, grotesque spells it contains. Ideas on what to do with the book are also provided, along with descriptions of a few other items the sorcerer may not have lost in the fire.

*You will travel far and see things  
no southern man has seen, perhaps  
no man at all.*

– Angus Wells, *Forbidden Magic*

## THE UNPLEASANT PENNING

Maldrick Udelhofen was, prior to his fall from grace, best known for being neither spectacular nor notorious. Unlike his former master – the thunderous Didac D'llampec, most infamous of weather wizards – he was of a very even temper.

That said, teacher and pupil shared an obsession on discovering and exploiting an entirely new avenue of magical inquiry. To that end, Maldrick spent vast sums of his considerable fortune on magical tomes from faraway lands, hoping their foreign philosophies and paradigms would illuminate the way. But he found nothing truly new in their pages – it was all the same magic, just done in different ways, in different languages.

One night, Maldrick was accosted by a wild-eyed and distinctly unnerving stranger – his face a hypnotic swirl of thin, blue tattoos. Hissing his words through teeth filed to points, he transfixed the wizard with tales of a far-flung land where people actually *walked* with their gods. He spoke of magical feats so alien and shocking that Maldrick was enraptured, very much wanting to see these things.

The wild-eyed stranger was willing to guide him to the island in return for safe passage. So the magician secured the services of a swift, fine ship and its crew, and set course for the uncharted lands of the stranger's tales. That was the last anyone would see of Maldrick for five long years.

## *The Prodigal's Return*

One gloomy, windless day, a man wrapped in a voluminous, dark cloak – his face covered in fine, blue tattoos – appeared at the gate of the Udelhofen estate and demanded entrance to his home. But the man who'd returned was a shattered and evil mockery of the one who had left.

The right side of Maldrick's face was melted like wax, and his hair had changed color from coal black to almost-uneearthly silver. His teeth had been filed down to jagged points, and his tongue had been split like a snake's – giving his speech a strange, new lilt. Worst of all were the eyes: wild, red-dened things in darkened, sunken sockets, they burned with knowledge too terrible to endure and be whole.

He had undergone other, more intricate modifications, hidden beneath the folds of his ebony cloak. His right arm was withered and twisted, yet still strong enough to have an iron grip. His right leg was gone at mid-thigh, replaced by a peg-leg cunningly fashioned from the polished skeleton of what was either a child or a severely misshapen adult.

His rightly shocked servants asked if he had been injured on his journey. But he assured them that he had willingly undergone these changes that he might share in the knowledge of those he had traveled so very far to see, and to know.

These were not disfigurements, he insisted. They were *sacrifices*.

## *An Eerie Exposition*

Before long, Maldrick was back before his magical peers, gladly explaining to them the wonders he had seen, and the sorcery he had learned.

He spoke of his long journey to the other end of the world, past seas and oceans both unmapped and undreamed of. But what he had found there horrified them, and what he had done to become a member of their society filled them with sickening revulsion.

As he ranted and raved, his fellows realized that Maldrick was both mad and broken. But they sensed no real evil within him – at least not as they understood it. So, thinking that he might be saved, given time and help, they merely confined Maldrick to his estate, and forbade his contact with any but those sent to try and return him to sanity.

That proved to be a foolhardy course of action. Jailed in his home, Maldrick took advantage of the time to engage

in further explorations of his hard-won knowledge. He never seemed to sleep, and was often seen experimenting by night under the moon and stars, and by day in his workshop, now filled with all manner of distasteful things.

He also took time to entertain in secret, inviting the city's repulsive and deranged aesthetes to sneak into the estate via secret passages in caverns below. As they gleefully heard his tales of foreign decadence and savagery, he worked his will upon them – making them his hands. Soon he had a small army of disturbed followers, buying and stealing supplies needed for some great work he would not yet speak of.

## *Destined Downfall*

One day, one of his servants managed to escape through those same caverns. He told the council everything: the flaunting of the house arrest; his depraved researches and experiments; stern punishments and grotesque abuses heaped upon his staff; and some massive and dire working he was soon to complete, three days hence.

United by concern and fear, a group of combat wizards was dispatched to deal with the matter. What they encountered in the Udelhofen estate that night killed many of them and drove most of the survivors insane. All their leader would say was that the fallen sorcerer was trying to raise up what he'd seen on his black island, and that – when finally struck down – his last words were, "You're too late. It's coming."

Maldrick's body was examined and found to have been changed on the *inside* as well. The physician who attended to him got halfway through his dissection before burning his notes, and recommending the same be done with the body. In the end, the Council razed the Udelhofen estate to the ground, and did not stop the flames until even the ashes were gone. They then sowed the earth with salt.

They say the worst thing was that those servants who could not leave remained in the blazing house. They were seen to be watching mutely from the windows as the estate burned down around them – their lips and eyes sewn shut, like the rag dolls of children.

Some reputedly saw even worse things, but none dared write them down.

## *Abominable Aftermath*

In the generations since then, sanitized versions of Maldrick's downfall have become stories to scare overly curious apprentices, and encourage them to be cautious of those offering foreign, forbidden knowledge. The once-handsome grounds of Udelhofen are still a fire-blasted ruin – suitable for growing nothing, and silent as the grave – and no portrait of the sorcerer still survives.

*Queenie: What the hell is that thing?*

*Madame Delphine LaLaurie: It's Bastien. My houseboy. He was a beast in life. Now evermore so. Enchanted no doubt by the same dark magic which has kept me alive.*

– *American Horror Story* #3.3



Of his works, however, some traces yet remain. Some of Maldrick's things were spared from the flames, most notably his grimoire, taken from the scene by the wizard who killed him. Since then, it's had a mysterious and storied trajectory: some say it was locked away and cautiously read. Others whisper it was stolen and used for evil. Still others claim its rescuers finally saw their folly and consigned it to the flames, only to find it would not burn.

Who is right? Few can assert with any authority. All that can be said is that, perhaps, it is best that it remain a work that fewer still will ever see, much less have the misfortune to read.

## BOUND EVIL

Maldrick's grimoire is 10" wide, 15" tall, and 3" thick. Its binding is thick, tanned leather made from the skin of a griffon. Its pages are almost translucent vellum. A long, thick braid of the griffon's hair is affixed to the spine, acting as a placeholder.

A bejeweled, silver replica of the Udelhofen family crest once adorned the front of the book. It was replaced by a strange, vaguely humanoid figure carved from the iridescent inside of a large shell. The man has a grotesquely elongated head with large eyes and mouth, arms that come down at anatomically impossible angles, and strangely shortened legs.

The book is in two portions: his life story, and the spells he's researched, learned, and created. What was written before he went to the black island is in a fine, crisp hand that becomes more refined with age. The portions after his journey, while still legible, are harsher in composition and lacking in wit and refinement.

## Life and Times

The first part of his story, begun after he left his apprenticeship, is hardly shocking. Once Maldrick returns from his journey, he spends a lot of time relating the many charnel wonders of the small, black island and the deranged people who live there.

He describes a culture based on complete control: maintaining near-perfect order through a harsh system of prohibition and punishment, and then breaking those prohibitions to gain power. They bind others to their will, tattoo spells on their skin, and sacrifice their own flesh for yet more power. They also summon their gods into strange, patchwork forms made from the festering creatures of the sea, so they might seek audience and make their bargains. His guide – last survivor of a shipwreck – was magically bound to return with a "suitable" magician from a far-away land.

After some sensible revulsion at their practices, and the fate of his crew, Maldrick slowly began to appreciate what their society had to offer. He was initiated into it, and made his own bargains to grow in power – eventually coming to rival their greatest sorcerer.

Why had they searched for one such as Maldrick? At the start, they told him that, much like their guest, they wished to learn new and stronger magic from other lands – supposedly to better make war on their neighbors. But, after a few years, Maldrick learned the truth: They wished to divorce themselves from their slimy, fickle sea gods and become a new race of men, complete with new magic.

Maldrick was shocked. He'd just come to love what these people had to offer – even carving himself up for more of those gods' power. How dare they take it from him?

Disgusted, he left, fighting his way off the island through a combination of his own magic and theirs. Once he got to the Black Island's nearest neighbor, he slew all he found there to provide "materials" for his long journey home.

Hurtled by summoned whirlwinds through dark seas, carried on the stretched backs of the dead, what little yet endured of Maldrick was eroded away. All that remained was to come home again and make it like the charnel paradise he'd traveled so far to discover, and sacrificed so much to become a part of.

Between these loathsome stories and descriptions, the sorcerer pours scorn upon his peers, who he believes were so jealous of his discoveries that they've confined him in the hopes he'll meekly hand them over. He speaks of his plan to combine their magic with his own to raise one of the gods of the island on a permanent basis, but doesn't go into specifics as to *how* – at least not in this section.

## Magical Workings

Over half of the book was reserved for spells, both what he learned at his master's table, and what he's learned, developed, and experimented with since. He'd filled out about a quarter before he went on his journey, and two-thirds of what remained in the time since – a feverish amount of new ideas, alien concepts, and his attempts to add what he knew before to what he'd since learned.

His earlier spells are quite worthy of investigation, as Maldrick had a wide and deep understanding of weather-related workings, as well as the science behind them. He also had a fair smattering of the classic spells: offensive, defensive, revelatory, blessings, and curses. However, he abhorred necromancy, even to the point of not learning to turn the undead – yet another use for a chain of lightning bolts!

His new paradigm was harsh and alien, requiring a shocking realignment of ethics, spirit, and method. The spells needed components not readily available in his native land, so he spent a lot of time finding suitable stand-ins, or developing workarounds. Thankfully, his small army of near-mad followers was willing to scour the landscape to bring him what he required.

The brief descriptions of the spells (below) include prerequisite spells and components in parenthesis. Components are abbreviated as: blood (B); chanting (C); shell dust (D); fish (F); human flesh (H); idol (I); stone knife (K) (see *Objects of Deranged Desire*, p. 17); magical power (P); human sacrifice (S); magical tool (T). In cases where the blood or human flesh must be the *caster's*, the notations are (Bc) and (Hc), respectively.

## General Spells

*Call Fish (CF)*: Summons the nearest school of small to medium fish.

*Call Leviathan (BCF)*: Summons the nearest large sea creature.

*Cause Pain (BcCDKP)*: Transfers pain and damage the *caster* does to another to someone else.

*Compel Behavior (Connect, p. 16; Intimidate, p. 16) (BcCDPT)*: The *caster* sews the target's eyes and mouth partially shut with an enchanted bone needle, creating a totally obedient slave. The spell is lifted when the *caster* removes the stitches.

## WHERE THE GOOD WORLD ENDS

The black island was created through a fairly recent geological event. According to the legends of the long, uncharted island chain it abuts, it bubbled up through the waters like some dying, massive thing from the deepest parts of the ocean. Its sawtooth rocks cause poisoned wounds, its black soil allows nothing to grow, and the atmosphere of the place is such that only the most unwholesome of sea creatures will swim or scuttle around it.

The inhabitants of that cursed place are the descendants of exiles – cast out of the other islands for their gruesome beliefs, untold generations ago. To spill blood without direct cause is one of the major religious prohibitions of the islands, but their neighbors feared that forcing them to leave would merely send their burgeoning evil elsewhere. So one dark night, the heretics were rounded up, rowed to the jagged and blasted island, and left with no provisions.

This exile was supposed to kill these islanders, but it only made them stronger. In the time since then, they have adapted quite well to their harsh environment, perfectly melding their grotesque philosophies to the tending of the land and one another. Indeed, they often joke that their jailers did them a favor, all those years ago.

The magic of the black island “works” through a brutal form of self-generated antinomian power. Its inhabitants have created a society filled with thousands of prohibitions – social and spiritual, great and small. The rules are

enforced by the entire community, and breaking even the least of them is cause for severe penalties. What might seem a minor faux pas to an outsider could be cause for extreme chastisement, imprisonment, ostracizing, and even death.

However, when the community needs to perform rituals, work great acts of magic, or venerate their hideous gods, they carefully and gleefully break as many prohibitions as they can in order to raise the power to do it. At such times, the island turns into a near riot of selfish, licentious, and destructive behavior as most – or even all – social restraints are unleashed. When the working is done, the survivors clean themselves up, reinstate the taboos, and go back about their lives.

The islanders still resemble their neighbors, though exposure to their gods has altered them – turned their hair stark silver, and made their eyes red and sunken. Coming of age leads to a fierce regimen of tattoos, done in ink made with trace amounts of the deadly rock, which makes necrotic blue lines under the skin.

The harsh conditions of the island have led them to be crafty in their choice of materials. They build their longhouses and slave pens from rock, dried kelp, and bones – both those of massive leviathans and their honored ancestors. Their noxious crops are sown in the bodies of the dead, and massive schools of fish are baited with those who break the taboos.

*Connect (BcCDP)*: Makes a temporary connection between the caster and a target. This is often made permanent through Make Tattoo Spell (below).

*Deflect Damage (Connect, above) (CP)*: Transfers pain and damage done to the caster to someone the caster has placed the Connect spell placed upon.

*Favorable Crops (BCF)*: Makes a planting more bountiful, in spite of adversity.

*Intimidate (CDP)*: Makes others subservient to the caster’s will, temporarily.

### Enchantments

*Make Magical Tools (BcCDHP)*: Enchants a specific tool needed for a spell. Examples are tattoo implements for Make Tattoo Spell, fishbone sewing needles for Compel Behavior and Make God Body, or a chisel for Make Idol.

*Make God Body (CBcFPT)*: Lets the caster make a fleshy vessel for a god to inhabit when summoned. The vessel is stitched together with enchanted bone needles, and usually made with sea creatures. The body is ensorcelled at dusk and lasts until dawn.

*Make Idol Spell (the spell to be enchanted, plus components) (CBDPST)*: Imbues a statue with a spell, which then has a wide area effect. Usually this is done for Create Taboo, though statues of the gods used for Call God are also made this way.

*Make Power Store (CBDHPT)*: Enchants an object to be used to store magical power. Most often this is done with

human bones, which are worn as power batteries. The larger the object, the more power can be stored.

*Make Tattoo Spell (the spell to be enchanted, plus components) (CBDHPT)*: Permanently inks a spell into target, so they’re always “on” without the need to use components. This is usually done with Connect, Deflect Damage, and Intimidate.

### Prohibitions

*Create Taboo (BcCDPS)(I)*: Permits the caster to declare a thing to be prohibited over a certain area, for a certain time. This is done to control behavior, through Reinforce Taboo, and/or gain magical power, through Break Taboo. It’s usually cast using an enchanted Idol, making it permanent. However, it’s also possible to create a prohibition over a certain area, and keep it going for a short time – eliminating the need for an idol.

*Reinforce Taboo (Create Taboo) (BcCDP)*: Causes anyone breaking a taboo within the area of its effect to lose a measure of either health or magical power per infraction. The loss is stipulated by the caster, and the length of time is usually from dusk to dawn, or vice versa. Health is turned into an equivalent measure of magical power. If an idol was used to create the taboo, the power is harvested and stored in the idol until a caster retrieves it for a spell; if no idol was involved, it all goes to the caster until he can’t absorb any more, and then it goes to any power stores he may have on his person.

## Power

*Small Sacrifice (BCDK):* Sacrifice of blood for magical power on a one-to-one basis of health for power. Can be done with caster's blood or someone else's. Power fills up caster's reserves and then enters any power storage.

*Greater Sacrifice (BcCDKS):* Human sacrifice to gain temporary power. The act of sacred killing delivers 1.5 times the victim's maximum power, if they're healthy; otherwise, only whatever they have remaining. Power fills up caster's reserves and then enters any power storage.

*Sacred Sacrifice (BcCDHcK):* The caster offers a measure of himself up to the gods in exchange for the ability to store and wield even more power. For every point of a physical attribute the caster carves off himself with a special stone knife, a corresponding point of a spiritual attribute is increased.

## Deities

*Call God (BcCHIP):* Empowers the caster to parlay with a certain god, so as to ask for information, favors, and secrets. It must be cast on an enchanted idol, which animates when the god appears and seems to speak. The gods cannot affect anyone in this form – they have to be in specially made God Bodies to directly reward or punish their faithful. But it's useful to make arrangements with a god *before* summoning it.

*Summon God (Call God, above) (BCIPS):* Calls a particular god and inserts it into a God Body for a time. This is done so its followers can dance and speak with it, and beg it for divine favors. The hungry, greedy gods of the Black Island are happy to take their flock's meager sacrifices and consider their requests, but rarely deliver on them unless they're *really* impressed. The spells lasts until the God Body wears out – usually 12 hours – and the god cannot leave the sight of its idol.

## UNPLEASANT POSSIBILITIES

As with any great and terrible grimoire, and the demented soul who penned it, there are a number of possibilities for using its dread legacy.

### *Bleak Background*

Maldrick's sad and sorry ending makes for a great cautionary tale about the dangers of going too far afield, or trusting in foreign sorcerers. His blasted estate can be a spooky location of note, with legends of underground secret chambers and cursed treasure hoards leading many a fool-hardy party to go there, after dark. Who knows what sinister, "failed" experiments he left to rot in the caverns below, and what they have become?

### *Dangerous Loot*

If *The Tome of the Black Island* has been missing for some time, then perhaps the PCs may run across it in the treasure hoard of some evil wizard, greedy dragon, or loathsome cult.

They may not even know what it is at first, depending on how long it's been moldering there. But some magical research should soon reveal that they have discovered a very unsafe and infamous thing.

Depending on how they researched it, and who they told, they may soon have a lot of unwelcome interests. Obsessed magical collectors may want to buy it, or send people to steal it. Evil magicians could send servitors and underlings to kill them and take it. The authorities may decide the PCs shouldn't even *have* it, and demand they turn it over "for their own good."

## OBJECTS OF DERANGED DESIRE

Stories of Maldrick's ill-gotten artifacts resurfacing should cause both alarm and interest among magical circles. The PCs might be hired to accompany a concerned wizard as he bids for them at some demented magical auction. They might be tasked with stealing the things from their current owners – either from a locked stronghold or a dank dungeon – and then wonder why their employer wants them so badly.

*The Bone Leg:* The artificial leg Maldrick wore holds as much magical power as a normal human. To be used properly, it must be *worn* as a leg – requiring the would-be user to undergo a gruesome surgery to fit it.

*Stone Knife:* A rough-cut knife, hewn from the poisoned rock of the Black Island. It's needed for certain spells. It also delivers a deadly, slow-acting poison in the wounds of anyone cut by it.

*Fishbone Sewing Needle:* A long, evil-looking thing, stained with blood. It's needed for Compel Behavior (p. 15) and Make God Body (p. 15) spells.

### *Questionable Knowledge*

It's possible the authorities already have the book. It may have sat in a secure location for a very long time – well hidden from those who would use its contents. But a new and horrible situation has led to a need to learn the questionable spells in this book, and so it must see the light of day once more.

This could be one way for a GM to get exotic, foreign, or otherwise-forbidden spellcraft into the game world, or at least the PCs' hands. It's possible Maldrick succeeded in inventing a new line of magical inquiry, or maybe accidentally solved a long-sought conundrum in his quest to find other, darker prizes.

But such knowledge can be very dangerous. While the party's magicians delve within the dread contents of the *Tome* to find something of use, they may find their imaginations fired in the wrong direction.

### *The Cult of the Black Island*

The cult of Maldrick's followers has continued on, in the darkest recesses of the city. At times, they merely bedevil the authorities with their degenerated aping of his "wisdom." At others, they present a truly dangerous threat.

Recently, they've stumbled onto something big. The cult's new leader has unearthed enough of his teachings to bring him back to life. The cult is working toward assembling his ashes, artifacts, and a mismatched collection of body parts to do just that.



The PCs must enter into the darkness of their own city to put an end to the long-dead magician's sinister legacy. What will they find there? How much of the *Tome* have these insane people reassembled? What will they do with what they find?

## Journey Into Darkness

Whether confiscated, missing, or merely misplaced, the *Tome* is needed. An expedition is being mounted to investigate the chain of islands Maldrick spoke of, and see what those far-off lands have to offer – provided they exist at all. For this reason the book must be found, mined for navigational clues, and studied to understand what the explorers will find.

The PCs have been engaged to find the spellbook and accompany the expedition. It promises good pay, adventure, and a chance to collect in the spoils of what this new world has to offer. It also promises danger and uncertainty, as no one has successfully attempted a voyage of this distance in living memory, and, if the stories are correct, there may be a terrible new world awaiting at the journey's end.

But as the trip goes on, and the way becomes stranger, will the book show more than intended? Will the revelations unveil not merely the way, but a literal map to madness? Will they find the Black Island a horrible place, or welcoming after they have fallen under the spell of the *Tome*?

## What Rough Beast

All this time, no one's been certain what Maldrick was summoning, only that interrupting the ceremony at that moment must have stopped it from appearing. The authorities insisted – perhaps more from fear than fact – that his portentous last words were the idle boasts of a dying, insane wizard.

Unfortunately, they were wrong. The magicians who stormed the estate were too late to stop the thing from coming. All they did was delay its appearance, slowing the arrival

down by a factor of generations. The thing has been approaching all this time – ruining Maldrick's estate as it slowly manifests, lengthening its shadows, and attracting all manner of filth and unwholesomeness.

The only way to dispel such a beast is to possess its name, and the only way to reverse the spell is to know it. The answers to both are in Maldrick's dread tome, so, to save the kingdom from the approaching horror, the PCs must track it down. They may also have to find some of his other, hideous implements – scattered to the four winds after all these ages – and reunite them to counter the wizard's last working.

As for what it is: part of what Maldrick was working toward, back on the Black Island, was a way to put one of their gods into a *storm*, rather than some loathsome, patchwork body that could only withstand so much. He didn't have the spell quite right, and the ceremony was interrupted. But every year, around the time the summoning happened, dark storms batter the city – worse and worse each year.

One year, soon, the storm will grow eyes and a voice, and then rage to have been denied access to the world for so very long.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

By day an unassuming bookstore clerk, J. Edward Tremlett takes his ancient keyboard from its hiding place and unfurls his words upon the world. His bizarre lifestyle has taken him to such exotic locales as South Korea and Dubai, UAE. He is a frequent contributor to *Pyramid*, has been the editor of *The Wraith Project*, and has seen print in *The End Is Nigh* and *Worlds of Cthulhu*. He's the author of the fictional blog *SPYCOD's Tales* ([spygod-tales.blogspot.com](http://spygod-tales.blogspot.com)) and writes for Op-Ed News. He currently lives in Lansing, Michigan, with two cats and a mountain of Lego bricks.

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# EIDETIC MEMORY

## DARK ALCHEMY

BY DAVID L. PULVER

The set of elixirs collectively referred to as “dark alchemy” represent formulations that are associated with necromantic and thanatological practices. (The existing elixirs of Lichdom, *GURPS Magic*, p. 217, and Reanimation, *Magic*, p. 217, may also be considered to be part of the same family group.) Certain of the elixirs described below normally are illegal in many jurisdictions, including Cannibalism, Cerebral Preservation, Corpse Powder, Liquefied Memories, Nightmare Extraction, and Zombification. The other elixirs listed here are usually unrestricted, though they may be uncommon or considered somewhat disreputable by association.

In a *GURPS Banestorm* campaign, the techniques for formulating dark alchemy elixirs are known to the alchemists in the hidden city of Abydos (see *GURPS Banestorm: Abydos*), where, like necromantic magic, they are quite legal. However, familiarity with some of these elixirs may have spread beyond that cursed city. In other campaigns, it is possible that this knowledge could be unique to certain races who are associated with necromancy or death – e.g., ghouls or banes (see *GURPS Fantasy Folk*) – or might simply represent the individual researchers of eccentric alchemists, liches, or alchemist-mages.

### Artificial Blood

This pale elixir is an artificial substitute for blood. Each dose is equivalent to 2 HP worth of blood. As it is an alchemical substitution, it can nourish creatures that must feed on human blood, such as vampires, even if this is a mystical rather than physical requirement. Although its purpose may be benign, it is often considered sinister for this reason.

*Duration:* 1 week.

*Form:* Potion.

*Cost:* \$250/\$450.

*Recipe:* \$100; one week; defaults to Alchemy-1.

### Bella Mortis

This ointment must be rubbed over the entire body of an intact cadaver that has not experienced significant decay (generally, no more than a day old). If applied to a corpse, the body swiftly regains the look and feel it possessed in life just

before death. It loses stiffness, and pallor, and does not further decay until the elixir’s effects wear off. At a casual glance, an otherwise uninjured corpse appears sleeping rather than dead, until the lack of breath is noticed. (This elixir also plays havoc with any forensic attempt to determine time of death; it’s as if the death occurred a moment ago.) It has no effect on a live person.

*Duration:* 1 week.

*Form:* Ointment.

*Cost:* \$250/\$450.

*Recipe:* \$100; 1 week; defaults to Alchemy-1.

### Blood Compatibility

This elixir allows a living subject to accept blood transfusions and organ transplants from incompatible donors, or even from other species, without experiencing rejection. An unfortunate side effect is that the subject is at -3 on HT rolls to resist diseases or infections during the period (unless he is also completely immune to disease). Also, blood or organs taken from the subject while he is under the influence of this potion are (permanently) safe to transfuse or transplant to anyone without rejection.

*Duration:* 1 month.

*Form:* Potion.

*Cost:* \$500/\$900.

*Recipe:* \$200; 2 weeks; defaults to Alchemy-1.

### Cannibalism

A living person who drinks this hostile elixir suffers a terrible curse: they can only derive nourishment from flesh and blood of their own species. Ingesting any other type of food results in retching (p. B429), immediately regurgitating it; this doesn’t prevent them adding non-proteins, e.g., salt with their food.

*Duration:* 1 week.

*Form:* Potion or powder.

*Cost:* \$500/\$900.

*Recipe:* \$200; two weeks; defaults to Alchemy-1.

## Cerebral Preservation

If a freshly severed head is placed (and kept) within a jar containing blood fortified with a dose of this potion, it remains alive for up to one week; a further dose of this potion each week will continue to preserve the head. The head may think, speak, use any senses, and cast spells or use other abilities that do not require limbs. Due to limited oxygen, speech is restricted to a whisper. If removed from the jar of blood, the head dies after five seconds unless resubmerged.

*Duration:* 1 week.

*Form:* Potion.

*Cost:* \$2,000/\$3,300.

*Recipe:* \$700; eight weeks; defaults to Alchemy-3.

## Corpse Powder

The manufacture of this elixir requires a restrained living being be killed and then, over a period of weeks, rendered down to a concentrated powdery or liquid essence.

Anyone who ingests the elixir must make a HT-4 roll. If this fails, his body slowly transforms to resemble that of the original being whose essence was consumed. After one week, subtle changes in appearance can be observed (and if the new form was inhuman, this may also result in acquiring one to two levels of Unnatural Features).

At the start of the second week, the change accelerates. A second HT-4 roll is required, with success warding off further changes. Failure causes the victim to collapse into a coma for 1d days, during which time, his body alters as necessary to accommodate the changes, which will be complete at the end of the second week.

Parallel to these physical changes, the victim must make a Will-4 roll to avoid his mind being similarly altered, with symptoms expressed through dreams and visions of the

original being's life and a sense of it impinging upon his own. If the roll fails, after the first week, he acquires a Split Personality with the second personality being that of the deceased entity. After a further two weeks with the Split Personality, a second Will roll is required, rolling at -4 if the physical transformation was completed during this period. Failure results in the second personality obliterating that of the subject. Success means the Split Personality is retained. A critical success expels it from the subject's mind.

Application of an alchemical antidote (*Magic*, p. 217) halts the transformation, but does not reverse the effects if they have already occurred.

*Duration:* Permanent.

*Form:* Potion or powder.

*Cost:* \$12,500/\$20,000.

*Recipe:* \$6,000; 25 weeks; defaults to Alchemy-6.

## Ghost Repellent

Any incorporeal undead in the area of effect feel their essence being eaten away; they take 1d-1 injury per second of exposure, and experience severe pain (p. B428) while in the pastille's area of effect and for one second thereafter.

*Duration:* See Pastille (*GURPS Magic*, p. 213).

*Form:* Pastille.

*Cost:* \$400/\$550.

*Recipe:* \$200; 1 week; defaults to Alchemy-1.

## Liquefied Memories

The creation of this elixir requires the fresh or preserved brain of a subject, which is consumed during the six-week-long process of making the elixir. Upon drinking the potion, the imbiber may access the memories of the subject as if they were his own. After the duration wears off, the memories do as well. Of course, the user may take actions such as recording memories he wishes to retain or relating what he remembers to others.

*Duration:* 1d hours.

*Form:* Potion.

*Cost:* \$1,000/\$1,500.

*Recipe:* \$500 (plus brain); three weeks; defaults to Alchemy-2.

## Nightmare Extraction

This elixir may be taken by anyone who suffers from the Nightmares disadvantage. It suppresses the disadvantage for a week, but each night, the sleeper's nightmare takes physical form, with terrible people, monsters, or things from his dreams manifesting as demonic *nightmare avatars* (above) who exist within the real world and prey upon people *other* than the originating dreamer. The avatar may be the same entity or different entities depending on whether the nightmares are varied or recurring. It will appear within 100 yards of the dreamer.

Nightmare avatars are uniquely vulnerable to their dreamer, who is the entity that created them – however, as the original person must face their innermost fears, a confrontation should always involve overcoming a Fright Check!

## NIGHTMARE AVATAR

A nightmare avatar is an embodied demonic spirit created from someone's dreams via the elixir of Nightmare Extraction. It will have the statistics appropriate to whatever being or creature appears in the nightmare, plus these traits.

**Advantages:** Doesn't Eat or Drink [10]; Doesn't Sleep [20]; Regeneration (Regular) [25]; Unaging [15]; Unkillable 3 (Achilles' Heel, Damage from dreamer, -10%) [135].

**Disadvantages:** Fragile (Unnatural) [-50]; Nocturnal (Variant; Nonexistent when dreamer is awake) [-20]; Supernatural Features (No Body Heat) [-5]; Vulnerability (Any attack by the dreamer x4) [-40].

Nightmare avatars may also possess Signature Gear that appears with them when they materialize. The combination of Fragile (Unnatural) and Unkillable 3 means the avatar dies (vanishing into multicolored smoke) at -1 x HP, then reforms as soon as its Regular Regeneration (1 HP/hour) restores it. It normally reforms within 100 yards of its dreamer.

For an adventure that features detailed examples of nightmare avatars, see *The Horror Out of Dreams* in *Pyramid* #3/31: *Monster Hunters*.



*Duration:* 1 week.

*Form:* Potion or powder.

*Cost:* \$3,000/\$4,500.

*Recipe:* \$1,500; nine weeks; defaults to Alchemy-4.

### **Rapid Decay**

This elixir magically accelerates natural post-mortem decay 60 times faster. This means that within a mere two minutes, pallor sets in. In 12 minutes, rigor mortis begins. Within 18 minutes, the corpse cools to room temperature. Within half an hour, rigor mortis ends and the body bloats and starts to rot (becoming attractive to scavengers, insects, etc.), or it mummifies if kept cool and dry, the process completing itself within a few hours.

If the ointment is applied to a zombie, it transforms the creature into a skeleton over a period of 1d hours, gradually enough so as not to inflict extra damage aside from the loss of HP due to the difference between the zombie and skeleton templates.

*Duration:* Permanent.

*Form:* Ointment.

*Cost:* \$250/\$450.

*Recipe:* \$100; 1 week; defaults to Alchemy-1.

### **Zombification**

Someone who takes this elixir up to an hour prior to their death will reanimate as a zombie 1d seconds after they are killed, much as if they had been raised by a *Zombie spell* (*Magic*, p. 151). Alternatively, the potion can be poured over a corpse, or into the earth of an open grave, and an hour later, the corpse reanimates and rises up (or claws itself free of the grave) as a zombie. In either case, the corpse must meet the usual criteria for a zombie; the person's body can't be totally destroyed.

The zombie created by this potion is under the control of the potion's maker. If that person is not there to give orders, the zombie will shamle about aimlessly, counter-attacking if it is attacked. However, living people who take the potion,

and then are reanimated after being slain, attack their killer, and any of his comrades, if they are present after the return. This does not apply if their killer was the potion's maker; if so, they must obey him.

*Duration:* 1 hour (zombies created are permanent).

*Form:* Potion.

*Cost:* \$2,000/\$3,000.

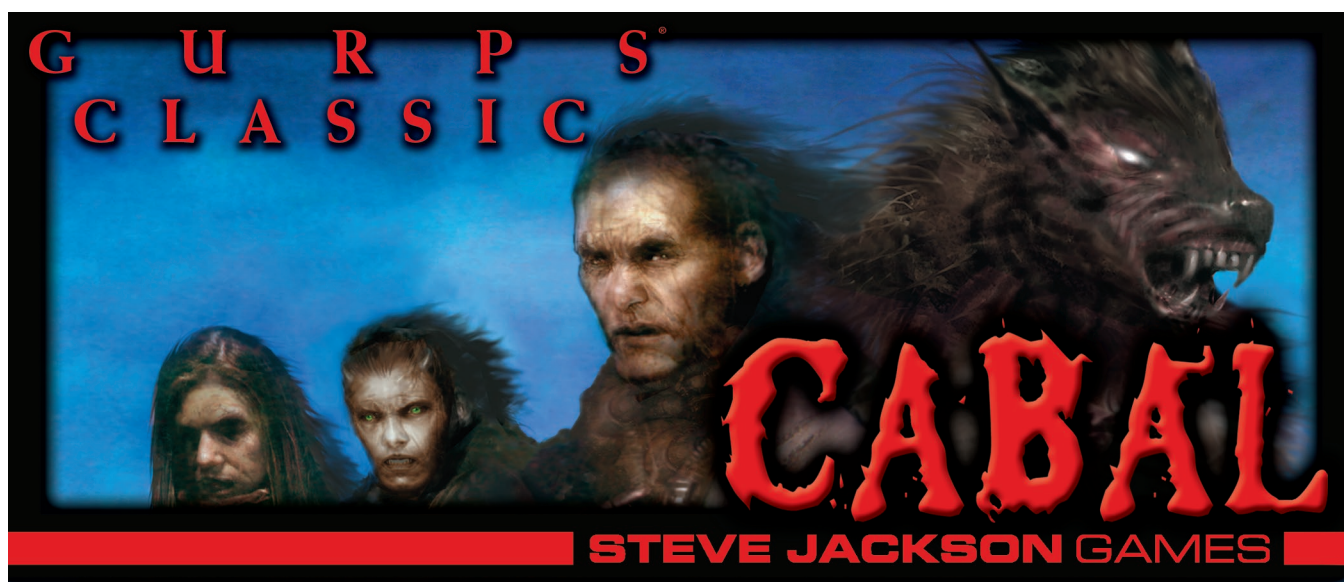
*Recipe:* \$1,000; six weeks; defaults to Alchemy-2.

*Our first order of  
business will be to find a  
deranged alchemist, which  
should not be very difficult.*

*– Barry Hughart,  
Bridge of Birds*

## **ABOUT THE COLUMNIST**

David L. Pulver is a Canadian freelance author. An avid science-fiction fan, he began roleplaying in junior high with the newly released *Basic Dungeons & Dragons*. Upon graduating from university, he decided to become a game designer. Since then, David has written over 70 roleplaying game books, and he has worked as a staff writer, editor, and line developer for Steve Jackson Games and Guardians of Order. He is best known for creating *Transhuman Space*, co-authoring the *Big Eyes, Small Mouth* anime RPG, and writing countless *GURPS* books, including the *GURPS Basic Set*, *Fourth Edition*, *GURPS Ultra-Tech*, and the *GURPS Spaceships* series.



# THE THAUMATURGY OF METALLURGY

BY TED BROCK

"So what are they made from?"

The scruffy young man seemed to bounce in place as the old wizard studied the silvery sword and cuirass, despite the looks the old man was giving him.

"They're clearly not from around here," the wizard told his young client. "It's an alloy, made from steel and some other metal I've never seen, with the luster of polished pewter and stronger than iron. You say you took these off a brigand?"

The young man suddenly looked nervous, glancing around the workshop. While most wizards worked with alchemical components or dusty leather-bound tomes, this shop looked more like a blacksmith's forge than a wizard's lab. He tried to appear haughty. "He attacked me . . ."

"Mm-hmm." The wizard's glare though his spectacles sent shivers through the young man's spine. "I'll need to study these more closely to determine their origin. Wait outside." He waved nonchalantly at the door.

After the young man had stepped through the door, the wizard grabbed a large uncut emerald sitting on a shelf while his canine familiar paddled up to him. "It's a shame, but the Secret must be preserved," he told the familiar, drawing upon all the energy he could from both it and the Powerstone. "Not only did Infinity **not** take my advice about using regular steel, equipping their scouts with titanium steel instead, they let this **kid** kill one of their agents. The paperwork's going to be a mess."

Outside, Aelvinios, feared bandit of the mountain passes, paced, before taking a seat on a chair near the workshop door. "Crazy old man," he muttered, closing his eyes as he leaned back. Experience had taught him that wizards work at their own pace;

*It's made of solid iron  
It weighs a ton or two  
We know you'd like to meet it  
It wants to meet you, too!*  
(CLANG!)

– *Animaniacs* #1.61

these things could take a while or no time at all. "At least that stranger had some good gold on him."

He never saw the anvil falling from the sky, nor would he ever get a chance to spend that gold.

These spells are intended to supplement and expand the Metal spells in the Technology college (*GURPS Magic*, pp. 182-183) into its own college, giving an alternate take on the versions presented in *GURPS Thaumatology* and *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 9: Summoners*. In some settings, the Metal college is an elemental college, like that of Earth, Air, Fire, Water, and occasionally Plant.

## NEW SPELLS

Like the Making and Breaking college, the Metal college of spells is popular among mages, commonly those with Magery 1 or 2, whose primary vocation is nonmagical.

Some spells from *Magic* are part of the Metal college. See *Superseding Previously Published Spells*, p. 24, for these spells and alternative prerequisites for them.

### Alloy Metal

#### Regular

This spell refines simple metals into alloys. It requires the proper amounts of metals commonly required for the intended alloy. Should improper amounts be present, excess raw metal is left over. For example, to produce bronze, tin and copper (classic bronze is about 90% copper and 10% tin) are necessary. Having 9 lbs. of copper and 1 lb. of tin will produce 10 lbs. of bronze, but having 4.5 lbs. of copper and 5 lbs. of tin will produce 5 lbs. of bronze with 4.5 lbs. of tin left over.

This is also a Making and Breaking spell.

*Cost:* 5 per pound of metal (minimum 3).

*Time to cast:* 10 seconds.

*Prerequisites:* Magery 1 and Shape Metal.

#### Item

Staff, wand, or jewelry. *Energy cost to create:* 400.

## Anvil Strike (VH)

### Missile

A relatively silly spell developed by a mage millennia ago solely for the purpose of making a point, this spell is best cast outside, but can be performed inside if the caster does not care about collateral damage. Unlike most missile spells, the spell is not held by the caster and then thrown. Instead, an iron anvil falls from the sky with enough force that it will pass through roofs, floors, and ceilings until it hits the ground. (This spell also may be granted by various gods, particularly gods of the forge, who appreciate the irony of it.)

The anvil itself is produced through a refined application of Create Metal and Shape Metal. The spell creates one cubic foot of iron, 100 yards in the air. When it falls, it lands on a one-hex area. The spell can be “held,” increasing the radius of the area covered by one hex for each second the spell is cast. Calculate falling damage for the proper weight (see p. B430); one cubic foot of iron weighs 500 lbs., which does 28d crushing damage. Aerodynamic shapes, atmospheric densities greater than standard, and differing gravities may cause the damage to change. The anvil disappears two minutes after it hits.

When cast the mage must make a roll against Artillery (Bombs) to hit the target. On a critical failure, the mage hits himself!

Note that the “anvil” does not have to take the shape of an anvil; the mage creates the shape of the “anvil” at casting time. Common forms are round balls, rectangular and pyramidal prisms, and, of course, the obligatory anvil shape.

Because it is a “missile” spell, Reverse Missiles (*Magic*, p. 168) will protect the target; however, this merely returns the anvil to its starting location! The target is still at risk of being hit a second time once gravity reasserts itself on the anvil.

*Cost:* 40 per cubic foot of iron. This anvil is created 100 yards in the air and does a minimum of 28d crushing damage on impact.

*Time to cast:* 10 seconds per cubic foot of anvil.

*Prerequisites:* Magery 3, Rain of Shards, and Teleport.

### Item

Staff or wand. Usable only by mages. *Energy cost to create:* 5,000. Extremely rare!

## Arrow

### Missile

Creates a metal-tipped (commonly iron, specified when the caster learns the spell) arrow that flies at high speeds toward the target. This spell has Acc 3 and Range 80/160. The weapon disappears five seconds after being hurled at its target.

*Cost:* Any, up to the Magery level per second, for three seconds. The arrow does 1d-1 impaling damage or 1d-2 (2) piercing damage (for a bodkin point) per energy point.

*Time to cast:* 1 second.

*Prerequisite:* Create Metal.

### Item

(a) Staff or wand – the arrow is fired from the end of the item. Usable only by mages. *Energy cost to create:* 600. (b) Bow or crossbow – the arrow does the spell damage as opposed to

the damage listed for the ST of the bow or crossbow. Usable only by mages. *Energy cost to create:* 600.

## Bloody Iron

### Regular; Resisted by HT

This spell enables the mage to extract the iron in someone's blood from his bodies. This is extremely painful, causing agony (p. B428), as well as doing 1d-1 toxic damage to the target every second the mage concentrates. The metal extracted appears as a fine red mist near the target, but cannot generate more than a few grams of iron from a given person.

This is also a Necromancy spell.

*Cost:* 2.

*Prerequisite:* Move Metal.

### Item

Staff or wand. Usable only by mages. *Energy cost to create:* 1,200.

*I am the spirit of metals,  
the fire which does not burn,  
the water which does not  
wet the hands.*

– Patrick Harpur,  
**Mercurius:**

**The Marriage of  
Heaven and Earth**

## Blunderbuss

### Missile

Creates a spread of lead or iron pellets that fly in a cone at high speeds toward the target; use the Shotgun rules (p. B409) for determining damage and penetrating DR at various ranges. This spell has Acc 2, Range 20/200, and Rcl 1; treat as a shotgun with a RoF of  $N \times 9$ , where  $N$  is the amount of energy spent during casting.

*Cost:* Any, up to your Magery. Each point of energy produces nine pellets; each pellet does 1d+1 small piercing damage. These pellets disappear five seconds after being fired. Unlike other Missile spells, this spell *cannot* be held for additional seconds to increase the energy put into the spell and hence the number of pellets fired.

*Time to cast:* 1 second.

*Prerequisite:* Arrow.

### Item

Staff, wand, or metal tube (including gun barrels) – the pellets are fired from the end of the item. Usable only by mages. *Energy cost to create:* 600.



## Celestial Shotgun

### Area

Balls of lead, resembling those of a shotgun, rain down from the sky onto the area, causing 1d small piercing damage per second to all within it. Those under the rain of pellets take damage on their own turns; if less than an entire second is spent in the affected area, damage is halved (round down).

The spell can only be cast outdoors. Armor protects in the usual fashion. A shield with a DB of 2 or better can be held overhead in an attempt to block the bombardment. This requires two hands and a Ready action, and grants its cover DR in protecting the person once the shield is readied upward.

Inanimate objects, such as buildings, protect with their DR. The pellets that fall from the sky disappear within five minutes of the spell ending.

*Duration:* 1 minute.

*Base cost:* 2 to cast (minimum 4). Same cost to maintain. For double base cost, the spell does 2d piercing per second!

*Prerequisites:* Magery 2 and Blunderbuss.

### Item

Wand or staff. Usable only by mages. *Energy cost to create:* 500.

## OPTIONAL RULES: SUPERSEDING PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED SPELLS

Several of these spells are designed to supersede spells from *Magic*, either in whole or in part. In particular, the Flesh to Metal, Metal to Flesh, Stone to Metal, and Metal to Stone spells were extracted from Earth college spells in *Magic*, making the metal functions of the Earth college spells extraneous. Those who use the Metal college are encouraged to change the Earth spells to remove the metal effects.

These previously published spells are also part of the Metal college, with the following changes.

*Body of Metal* (*Magic*, p. 183): Change prerequisite to Flesh to Metal.

*Iron Arm* (*Magic*, p. 196): Change prerequisites to Resist Pain or Shape Metal, and DX 11 or better.

*Metal Vision* (*Magic*, p. 183): No changes.

*Shape Metal* (*Magic*, pp. 182-183): Change prerequisites to Magery 1 and Identify Metal.

*Steelwraith* (*Magic*, p. 54): Change prerequisites to Magery 2 and Walk Through Metal.

*Turn Blade* (*Magic*, p. 167): Change prerequisites to Apportation or Spasm or Shape Metal.

In addition, for *Create Object* (*Magic*, p. 98), while not technically part of the Metal college, if using Metal college spells in the campaign, it is best to change the prerequisite of Create Earth to Create Metal for items made out of metal. This would include many weapons.

## Conjure Shield

### Regular

This spell conjures a round steel shield on the subject's arm that lasts for one minute. The caster specifies at conjuration whether the shield is small, medium, or large. The shield is exactly like a heavy shield of its size in all respects, including weight, DB, DR/HP, and cover DR, and can be handed to others for their use.

Unlike the Shield spell provided by the Protection and Warning college (*Magic*, p. 167), this spell does not count as an "on" spell for concentration purposes.

A variation of this spell producing a light wooden shield is a Plant college spell, with prerequisites of Magery 1 and Shape Plant.

*Duration:* 1 minute.

*Cost:* 3 per DB of the shield, up to 9 energy for a DB 3 large shield; half to maintain. A dueling buckler with DB 0 (*GURPS Low-Tech*, p. 116) is possible, but has the same energy cost as a shield with DB 1.

*Prerequisite:* Create Metal.

### Item

(a) Staff or wand; only usable by mages. *Energy cost to create:* 600. (b) Bracer, armband, gauntlet, or ring; creates the shield on the wearer's arm. *Energy cost to create:* 500 per DB of the shield, set at item creation.

## Create Metal

### Regular

Creates *simple* metals – such as copper, iron, tin, or lead – where none existed before. For the purposes of this spell, a "simple" metal is any metal known at the caster's TL which is not an alloy of more than two metals nor radioactive. Several elements that are considered metals in modern chemistry, such as calcium and potassium, aren't always considered "metal" prior to the development of atomic theory.

*Duration:* Permanent until dispelled or destroyed. The GM concerned about this spell's economic impact can give this spell a shorter duration (time frames of one hour to one day are recommended), and make permanent durations cost 10 times the energy. Regardless of duration, the spell never counts as an "on" spell.

*Cost:* 5 per cubic yard (twice for heavy metals, such as iron or lead; minimum 10) to create from nothingness.

*Prerequisite:* Stone to Metal.

### Item

Staff or wand. *Energy cost to create:* 500.

## Essential Metal

### Regular

Creates the magical essence of Metal. Essential Metal is three times as strong (HP and DR) as iron, and a framework or beam of Essential Metal supports three times as much weight. This metal is also lighter and brighter than ordinary metals, having many of the properties of orichalcum.

*Duration:* Permanent until dispelled or destroyed. The GM concerned about this spell's economic impact can give this spell a shorter duration (time frames of one hour to one day are recommended), and make permanent durations cost 10 times the energy. Regardless of duration, the spell never counts as an "on" spell.

*Cost:* 12 per cubic yard.

*Time to cast:* 30 seconds.

*Prerequisites:* Six Metal spells.

### Item

Staff. Usable only by mages. *Energy cost to create:* 500.

## Flesh to Metal

### Regular; Resisted by HT

This spell "petrifies" a living being as a metal statue. Note that this is an all-or-nothing deal; a being cannot be partially converted to metal.

*Duration:* Permanent, until reversed with a Metal to Flesh spell.

*Cost:* 20, plus 4 for every Size Modifier above 0.

*Time to cast:* 5 seconds, plus 1 second for every Size Modifier above 0.

*Prerequisites:* Magery 2 and Create Metal.

### Item

Wand or staff. Usable only by mages. *Energy cost to create:* 1,000. The item must touch the victim for the spell to work.

## Identify Metal

### Information

Reveals a metal's type. The caster must touch the metal to be identified. This spell also permits the caster to know whether the metal is natural or was achieved by means of conjuration or transmutation (such as Stone to Metal or Create Metal).

If the target metal is one that the caster has never encountered or heard of, the margin of success determines how much information you know: 0-1 reveals nothing; 2-3 means it's something the mage has never heard of; 4 means the GM reveals a few of its properties; 5 or more (or a critical success) means the GM tells the caster as much information on the metal's properties as the GM feels comfortable revealing.

*Example:* A TL4 mage trying to identify titanium has a chance to determine that this metal is lighter and stronger than iron, and can alloy with iron to produce a stronger steel.

This is also a Knowledge spell.

This spell has been expanded from its *Magic*, p. 182, counterpart.

*Cost:* 1.

*Prerequisite:* Seek Metal.

### Item

Staff, wand, or ring. *Energy cost to create:* 150.

## Metal to Flesh

### Regular

Reverses the effects of Flesh to Metal and brings the victim back to life (stunned). Cannot be used to animate a statue that was never alive, nor can it be used on victim of Flesh to Stone. Furthermore, it cannot turn a metal ingot into a slab of beef.

*Cost:* 10.

*Time to cast:* 5 seconds.

*Prerequisite:* Flesh to Metal.

### Item

Wand or staff. Usable only by mages. *Energy cost to create:* 1,000. The item must touch the victim for the spell to work.

## Metal to Stone

### Regular

Turns any metal (excluding special metals such as orichalcum) to hard stone similar to granite. It *cannot* be used to turn metal into gemstones. For double cost, turns metal into earth.

This is also an Earth spell.

*Duration:* Permanent until dispelled or destroyed; can be dispelled by a casting of Stone to Metal. Does not count as an "on" spell for concentration purposes.

*Base Cost:* 6 per cubic yard (minimum 6).

*Prerequisites:* Stone to Metal or any four Metal spells.

### Item

Staff, wand, or jewelry. *Energy cost to create:* 400.

## Move Metal

### Regular

The mage can cause metal to hover and move around. Levitated metal moves at Move 1.

*Duration:* 10 seconds.

*Cost:* 2 per pound of metal, half to maintain.

*Prerequisite:* Shape Metal.

*I fired five Titanium Elementals at them. They're just as strong and 40% lighter. What? Hey, it's not my fault everyone else limits themselves to four elements. Some of us got passing grades in Chem.*

*– Redcloak, Order of the Stick, #423*

## METAL MAGIC AND THE WORLD USING IT

Many of these spells have the potential to produce *incredible* amounts of tin, iron, silver, and gold, all of which can affect a setting's economy in ways that may not be immediately apparent. Metals produced using spells such as Stone to Metal and Create Metal should *always* register as being generated by magical transmutation or conjuration; laws could require that precious metals created with this method be considered counterfeit. In the case of tin, which is a fairly rare metal useful at low TLs (TL1 in particular) for various alloys, this can be used to produce bronze and pewter *very* cheaply. In this and similar cases, the GM may decide that it's best for the campaign that magically produced metals are *unable* to be alloyed with naturally occurring metals.

All of the spells – new and old alike – have been given a recommended Legality Class (p. B267). This indicates an estimation for how the typical Western society at any given time would treat the use of such spells. The GM should feel free to alter the LCs of the various spells to fit the setting.

### Spell Legality Classes

Spell	LC
Alloy Metal	3
Anvil Strike	1
Arrow	3
Bloody Iron	1
Blunderbuss	3
Body of Metal	2
Celestial Shotgun	2
Conjure Shield	3
Create Metal	3
Essential Metal	2
Flesh to Metal	2
Identify Metal	4
Iron Arm	3
Metal to Flesh	3
Metal to Stone	2
Metal Vision	3
Move Metal	3
Purify Metal	3
Rain of Shards	2
Restore Metal	3
Rust	2
Seek Metal	4
Shape Metal	4
Sharpen Blade	3
Smelt Ore	3
Steelwraith	2
Stone to Metal	3
Summon/Control/Create Metal Elemental	2
Transmute Metal	2
Turn Blade	3
Walk Through Metal	2

### Item

Staff or wand. Usable only by mages. *Energy cost to create:* 600.

### Purify Metal

#### Area

Removes foreign objects from metal items, including other metal objects (such as nails, screws, and rivets not essential to the item). It also closes holes made by those objects and removes any tarnish, dents, or rust.

*Base Cost:* 2.

*Time to cast:* 30 seconds.

*Prerequisite:* Restore Metal.

### Rain of Shards

#### Area

Shards of sharp metal rain down from the sky onto the area, causing 1d-1 impaling damage per second to all within it. Characters and creatures under the rain of shards take damage on their own turns; if less than an entire second is spent in the affected area, damage is halved (round down).

The spell can only be cast outdoors. Armor protects in the usual fashion. A shield with a DB of 2 or better can be held overhead in an attempt to block the bombardment. This requires two hands and a Ready action, and grants its cover DR once the shield is readied upward.

Inanimate objects, such as buildings, protect with their DR. The shards that fall from the sky disappear within five minutes of the spell ending.

*Duration:* 1 minute.

*Base cost:* 2 to cast (minimum 4). Same cost to maintain. For double base cost, the Rain of Shards does 2d-2 per second!

*Prerequisite:* Celestial Shotgun.

### Item

Wand or staff. Usable only by mages. *Energy cost to create:* 500.

### Restore Metal

#### Regular

This spell causes a rusted item to reverse its oxidation, strengthening it if it was made of iron, steel, or similar metal. Verdigrised copper is restored to its proper color, but may still need polishing. This spell reverses the effects of the Rust spell (below), as well as any HT loss due to poor or no maintenance. If Malfuction scores are used (p. B407), each casting increases the Malf. by 1, to the maximum permitted by the TL.

This is also a Making and Breaking spell.

*Duration:* Instant; may be countered by casting Rust.

*Base Cost:* 5 per pound of metal.

*Prerequisite:* Rust.

### Item

Staff, wand, or jewelry. *Energy cost to create:* 400. The item must touch the target for the spell to work.



## Rust

### Regular; resisted at HT-4

This spell causes metals such as iron and steel to rust away at an accelerated rate, weakening the metals. The metal in question must be of a type that weakens in time with exposure to oxygen; copper, for example, changes color to green but does not weaken. This spell may be countered by casting Restore Metal.

Items made of metal that are subjected to this spell take -2 to their HT per casting, halved for items with very little metal in them. Weapons and armor have their quality reduced one level per casting, from *very fine* to *fine*, or from *good* to *cheap*.

This is also a Making and Breaking spell.

*Base Cost:* 5 per pound of metal, minimum 3. An additional 3 energy per additional -2 to the item's HT.

*Prerequisites:* Magery 1 and Create Metal.

### Item

Staff, wand, or jewelry. *Energy cost to create:* 400. The item must touch the target for the spell to work.

## Seek Metal

### Information

Identifies the direction and approximate distance of the nearest significant quantity of metal. Use the long-distance modifiers (*Magic*, p. 14). Any particular types or known quantities of metal may be excluded if the caster specifically mentions them before beginning.

This is also a Knowledge spell.

*Cost:* 3.

*Time to cast:* 10 seconds.

### Item

Wand, staff, or jewelry. If seeking out a specific type of metal, an ounce of the given metal must be attached to the item. Some items have a slot that permits changing the sliver of metal involved, while items designed to seek specific metals include the metal in their construction. *Energy cost to create:* 60.

## Sharpen Blade

### Regular

Weapons and tools such as swords, knives, and axes get dull over time. While regular maintenance can keep the blade sharp, this spell sharpens the blade in a hurry.

*Cost:* 2. Double the cost to provide a temporary (until the next hit) armor divisor of (2) to cutting and impaling damage. The temporary armor divisor does *not* stack with other armor divisors, such as those from the superfine, vibroblade, or hyperdense options from *GURPS Ultra-Tech*, pp. 163-164; the Penetrating Weapon enchantment from *GURPS Magic*, p. 63; or the Penetrating Strike skill from *GURPS Power-Ups 1: Imbuements*, p. 9.

*Prerequisite:* Shape Metal.

### Item

(a) Staff, or wand. *Energy cost to create:* 500. (b) Whetstone; running the whetstone across a blade once instantly sharpens it. Running it twice provides the temporary armor divisor. *Energy cost to create:* 750.

## Smelt Ore

### Regular

This spell extracts a quantity of metal ore into an ingot of the given metal. The stone portions of the ore crumble to dirt around the ingot.

This is also a Making and Breaking spell.

*Cost:* 3 per pound of metal extracted (minimum 3).

*Time to cast:* 10 seconds.

*Prerequisites:* Shape Metal and Shape Earth.

### Item

Wand or staff. *Energy cost to create:* 300.

## Stone to Metal

### Regular

This spell turns an item made of stone into a simple metal, such as copper or iron. For double energy cost, turns an item of earth or clay into metal.

This is also an Earth spell.

*Duration:* Permanent until dispelled or destroyed; can be dispelled by a casting of Metal to Stone. The GM worried

about this spell's economic impact can give this spell a shorter duration (time frames of one hour to one day are recommended), and make permanent durations cost 10 times the energy. Regardless of duration, the spell never counts as an "on" spell for concentration purposes.

*Base Cost:* 3 per cubic yard (minimum 3) of material to be transmuted.

*Prerequisites:* Magery 2 and Shape Metal.

### Item

Staff, wand, or jewelry. *Energy cost to create:* 300.

## Summon (Metal) Elemental, Control Metal Elemental, Create (Metal) Elemental

See *Magic*, pp. 27-28.

These spells are available if the college is treated as an Elemental college, similar to that of Air, Earth, Fire, Water, and occasionally Plant (often called the Elemental College of Wood in such treatments). In some settings, a single Summon Metal Elemental or Create Metal Elemental spell is suitable for any metal elemental. In others, each particular metal requires a different Summon or Create spell. If the latter approach is taken, Control Metal Elemental should only require knowledge of two Summon (Metal) Elemental spells, but should work on all types of metal elemental.

See p. 28 for sample metal elementals.

## Transmute Metal

### Regular

This spell converts one type of metal into another: lead to gold, silver to tin, copper to iron, etc. Note that alloys such as bronze, brass, pewter, and steel are possible with this spell, but this spell is unable to affect or inflict rust. Should the caster let the spell lapse, the metal reverts to its original form.

*Duration:* 1 minute.

*Cost:* 6 per cubic foot of metal converted, half that to maintain.

*Prerequisites:* Create Metal and Alloy Metal.

### Item

Staff, wand, or jewelry. *Energy cost to create:* 400.

## Walk Through Metal

### Regular

Pass through metal as if it were air. With this spell, the subject could walk through the metal grates of a dungeon's cell doors or the large metal door of a bank vault. This spell does not open a passage so that others can follow. It also doesn't reveal what is on the other side. If the caster also knows Earth to Air, he automatically has breathing air during his journey, at no energy cost; otherwise, he must hold his breath.

Should the spell end before the subject regains the open air, he is buried in the metal, as if entombed in it. He is not

automatically harmed, but will suffocate (see *Suffocation*, p. B436) if he cannot escape.

*Duration:* 10 seconds.

*Cost:* 6 to cast, 6 to maintain.

*Prerequisites:* Four Metal spells.

### Item

Cloak, footwear, or silver jewelry. *Energy cost to create:* 1,200.

## SAMPLE METAL ELEMENTALS

Building on the standard metal elemental template from p. 9 of *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 8: Summoners*, each of the seven "classical" metals – iron, tin, lead, copper, silver, gold, and mercury (also known as quicksilver) – has its own lens. Other metal elementals – such as zinc, titanium, aluminum, nickel, cobalt, and uranium – are possible in many settings; adapt the existing lenses to create these variations.

## Metal Elemental

40 points

<b>ST:</b> 10 [0]	<b>HP:</b> 10 [0]	<b>Speed:</b> 4.50 [0]
<b>DX:</b> 8 [-40]	<b>Will:</b> 6 [0]	<b>Move:</b> 4 [0]
<b>IQ:</b> 6 [-80]	<b>Per:</b> 6 [0]	
<b>HT:</b> 10 [0]	<b>FP:</b> 10 [0]	<b>SM:</b> -1

**Dodge:** 7      **Parry:** 7 (DX)      **DR:** 4 [20]

**Punch (8):** 1d-3 crushing.

**Advantages:** Doesn't Breathe [20]; Doesn't Eat or Drink [10]; Doesn't Sleep [20]; Immunity to Metabolic Hazards [30]; Injury Tolerance (Homogenous) [40]; Pressure Support 3 [15]; Vacuum Support [5].

**Features:** Susceptible to elemental-control magic.

### Lenses

*Copper, Gold, or Silver Elemental* (+64 points): Add DR 8 (Absorption, Goes to FP, +80%; Limited, Electricity, -20%) [64]

*Iron Elemental* (+60 points): Increase ST to 15 [50] and DR to 6 [30].

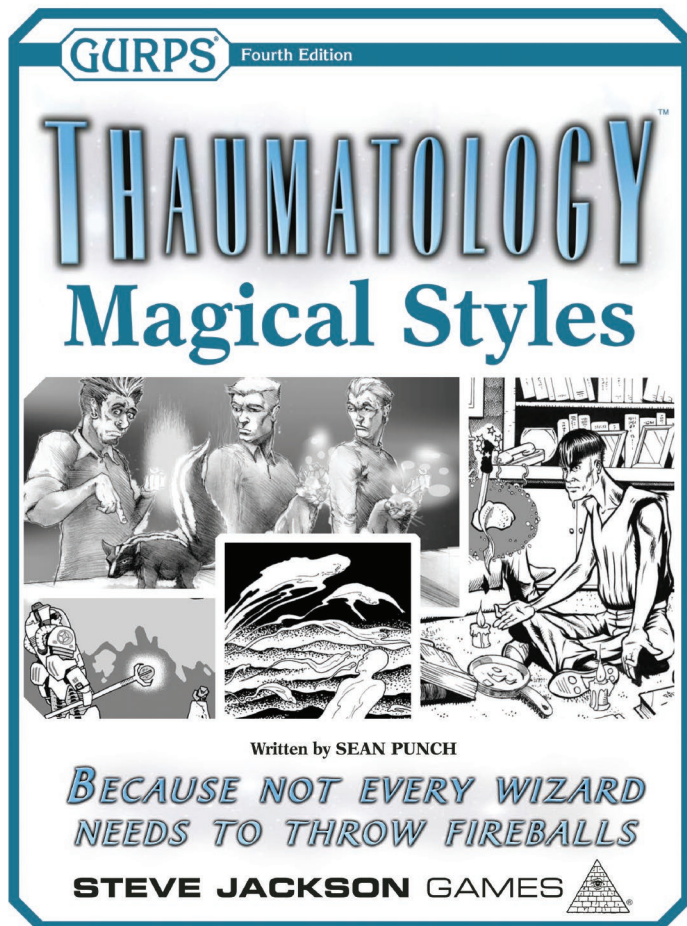
*Lead Elemental* (+10 points): Add Magic Resistance 5 [10].

*Mercury Elemental* (+10 points): Change Injury Tolerance from Homogenous [40] to Diffuse [100]; reduce ST to 5 [-50].

*Tin Elemental* (-21 points): Reduce ST to 8 [-20], increase HP by 2 [4], and reduce DR by 1 [-5]

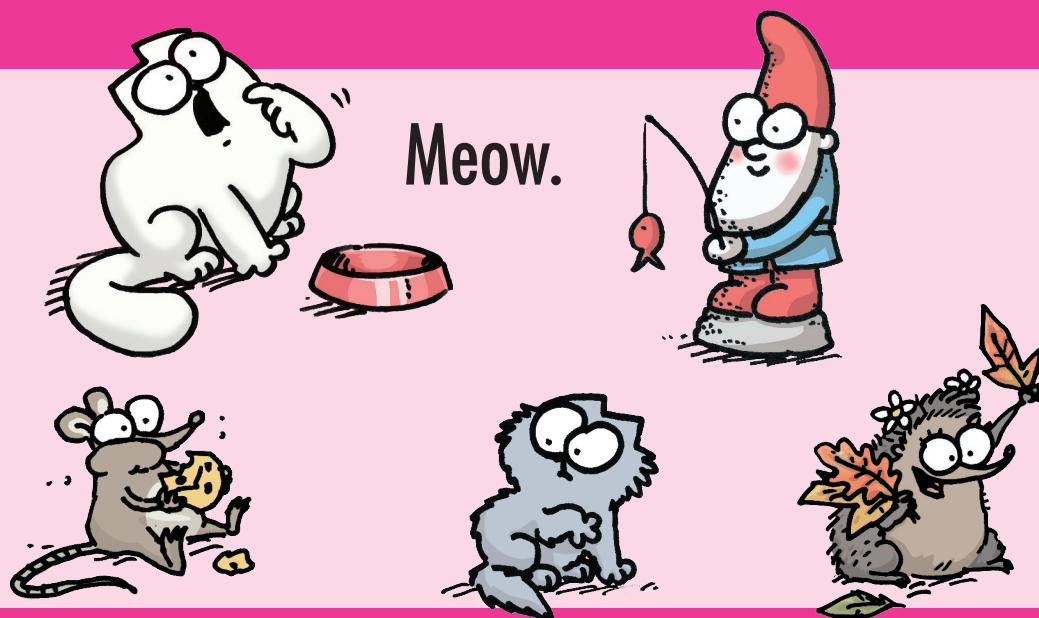
## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ted Brock got his gaming start as an online *Rifts* Game Master (originally skipping playing altogether), and migrated into *GURPS* in the late 1990s, just a few years before Fourth Edition's release. He is a native Pennsylvanian who has lived in a number of states over the last 25 years, and currently resides in Laurens, South Carolina. He would like to thank the members of the *Pyramid* Write Club, but the first rule of Write Club is, "Don't talk about Write Club."



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# CODEx DUELLO

BY CHRISTOPHER R. RICE

*"You should **never** have challenged me," said the figure in the black robe as he stared at his opponent a dozen yards away.*

*"You killed six people because they were 'in your way.' That's all the reason I need," said the woman in the white robes.*

*"You have no proof of this, and you know it. Stop fabricating such stories," Black said as he fiddled with the handle of his wand. The solid yew stick had silver filigree and a dozen black opals in a geometric pattern designed to bolster his already potent necromantic powers.*

*"That's what this duel is to decide," said White, gesturing to the other assembled mages, "here among our brethren at the Witching Hour. When the clock strikes midnight, we dance, you murdering bastard."*

How do mages settle duels? Is it fire and flash, or a contest of wits? Is it a duel of shapes, where the contestants quickly change form until one of them overpowers the other with a superior form? What if it's a duel of specialized magic?

This article provides a framework for resolving such contests, with general rules for any magic system and specific rules for established ones. This system is about civilized wizards dueling to resolve differences – not destroying entire cities or other epic fights – even if they have no combat spells. Such duels would test the magical might of each participant *without* inflicting massive collateral damage.

The concept of Magical ST was inspired by *GURPS Martial Arts: Technical Grappling's* Trained ST.

## THE ART OF THE DUEL

A mage duel consists of three aspects: the Challenge (below), where the aggrieved party makes the invitation to battle; the Duel (below), the actual combat; and the Satisfaction (p. 32), the conclusion of the duel for one party or the other.

### THE CHALLENGE

Any mage (or in some worlds, *anyone*) can issue a challenge to another mage. The mage's reason for why he's aggrieved should be legitimate (or at least mildly authentic). Those who go around issuing challenges willy-nilly tend to be taken less seriously. To issue a challenge in a dignified way, so that the other party cannot evade, roll against Games (Mage Dueling) or Savoir-Faire (Magical). See pp. 34-35 for both skills. In societies with Magical Rank (*GURPS Social Engineering*, p. 15) or where Magical Rank replaces Status, this roll *adds* the modifier if the level of both parties are not the same.

Once the challenge has been issued, the challenged gets to pick the type of duel (p. 31), its time and place, and whether lethal or nonlethal. Most mage duels are nonlethal (p. 31), though especially angry or desperate challengers might demand a duel to the death. Lethal duels *must* be agreed upon by both parties.

These rules don't preclude three (or more!) duelists, though such sorcerous "stand-offs" are typically uncommon.

### THE DUEL

There are three stages to most formal duels. First, a Partition must be raised by the participants, possibly with the help of their seconds (if any) or any witnesses. Second, a period of time occurs (often known as "the Rush" in magical dueling

jargon) where the mages may size each other up, engage in brief efforts to intimidate each other, or even back out of the duel and accept whatever social or legal penalties might descend. Finally, the duel proper begins.

### *The Gathering*

All participants must take time before the duel to form a magical barrier called a *Partition*. The Partition is an anti-magical barrier that is created by both the will of the duelists and their intent. Duelists either raise the Partition themselves or have it raised. Since the Partition, once created, functions as a spell that melds the will of the duelists with their own magic, without sufficient intent to harm or kill the opponent, a Partition cannot be raised. Witnesses or seconds may funnel power into the Partition, but it will only work if the duelists are sincere about their forthcoming fight.

It takes one minute and a Will-based roll against Games (Mage Dueling), at default if necessary, to create a proper Partition.

Partitions both protect onlookers and concentrate the magical energies, enabling the use of new offensive and defensive options (see *The Duel*, pp. 31-32). The Partition itself completely negates any magic from entering *or* exiting (treat this as *Static*, *GURPS Powers*, p. 98, except it only stops magical effects from entering or leaving the area).

Leaving the Partition results in immediate forfeiture of the duel for nonlethal duels. For lethal duels, the Partition "hardens" and becomes impossible to penetrate until at least one of the participants is dead or dying. Optionally, the GM can rule that contact with the Partition inflicts 1 point of injury on the subject.

## Size of the Partition

The area in yards of radius covered by the Partition is equal to the highest Will among all participants plus *all* levels of Magery. Any mage who is observing the duel can become a participant for the purposes of determining the size of the Partition. See also *Symbol Drawing* (p. 35) for another way to increase this radius.

## Permanent Partitions

In some campaign worlds, the dueling field for mages might be specially prepared with magical glyphs or sigils designed to create a larger or more powerful Partition. For mage guilds, this also might involve the *permanent* creation of such an area.

The costs of such an enchantment usually is irrelevant to PCs. Should a price be needed, each *yard* of a permanent, basic dueling ground's radius costs 10% of Average Starting Wealth for the campaign. A permanent ground allows Partitions to be created in half the normal time as long as they do not exceed the radius of the prepared area.

For *half* cost, the dueling ground can be of cheap quality or quickly improvised, but gives -1 to *all* rolls to conjure a Partition. For *five* times cost, the area provides +1 to such rolls. For 200× cost, it offers +2, and for 100× times cost, it gives +TL/2 (minimum of +3).

## The Rush

Before the duel begins, each mage locks eyes with the other and studies him, trying to both size up his opponent and intimidate him to quit. This is a Quick Contest of Will (though Mental Strength or Intimidation may be substituted, if better). The winner adds a bonus to his Basic Speed during the *first* round of combat equal to (margin of success × 0.25). The winner isn't actually speeding up; rather, this increase is a combination of his foe's moment of indecision, temporary loss of confidence, etc. If wands, rods, staves, and other "wizardly" equipment are important to the campaign setting, see *Wands at High Noon* (p. 35). The following modifiers apply to this roll.

*Rush Modifiers:* Fearlessness; +5 each for Indomitable and Unfazeable; the better fighter gets +1 per three levels by which his best combat skill exceeds his opponent's. If you have a Magical Style Familiarity (*GURPS Thaumatology: Magical Styles*, p. 20) your opponent doesn't, add a noncumulative +1. Add a further +1 if you also have Spell Duelist (*Magical Styles*, p. 31). Reputation can go either way. For instance, -2 for being a ruthless killer would give +2 in lethal duels, but +2 for being merciful might give -2. In some settings Magical Rank, Status, and other reaction modifiers apply.

At this point either duelist may forfeit without fighting, in which case proceed to the Satisfaction portion of the duel; otherwise, proceed to the Duel itself. For lethal duels, it may be impossible to forfeit and thus the duel only ends if one of the mages dies! This must be decided on before the duel is fought.

## The Duel

Mage duels can be either *nonlethal* (the most common) or *lethal*. Nonlethal last until one of the participants yields, physically cannot continue, or falls unconscious. Lethal duels last until one of the participants dies. Both forms use the normal combat rules from the **Basic Set**.

Duel types can be *close-range* (all spells must be used in melee combat or within five yards), *short-range* (range penalties are at -1/yard), or *long-range* (standard range penalties apply, p. B550).

Attacks and defense don't use FP, though duelists can utilize Extra Effort normally to increase an attack's capabilities.

## Attacks

When fighting a nonlethal mage duel, participants don't rely on their standard spells. Instead, each duelist has a *Magical ST* (mST) equal to the individual's Will plus Magery plus a bonus from a relevant skill (see *Fighting Fit*, below, for the bonus value). Use this mST for the purpose of determining *Basic Damage* (pp. B15-16).

## FIGHTING FIT

When determining someone's mST (see *Attacks*, above), add a bonus based on certain skills: Mental Strength, Sports (Mage Dueling), Meditation, or Thaumatology. (The GM may add other skills or permit the bonus to be based on spells if desired.) The chart below lists the bonuses each skill provides; the person only gets the single *best* bonus!

*Example:* If you have Mental Strength at IQ+4, add +1 to mST. If you have Meditation at IQ+4, add +3. If you have *both* at IQ+4, only add the highest bonus (+3) to your mST, not both (+4).

Skill	Attribute+1	Attribute+2	Attribute+4	Attribute+7	Attribute+10	Each +3 Skill
Mental Strength*	—	—	+1	+2	+3	+1
Sports (Mage Dueling)†	—	+1	+2	+3	+4	+1
Meditation or Thaumatology‡	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5	+1

\* Use this line for any Easy skill appropriate for the magic system (e.g., Singing for bards).

† Use this line for any Average or Hard skill appropriate for the magic system (e.g., Symbol Drawing for symbol magic).

‡ Use this line for any Hard or Very Hard skill appropriate for the magic system (e.g., Ritual Magic for spirit-assisted magic).

Attacks can cause damage, in which case they do Thrust damage equal to the duelist's mST. Attacks can also be used to grapple, lift objects, etc., in which case, they have a Basic Lift as appropriate to the duelist's mST. Treat the latter as Telekinesis (p. B92) with a range covering the full size of the Partition (p. 31). Lastly, attacks can inflict an appropriate Affliction (p. B35), with each point of basic damage translating as +10% worth of any listed modifier except for Heart Attack or Coma (unless it's a lethal duel). Use *Modifying Dice + Adds* (p. B269) to turn dice into a flat numerical value.

*Example: If your mST was 14, you'd inflict 1d damage if you attacked directly or could inflict up to +40% worth of Afflictions since 1d = 4 points.*

Optionally, for 2 FP, duelists can add modifiers to their damage; each 10% worth of modifiers reduces the damage inflicted by 1 point. Limitations can be added as well to offset the cost, but never give *additional* damage. Adding Melee Attack (p. B112) to create conjured weaponry lasts for Magery  $\times 3$  seconds, as long as the mage doesn't cast other spells.

Duelists attack by making a roll against DX, Innate Attack, or DX-based Sports (Mage Dueling), plus Magery. All attacks are assumed to be ranged "spells" and use the standard range penalties (p. B550), though this may change if another type of duel is used (p. 31).

## Defenses

A duelist can dodge any attack. Or he may parry, if holding a magically summoned weapon (*Attacks*, pp. 31-32), staff, wand, or similar item. If neither is a valid tactical option for whatever reason, he may instead throw up a temporary magic barrier to reduce damage; this requires a successful roll against (attack skill/2) + 3, modified by Enhanced Block (Magical), Combat Reflexes, and Enhanced Time Sense. To figure out how much damage it stops, roll thrust damage

for the defender's mST – or swing damage if he chose All-Out Defense (Increased Block). Against afflictions, this must equal or exceed the "damage" rolled by the attacker to stop it, though leveled afflictions may be reduced to a lower level (e.g., a 6-point "terrible pain" affliction would not be stopped by a 3-point barrier, but *would* be lowered to "severe pain").

## Damage

All damage is taken from FP (*not* HP) in nonlethal duels. When a duelist reaches 0 FP, he experiences the usual effects (p. B426), except he never suffers HP damage or a heart attack. Instead, he remains unconscious until he returns to 1 FP, at which point he regains consciousness. Defensive traits that protect against magical attacks function normally. In this instance, Magic Resistance or Mind Shield are effectively Damage Resistance.

Lethal duels use the same rules, but cause *HP* damage instead of FP loss. This damage can be burning, crushing, or toxic (duelist's choice). Optionally, those involved may cause *twice* as much if it's a small piercing attack, three-quarters as much if it's a cutting or large piercing attack, or *half* as much if it's corrosion, huge piercing, or impaling attack.

## THE SATISFACTION

Once the mage duel is finished and there is a clear winner, the outcome depends on the beginning stakes. If a duel was to the death, then the opponent's demise might be all that's at stake, but doesn't need to be. If the duel was fought for "honor," the winner's actions that culminated in the duel (whatever they were) are assumed to be correct. If it was over some other matter like property, law, etc., then the winner is assumed to secure whatever outcome best favors him.

There may be additional benefits for the winner, even if the duel itself does not settle the matter that provoked it. For example, this could add +4 to contested, reaction, or skill rolls (increase this to +6 if the duel was to the death) for a day. Likewise, if the duel was over a point of law, then the winner might gain +4 to his reaction rolls to persuade a jury to his side, or to Law skill rolls.

In some campaigns, winning a duel might result in a longer-lasting reaction modifier. For the next 1d weeks, winners of a mage duel have a reaction bonus of 1d-2 (minimum 0), while losers take a 1d-2 (minimum 0) penalty. Multiple wins or losses are additive, though no bonus can rise above +4 or fall below -4. This bonus applies to duelist enthusiasts and enemies or allies of the opponent. It also adds to rolls during a Rush (p. 31).

### *Magic Dueling Leagues*

The GM might wish to co-opt these rules for battles of honor to blood sports where mages (or *teams* of mages!) compete with one another. The rules for duels would stay as presented, but Sports (Mage Dueling) would become an important skill! A creative GM could even make special rules regarding positions like modern sports, "instant win" conditions, and so on. For campaigns featuring magical implements like wands or staves, the rules could become hockey-like, specifying which areas of contact are allowed and which are not (no high-staving!).

# DUELS AND EXISTING SYSTEMS

While the rules above are generic enough to be used for any campaign's magic, here are a few useful guidelines for existing systems.

## STANDARD MAGIC

*Magic* relies on the dueling rules as is, but the GM can let casters use their

*Test your mystical  
might in a duel!*

damaging or afflicting spells (or anything else the GM will allow) in a duel instead of the ones granted by the Partition.

In nonlethal duels, this means all damaging spells inflict an equivalent amount of FP loss in place of their usual damage.

Calculate mST normally, but mages can use their best spell for their skill bonus (see *Fighting Fit*, p. 31).



## RITUAL PATH MAGIC

**GURPS Thaumatology: Ritual Path Magic** offers a magical framework based on an energy-gathering model which might not provide some of the more cinematic flair associated with dueling mages. Therefore, the GM may allow non-adepts to use the adept times while within the confines of the Partition (pp. 30-31). Those who already use the adept times *ignore* the -4 penalty for hasty casting, allowing them to gather energy in one second!

Calculate mST as the higher of (10 plus Magery) or (12 plus training bonuses for Path of Magic or Thaumatology). The higher of Will or a Will-based Path of Magic can be used to conjure the Partition.

## SORCERY

**GURPS Thaumatology: Sorcery** is practically made for flashy duels between spellcasters. Magical ST (mST) is 9 + (total number of points Sorcerous Empowerment / 10) + Sorcery Talent.

In addition, the following spell is highly useful to sorcerers who often participate in mage duels.

### Dueling Shield

**Keywords:** Obvious.

**Full Cost:** 27 points for level 1 + 19 points/additional level.

**Casting Roll:** None.

**Range:** Self.

**Duration:** 30 minutes or until duel ends.

## PSYCHIC DUELS?

There's no reason why these rules can't be used for psionics instead of magic; simply replace *Magical ST* (mST) with *Psychic ST* (pST). For the purposes of damage (lifting or striking) only, psis with TK Grab can use their level of that trait if better. Those with suitable telepathic abilities can use those in duels as well (though nonlethal duels change any HP damage into FP damage instead).

For the purposes of *Fighting Fit* (p. 31), treat Expert Skill (Psionics) and any non-Psychokinetic or non-Telepathic skill as Sports (Mage Dueling). For Psychokinetic or Telepathic psionic skills, treat them as Thaumatology.

You summon a shield that helps you defend against your opponent's attacks. Each level gives you +1 to active defenses (including throwing up a temporary barrier) and +4 DR that protects you and your gear. This Protection and Warning spell can be used only while in a magical duel.

**Statistics:** Affliction 1 (HT; Accessibility, Self Only, -50%; Advantage, Dueling Shield 1, +190%; Extended Duration, 10x, +40%; Fixed Duration, +0%; Sorcery, -15%) [27]. Additional levels add further Dueling Shield to the Advantage enhancement (+190%) [+19]. **Notes:** Each level of Dueling Shield is Damage Resistance 4 (Accessibility, Mage duels only, -60%; Force-Field, +20%; Magical, -10%) [10] + Defense Bonus 1 (Accessibility, Mage duels only, -60%; Magical, -10%) [9]. Defense Bonus is from **GURPS Supers**; it is Obvious, but as this has no repercussions while within a mage duel, it is a special effect which overlaps the Accessibility.

# CHARACTER TRAITS

The following new or existing traits are important in settings that make use of the new dueling rules.

mST for determining how much a mage can lift, while Striking ST determines his mST's damage.

## ADVANTAGES

Mages may purchase dueling-only versions of advantages, including Magery; these have "Accessibility, Mage duels only, -60%" in addition to any other modifiers. This is useful for mages who can chuck powerful fireballs with ease. Consider also Ambidexterity (for dual wand wielding!), Enhanced Block (Magical) [5/level], Enhanced Parry (Magical) [5/level], Extra Attack (Accessibility, Mage duels only, -20%) [20/level], Hard to Subdue [2/level], and Mind Shield [4/level].

### Lifting ST, Striking ST

see p. B65, B88

The GM can allow particularly strong or skilled duelists to purchase a variant of Lifting ST or Striking ST to increase their mST by adding "Limited, mST, -40%." Lifting ST adds to

*Madam Mim: Want to fight?  
Want to have a wizard's duel?  
Merlin: As you wish, madam.  
— Sword in the Stone  
(1963)*

## NEW PERKS

As in **GURPS Power-Ups 2: Perks**, † marks a perk that requires specialization, while ‡ indicates one that comes in several levels that count as a perk apiece.

### Intimidating Aura‡

**Prerequisite:** Magery 1.

You may have only as many levels of this perk as you have of Magery. Add your perk level to your Intimidation rolls. For systems like Ritual Path Magic, where Magery is not a Talent, the level is limited to 4.

The GM might generalize this to other skills plausibly aided by magical ability. For example, a "Mage Sight" perk might add Magery to Observation. Each skill requires its own perk. In essence, such perks extend Magery to aid additional skills in accordance with *Smooth Talent Cost* (**GURPS Power-Ups 3: Talents**, p. 25).

## Mystical Momentum†

Each level of this perk (up to four) gives you +0.25 when determining order of initiative if you win the Quick Contest from *The Rush* (p. 31).

## Partition Mastery†

Each level of this perk (up to four) gives +2 to your Will when determining the size of the Partition (p. 31) for a duel.

## Speed of Thought

*Prerequisite:* IQ 10+.

When determining your Basic Speed for the purposes of who goes first in the order of initiative, use your IQ/2 *instead* of DX + HT/4.

## DISADVANTAGES

Duelists can have the gamut of disadvantages appropriate for mages in the campaign setting, but a few suitable ones includes Bloodlust [-10\*], Bad Temper [-10\*], Delusion (“I’m a world-class duelist!”) [-10], Enemy (lesser known duelists or rival) [varies], Odious Personal Habit (Only duels to the death) [-5], Overconfidence [-5\*], and Reputation [varies].

As an optional rule, the GM may permit certain disadvantages to have a self-control number (p. B120). Suitable disadvantages include Callous, Delusions, Jealousy, Lazy, Odious Personal Habit, Paranoia, and so on.

## Code of Honor

see p. B127

Given mage dueling as a codified form of combat, a new form of Code of Honor is appropriate to campaigns featuring such trials.

*Code of Honor (Duelist’s):* Never cheat during a duel. Do everything in your power to make sure others fight fair duels. If called to be a judge or witness, be neutral and fair. If fighting a duel to the death, be neither cruel nor cowardly. Respect your opponents even if they show you no respect. -5 points.

## Odious Personal Habit

see p. B130

For mages who fight duels only to increase their reputation and standing, Odious Personal Habit (Gloryhound) is worth -10 points. When combined with Overconfidence, it can represent an overweening and dangerous pride. For mages who *only* duel to the death, Odious Personal Habit (Lethal duels only) is worth -5 points.

## Social Stigma

see p. B127

In some campaign settings, particularly inept mages might not be able to create a Partition, be bad at the Rush, and so on. For such mages, purchase a quirk – “Inept Duelist” – and specialize by a particular aspect. For that aspect, they suffer -4 to all rolls and if a skill can be used for it (e.g., Mental Strength or Intimidation instead of Will for the Rush) then they cannot use that skill, even if it would give them a better skill level! If a mage is bad at *all* aspects of a duel, he should take Social Stigma (Ignorant) (p. B155) instead. This gives him -2 to all reaction rolls against other mages *and* gives the -4 to rolls as for Inept Duelist.

## SKILLS

While not specifically listed, Thaumatology is an important skill for all mages. The following are specifically useful for games featuring mage duels.

## Games†

see p. B197

Campaigns with mage duels or magical team-combat sports may use the following specialty for the Games skill.

*Mage Dueling:* You know the proper rules, constraints, and famous duels between mages appropriate for your society. The skill also covers the correct manners to issue, accept, or decline a duel. For duels requiring judges or witnesses, this represents the necessary knowledge to adjudicate such events.

## Savoir-Faire†

see p. B218

Campaigns where mages have stratified societies or guilds require a new specialty.

*Magical:* You know the proper conduct, rules, and etiquette of magical society (for this setting). At minimum, this skill includes proper forms of address, widely known laws regarding magic and its legal use, and how to apply for apprenticeships with other mages. It must also be used if you want to impersonate someone with higher or lower levels of Magery than you actually have!

## Sports†

see p. B222

Those whose campaigns feature mage duels or similar may wish to use the following specialty for the Sports skill.

*Black’s eyes went wide as he realized who he was dueling, but it was too late by then. The clock struck twelve, and a bolt of power flew so hard and so fast that he didn’t even know he was dead until he hit the ground.*

*Mage Dueling:* This specialty can be used to recall the basic rules for dueling and is used instead of DX when attacking with spells in a mage duel. It also can be used to physically attack with a wand, rod, staff, or similar “wizardly” implement. Likewise, it can be used to parry such attacks or perform a magical parry or block (p. 32) at (skill/2) + 3.

## Symbol Drawing

see p. B224

Use the following specialty for Partitions (pp. 30-31).

*Dueling Glyphs:* You’ve studied the arcane symbols associated with mage duels. This gives you special insight into the creation of such areas (including permanent ones). When you prepare a site that will be used to create a Partition, roll Symbol Drawing (Dueling Glyphs) and add half your margin of success to determine its final size, round up.

## NEW EQUIPMENT

The following equipment could be germane to campaigns featuring mage duels, but could be generalized to any campaign with magic (especially the rules for magical foci).

Some gear notes a “cost factor” (CF). To find final cost, multiply list cost by (1 + total CF); e.g., a magical dueling dummy that gives -20% to training times (+19 CF) and counts as a teacher with Teaching-12 (+19 CF) is 1 + 19 + 19 = 39 times cost. Weight effects multiply together; e.g., that dummy has 1.2 times weight.

## Magical Foci (TL<sup>^</sup>)

Fiction is filled with magic users who rely on wands, staves, rods, jewelry, and other “focusing” objects. Such objects give as many benefits of having a staff (see *Staffs* in *GURPS Magic*, p. 13) as possible considering the form. They also give +1 on all magic used ceremonially (including duels, which are a distinct form of ceremonial magic). The exact definition of ceremonial magic depends on the magic system. For standard magic, this means it uses the rules for *Ceremonial Magic* (p. B238), while for Ritual Path Magic, it might mean any spell cast using the non-adept times.

Foci have a cost equal to the base object plus 1/2 the Average Starting Wealth of the campaign. Higher quality foci can give a bonus to spellcasting. For +2 to ceremonial magic, add +4 CF; for +3, add +19 CF, and for +4, add +99 CF. No higher levels are possible, though rumors of forgotten relics providing +5 or more persist. Weight is as for the base object.

## Training Equipment (TL<sup>^</sup>)

*Magical Dueling Dummy (TL<sup>^</sup>):* A life-sized model used to train a mage in various dueling styles. Only one person at a time can practice with the dummy. Higher quality dummies reduce the time needed for *Improvement Through Study* (pp. B292-294): -10% for +9 CF or -20% for +19 CF. For an additional +19 CF, the GM can allow the dummy to have a “semi-sapient” awareness, giving it a Teaching of 12 for improving mage-dueling skills. This increases the weight by an additional

## WANDS AT HIGH NOON

*The Dresden Files*, the *Harry Potter* series, *Lord of the Rings*, and countless other media feature wizards using traditional “magical” accoutrements like staves, rods, or wands as a way to bring more control to their powers. In some campaigns, if dueling etiquette requires that the participants start with their magical tools “sheathed,” the GM can allow a new Fast-Draw specialty. Higher quality items give a bonus to Fast-Draw rolls.

## Fast-Draw

see p. B194

In settings where a mage makes use of a physical item to focus his power or assist the casting, a new specialty is available.

*Wand:* Lets you ready a wand, staff, rod, focusing crystal, or similar paraphernalia instantly for the purposes of spellcasting. This gives you any usual bonuses your magic system bestows for having such an item. It also provides a bonus to other rolls for the Rush (p. 31) equal to one-third the margin of success on the Fast-Draw roll. This covers the *mundane* aspects of using such equipment as well, e.g., you can use Fast-Draw (Wand) to ready a staff for physical combat.

20%. If the GM likes, each additional +10 CF can raise this skill level by one. The GM sets the upper limit, but 12 + TL/2 (round up) is appropriate for most settings. The weight multiplier increases by +0.2 per +1 to skill after 12 (e.g., a dummy with a 14 skill has a weight multiplier of 1.4). Other training metrics like electronics, pressure gauges, etc. are included for free at the appropriate TL. Cost is equal to half the Average Starting Wealth and weight is 200 lbs. (100 lbs. at TL8 or higher).

*Training Gear (TL<sup>^</sup>):* This includes at least one dueling dummy (above), targets for practice, magical-strength indicators and training “weights,” and other such useful teaching equipment. This permits multiple students to be taught at the same time by a single teacher or allows the trainees to face off against each other for *Self-Teaching* (p. B293). Higher quality training gear uses the rules for a magical dueling dummy (above), but the time reduction is for all students. Cost is equal to twice the Average Starting Wealth and weight is 500 lbs.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Christopher R. Rice once fought a duel of wits with a Sicilian while death was on the line – turns out it’s easier than a ground war in Asia, but not by much. From Portsmouth, Virginia, he’s eking a living out of writing (somehow). Of course, if he’s not writing about *GURPS*, he’s blogging about it. Visit his site “Ravens N’ Pennies” ([www.ravensnpennies.com](http://www.ravensnpennies.com)) for more *GURPS* goodies. He wishes to thank L.A. and his gaming group, the Headhunters; Antoni Ten Monró; and Beth “Archangel” McCoy, the “Sith Editrix” for being most excellent sounding boards.



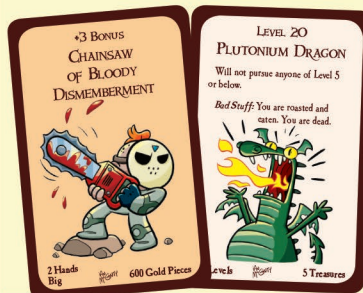
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# RANDOM THOUGHT TABLE

## THE POWER OF A GOOD REPUTATION

BY STEVEN MARSH, *PYRAMID* EDITOR

Magic is a strange and ethereal thing. It defies all attempts at quantification, and we are but helpless to look upon it and gaze in wonder.

Aww, who're we kidding? We play roleplaying games! If we can quantify "How much does Bob like Ted?" and "What're the odds of failure for this nonexistent warp drive?" then shackling the effervescent forces of the universe is a trifling.

In fact, given how much tends to be quantified in most roleplaying games, one of the really easy ways to come up with new and interesting magical systems is to take an existing magic system – which, generally, has *some* quantified aspect to it – and then associate it with something else quantifiable. This can be a real-world quality or – since we're talking games – some other aspect of the game line.

Here, then, is one example of how to smash two game-codified ideas together to form something new and . . . well, *magical*.

*Fame, it's not your brain,  
it's just the flame  
That burns your change . . .  
– David Bowie, "Fame"*

### WHEN THE COSMOS KNOWS YOU, YOU KNOW THE COSMOS

In most settings where magic is known, powerful magicians are famous (or infamous). This makes sense; the world would probably keep tabs on someone who can cause opposing armies to burst into flames.

But what if the relationship assumed here is exactly wrong, and reality is actually the reverse of what is being causally

inferred? What if – instead of people becoming famous for being powerful magicians – people become powerful magicians because people believe in their fame and power?

There is already some precedent for this in the real world. Some of the world's most-popular stage magicians are often performing tricks that are pretty well-known, both amid the magic community and among larger audiences. There may be variations or combinations of themes, but what will often set two acts apart is showmanship and skill – and, sometimes, the reputation of the magician. After all, if you spent \$95 for a Vegas seat for an A-list magician, you're probably more inclined to think that they must *somehow* be worth it compared to the \$8 entertainer performing at the hotel bar by the airport.

So, what if magic in a world is tied to one's popularity? In other words, magic is possible, but only if people think that you (and you specifically) can create it?

Obviously, that leads to a bit of a chicken-and-egg problem. How do I prove I have magic if that magic is made possible by people seeing me prove it? But that's not as difficult to overcome as it may seem. Like so many things in the world, you just need to fake it 'til you make it. In such a setting, there may be a bridge between the skills of a stage magician and the might of a full-fledged wizard, with many magicians using the former to augment their reputation until they can attain the powers of the latter.

How a person augments their reputation is up to them; all the cosmos requires is that the person is believed by a large enough portion to possess magical powers. This can be done by stagecraft trickery, fan-base bribery, or even claiming another magician's actions as one's own (either willingly or duplicitously).

It may seem that such a setting would require this underlying truth of magic to be a secret, but that's probably not the case. After all, how many people in the real world have billed themselves as being "real" psychics, not like those other fakes? Or how many people have had a reputation for real magical power, despite most evidence to the contrary?



Of course, in such a world, once you get your foot in the door and get people to start believing, it becomes much easier to *keep* your power. After all, people would probably have had an easier time believing Aleister Crowley had magical powers if large enough crowds routinely saw him fling around fireballs.

## AUDIENCE OF ONE

So, with fame-based magic, if you can only perform magic if others believe in you, what happens when you're trying to do magic alone?

There are two possible answers.

- *"I'm my worst critic."* – The magician can perform magic in private, provided his Magery and Reputation would permit it normally. In this case, any mental disadvantages that would adversely affect one's own perception of one's Reputation – Low Self-Image, Manic-Depressive, etc. – also have the possibility of short-circuiting the effect.

- *"I need an audience!"* – You simply can't perform magic without someone else around to marvel at you, which would explain why so many magicians maintain coteries.

This should be a setting-wide switch, depending on the campaign. Obviously the latter is much more limiting, but it may be well-suited for many campaigns.

## THE FAME GAME

Now that we have a broad idea – "reputation equals magic" – we can start looking for a way to tie it into quantified aspects of the game. **GURPS** makes this trivial, since magic is well-codified, and so is Reputation.

There are several ways to make this happen. For our purposes, we consider the standard **GURPS Magic** system, but it should be straightforward to adapt this to any other magic system in **GURPS**.

Fame-based magic is dependent on the belief of others *instead* of being tied to mana. Fame-based mages can cast spells in no-mana zones, and they ignore every countermeasure from the Ward spell to the Static (Magic) trait; to stop them from casting, influence or scare away their audience!

A person or group must know your Reputation for you to affect magic in front of them. This means that *all* levels of Magery are affected by "people affected" and "frequency of recognition." If the group in front of which the magician is performing doesn't know who the magician is (as determined by the "people affected" and the "frequency of recognition"), then the magician can't perform magic, period. In this case, the audience needs to be at least 75% people who are swayed by the Reputation (not counting the magician); that is, a magician can use real magic in front of one person who hasn't heard of him if there are three other people in the room who are influenced by his Reputation.

In addition, a caster's Magery level is dependent on his Reputation. In a setting allowing up to Magery 3, that person requires Reputation +1 for Magery 0, +2 for Magery 1, +3 for Magery 2, and +4 for Magery 3. A higher cap necessitates tweaking these values; e.g., if Magery 6 is available, consider

Reputation +1 for Magery 0, +2 for Magery 1-2, +3 for Magery 3-4, and +4 for Magery 5-6. If the caster's Reputation drops, so does his Magery (temporarily).

Invisible spells still require a Reputation, even if the magician isn't making it publicly known. It is the belief that he can do these effects that makes it possible.

Generally, Reputation is required for anyone within the range of the spell effect. For example, any detection magic requires a 75% majority of those in the affected area to have awareness of the magician's Reputation. (Knowing that the all-seeing magician can see into your soul is a real leg up on actually letting him see into your soul.)

These rules are perhaps most interesting in a setting where Reputation can undergo radical swings, and where magicians need to keep their names in the limelight in a "what have you blown up for me lately" world.

The core is straightforward, but it can be tweaked in any number of ways. For example, maybe all Reputation has to be tied to specific Colleges; someone with a Reputation +4 as a "known Fire mage" still can't perform Water magic until he can somehow get a foothold into that Reputation. Similarly, these rules allow for magicians who perform for selected communities. Thus, faith healers can cast magic for their congregations but can't do much for the outside world (unless their believers are brought along, of course), while cultists can protect themselves from outsiders but can't do much to affect larger society.

These rules assume that magic is a personal phenomenon. It's up to the GM whether an organizational Reputation – imputed or otherwise (see **GURPS Social Engineering**) – is enough to empower someone. If so, that makes organizations much more powerful and also makes these rules much less restrictive; belonging to the magician's guild would be enough itself to give you magical powers. However, this might be interesting to play with in a suitably weird campaign. Perhaps in a conspiracy-driven game, where only a few people know about the College of Dark Magic, it is the knowledge of that organization itself that gives the College their power; the heroes may spend much of their time suppressing Dark Magic efforts to spread their reputation wider, all the while being kept in the dark by their own bosses about the College's abilities. Because, in this case, being aware of the problem makes it that much more deadly.

*A man's real life is that accorded to him in the thoughts of other men by reason of respect or natural love.*

– Joseph Conrad

## ABOUT THE EDITOR

Steven Marsh is a freelance writer and editor. He has contributed to roleplaying game releases from Green Ronin, West End Games, White Wolf, Hogshead Publishing, and others. He has been editing *Pyramid* for over 10 years; during that time, he has won four Origins awards. He lives in Indiana with his wife, Nikola Vrtis, and their son.

Special thanks to Jason "PK" Levine for his **GURPS** magic.



# SHORT BURSTS

## TECH SUPPORT

BY MATT RIGGSBY

*The next edition of **Car Wars** is coming! To help prepare, **Pyramid** proudly presents this vignette, spotlighting one aspect of its bold new world. Visit [carwars.sjgames.com](http://carwars.sjgames.com) to keep abreast of the latest developments!*

\* \* \*

A gout of sparks and flame flared along the side of the sedan. It arced up like a burning wing along the edge of a pair of adjacent foamed armor plates, one of the most vulnerable spots on the car if hit from just the wrong angle.

Wen shut off the welder, switched out her heavy mask for a huge lens, and examined her handiwork with eyes and a handheld sensor. Ultrasound and magnetic signatures were nominal, and it looked smooth. Reinforcing the frame to take heavier plates wasn't ideal, but Wen couldn't afford the full-garage gantry it'd take to fab it as a single solid piece, not on what Tribe Krizz-Krash was winning. Maybe if next week-end worked out . . .

It was more a change in light than the sound that made her turn her head. Bird had come in through the door on the west side of the garage, momentarily flooding the room with the light of the setting sun. He made a laughably phoenix-like silhouette with his long legs and wave-like fringes hanging from the sleeves of his engineered-crocodile jacket. He was shaking a box excitedly. It took a moment for Wen to realize she still had her noise cancelers on. "Is that it?" she asked, removing the safety headset and sliding her tiny, grease-smeared frame out of the armored box of the car, somehow managing not to catch any of her gear.

"Yes!" Bird was exasperated.

"Then stop waving it like that!" Wen admonished. "Bring it here."

Bird put the box on the workbench, too excited to stay resentful very long. Wen couldn't stay annoyed at Bird, either, not with what she hoped they had. With the brutal delicacy of a surgeon performing a battlefield amputation, she fired up a cutting wheel

and sliced open the rigid protective case. Putting that aside, she slid the transparent inner case from the outer shell's snug padding. She and Bird bent over for a closer look, hardly breathing.

From a set of small disks held in form-fitting foam, they saw their reflections looking back at them. Wen tilted the case this way and that, studying the shifting images.

"Well?" Bird asked eventually.

"Have to run some tests," Wen nearly whispered, "but they look like the real deal. This works out, I'm never asking your cousin anything about how he does business again."

"Gonna be ready for Big Yellow?"

Wen looked over at the incomplete rig in the corner of the garage. Heavy power leads, optical fiber connections, multiple shock reducers, and tubes of pure compressed gasses. "Call Krizz-Krash. And there's a pack of moddy over in that drawer marked A-Ar. Looks like I'm not sleeping until Sunday."

### About the Author

Matt Riggsby has written over 120 articles and supplements for Steve Jackson Games.



## ABOUT *GURPS*

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