

G U R P S[®]

SPIRITS



BY STEPHEN KENSON

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

GAMING AFTER DEATH

The creatures of the Other World are all around us. Some were once alive. Some were created by human imagination. And some are completely inhuman but thirst for our souls. *GURPS Spirits* is a complete guide to the spirit realm and its inhabitants. It includes a catalog of spirits from around the world: angels, demons, djinn, dryads, ghosts, loas, manitou, raksasha, and many, many more. It is also a campaign guide for characters who see spirits, serve them, use them . . . or fight them!

Also included: an expanded version of the ritual magic rules first seen in *GURPS Voodoo*, as a system for spirit-mediated magic.

No horror roleplaying campaign is complete without a ghostly apparition, the rattle of chains in the dead of night, or a malevolent spirit wreaking havoc. And the creatures of *GURPS Spirits* can be used in many other types of campaigns, too – from the questing knights of old to the paranormal investigators of today to the galactic explorers of tomorrow!

THE SPIRITS ARE HERE . . .



STEVE JACKSON GAMES
www.sjgames.com



GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition, Revised and Compendium I: Character Creation are required to use this supplement in a *GURPS* campaign. The material in *GURPS Spirits* can be used with any rules system.

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DENIZENS OF THE OTHERWORLD

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About GURPS

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Internet. Visit us on the World Wide Web at www.sjgames.com for an online catalog, errata, updates, Q&A, and much more. *GURPS* has its own Usenet group, too: rec.games.frp.gurps.

GURPSnet. This e-mail list hosts much of the online discussion of *GURPS*. To join, e-mail majordomo@io.com with “subscribe GURPSnet-L” in the body, or point your Web browser to gurpsnet.sjgames.com.

The *GURPS Spirits* web page is at www.sjgames.com/gurps/books/spirits/.

Page References

See *GURPS Compendium I*, p. 181, for a full list of abbreviations for *GURPS* titles. Any page reference that begins with a B refers to *GURPS Basic Set Third Edition Revised*; e.g., p. B144 refers to page 144 of *Basic Set*. CI refers to *Compendium I*, CII to *Compendium II*, G to *Grimoire*, H to *Horror* Second Edition, M to *Magic* Second Edition, P to *Psionics*, R to *Religion*, and VO to *Voodoo*.

INTRODUCTION

GURPS Spirits is the continuation of work begun in a number of excellent *GURPS* books, particularly *GURPS Voodoo* and *GURPS Undead*, both of which presented information on spirits and the spirit world for *GURPS*. But the scope of both books prevented them from being guides to spirits and spiritual phenomena in general: *Voodoo* focuses on the particular campaign setting of the Shadow War, while *Undead*, not surprisingly, focuses solely on spirits like ghosts and specters. *Spirits* is a generic guide for including spirits of all kinds in your *GURPS* games – ghosts, angels, demons, elementals, faeries, and many other incorporeal beings. This book also includes an expansion of the popular ritual magic rules introduced in *GURPS Voodoo*, breaking them away from the Shadow War setting and broadening them to include spirit magic throughout history and diverse human cultures, making the system truly generic and applicable to any campaign.

Spirits contains guidelines for adding a spiritual dimension to any setting, from traditional and urban fantasy to horror and even futuristic science fiction. The spirit templates in this book can be used for NPC spirits or as player characters in a spirit-based campaign. There are also templates for mortal characters who deal with spirits, from magicians to spirit hunters and more – everything needed to make spirits a part of your *GURPS* campaigns.



Using this Book

To skip right to the rules part of the book, go to Chapter 3 for information on the abilities of spirits and how they're represented in *GURPS*. Chapter 4 has racial templates for many different kinds of spirits, allowing you to put them to use quickly. Chapter 5 has templates for mortal and spirit characters, along with new advantages, disadvantages, and skills for mortal characters. Chapter 6 has a complete system of magic for *GURPS*, ritual magic, harnessing the forces of the spirit world. To use *Spirits* as a source book, check out the information in Chapters 1 and 2 for discussions about spirits and the spirit worlds, then see Chapter 7 for how to include spirits in your campaign and some of the issues to consider regarding them. Then look over the other chapters for the rules on spirits and characters involved with them.

About the Author

Steve Kenson has been a freelance RPG writer since 1994 and has contributed to numerous game lines including FASA's *Shadowrun* and *Earthdawn*, Last Unicorn Games' *Star Trek*, White Wolf's *Aberrant* and now *GURPS*. He has also contributed many articles to *Pyramid*. *GURPS Spirits* is his first *GURPS* book. Steve has been an avid gamer since 1981. His other interests include comic books and working with a local youth group. Steve lives in Merrimack, New Hampshire with his partner, Christopher Penczak.



Prison Worlds

Some spirit worlds may be created or used as prisons and places of exile, like many versions of hell or the Phantom Zone from *Superman*. A prison world may be an inner or an outer world. Inner worlds effectively cut the prisoners off from all contact with the physical world and can have almost any conditions. Prisoners may be tortured endlessly, as in hell, or exist (literally) in limbo. A prison world might even be quite pleasant, with the exception that the inhabitants can never leave. The properties of the prison world must limit or negate spirit-travel abilities to keep prisoners there, or the prisoners must have those abilities removed or neutralized in some other way.

If the prison is an outer spirit world, the prisoners have the equivalent of the Astral Entity disadvantage (p. CI96): able to perceive the physical world but unable to touch it or communicate with anyone in it. This is an effective (and torturous) exile if the prisoners have no special abilities that allow them to reach across the barrier between worlds. Exile in a prison world might have the unexpected side effect of stimulating such abilities – the Phantom Zone criminals in *Superman* developed telepathic abilities while trapped there.

Prison worlds may also be “pocket” dimensions within another spirit world, or even the physical world, with access to the prison through a physical item, like a genie’s lamp. In some stories these dimensional pockets are quite large, even worlds unto themselves.

Prisoners with the ability to communicate with the physical world might be able to trick or convince someone in the physical world into helping them escape.

Finally, a spirit world may be fixed in nature, as solid and unchangeable to its inhabitants as the physical world is to us. In this case, it can be treated as simply an unusual setting for the campaign, although abilities might still differ there. Such spirit worlds offer the opportunity to “visit” other settings. Modern folk traveling to the spirit world might find a fantasy setting complete with alternate versions of themselves wearing ancient armor and weapons. Cyberpunks might experience a virtual reality where they are four-color superheroes. Someone in the dream world or an astral plane might experience virtually any kind of setting. Fixed spirit worlds can be considered parallel worlds, and GMs may wish to consult *GURPS Time Travel* for more information on the subject.

Entering and Leaving Spirit Worlds

Generally speaking, entering a spirit world is not a simple matter. It usually requires special training or abilities, often available only to priests, shamans, psychics, or magicians, or perhaps only to spirits. Travelers can enter a spirit world in two ways: a physical transference (actually moving from one realm to the other) or projection, where the spirit separates from the physical body to travel in a spirit world.

their special powers are considered psionic: telepathic skills for communication, the Poltergeist Effect as a kind of psychokinesis, etc. Their powers can be detected with Psi Sense (p. P24), leave a residue detectable using Signature Sniffer, and are affected by their victims' Mind Shield and Psionic Resistance.

Psionic spirits may be Astral Entities (p. CI96) or Beings of Pure Thought (p. CI34). GMs who want to treat spirits as psionic phenomena should see *GURPS Psionics*, particularly pp. P45-53. For an example of ghosts as psi entities, see *GURPS Black Ops* (p. BO100).

Ultra-Tech Spirits

In an ultra-tech campaign setting, there are some additional things to take into account for spirits. The following traits may be common for them, in which case they should be added to spirit templates:

Cyber-Rejection (-10/-25 points; p. CI81): Since they are not material beings, spirits can't have cybernetic implants, although spirits might materialize with the *appearance* of cyberware (and perhaps even some of the effects, if they have the appropriate advantages).

Primitive (-5 points per TL; p. B26): Spirits may be *very* out of touch with technology in an ultra-tech campaign, giving them little or no understanding of how it works. On the other hand, they might be just as tech-savvy as anyone else. Spirits that are actually advanced alien beings might even have the High Technology advantage!

Zeroed (10 points; p. CI32): Unless their existence is widely acknowledged, spirits aren't likely to be listed in most ultra-tech databases as anything other than myths and "strange sightings," making them effectively Zeroed.

Skills

For the most part, spirits have access to the same skills as other characters and use them in the same manner. Spirits may have access to greater knowledge about certain subjects (particularly the spirit world). If this is the case, GMs can assign a Racial Skill Bonus for certain skills, such as Occultism, Spirit Lore, and Theology. Specific spirits might have bonuses in other areas, such as nature spirits gaining a Skill Bonus with Naturalist or even Geology (appropriate for earth spirits). Other Racial Skill Bonuses (p. CI177) can be assigned as the GM sees fit.

Fine Tuning

A number of small touches can round out spirit templates and tweak them for particular campaigns.

Taboo Traits and Features

Taboo traits are trivial restrictions or limitations that make sense given the nature of spirits but don't affect template cost (in other words, count as 0-point disadvantages). *Features* are 0-point "special effects" that change how a trait or

ability works but don't impose an overall restriction, such as "Can interbreed with mortal beings." Taboo traits and features can refine and customize a spirit template to better suit the needs of the campaign.

It would be impossible to list every single 0-point trait of a spirit, so most are left implicit in order to save time and space. As a general rule, if it makes sense for a spirit to be affected differently by a particular specialized or obscure effect, the GM should simply rule that is the case and move on with the game.

Some 0-point traits of spirits that merit particular attention include the following:

Affected by spirit spells and rituals. These include Pentagram and all of the spells from Chapter 6, along with rituals of the Path of Spirit. While humans aren't affected by these things and spirits are, spirits are immune to many other spells that affect humans, so the trade-off is worth no points.

Can be turned using True Faith. While this can be quite limiting to spirits at times, mortals with True Faith are rare. Additionally, spirits might be affected only by certain faiths.

Can be detected by sensitive individuals. Mortals with advantages like Awareness and Medium can sense spirits even in their normal, invisible form. The advantages (easy communication) and disadvantages (easy detection) balance out.

No mental skills. This is a limitation primarily of servitors and mindless spirits. It is a special effect of low IQ and the Cannot Learn disadvantage and therefore worth no additional points.

Quirks

Some traits may count as very minor disadvantages, effectively "racial quirks" (p. CI177) for that type of spirit. These are traits added primarily for roleplaying and "flavor," and they should be things found among *all* spirits of that particular type, rather than individuals. Possibilities include common behaviors, likes and dislikes, a dislike of certain things listed under *Dread* (p. 41), a minor aversion to consecrated ground, a fondness for certain types of food or drink, etc.

Spirits That Aren't

Finally, there's the matter of certain beings called "spirits" that don't fit the definition in this book. Spirits are incorporeal beings that may or may not be capable of assuming physical form. Some physical beings may also be called "spirits." The Sidhe of *GURPS Celtic Myth* might be considered faerie spirits, but they are corporeal beings that live in an alternate dimension and do not have the Spirit Form advantage, so they are not spirits. The In-Betweeners of *GURPS Voodoo* are associated with the spirit world and are affected by spirit rituals, but they are always corporeal and not true spirits. Likewise, most corporeal undead (from *GURPS Undead*) have a spiritual element but are not spirits. These "psuedospirits" may have advantages, disadvantages, taboo traits, and features in common with spirits (notably being affected by spells that block or affect spirits) but, for the purposes of this book, they are not considered "true" spirits.

Habitat

Spirits of place are strongly tied to their domains. Most spirits of place cannot leave their domains without suffering ill effects. Although the spirit of each place is unique, they may exhibit similar characteristics. The GM can assume, for example, that most forest spirits are similar in ability, in the same way that most people in the campaign world are similar. The size of a spirit's domain depends on its power and influence. A spirit may oversee a single tree in a forest, a particular grove, or the entire forest. Often such spirits have a hierarchy, with more powerful spirits ruling over lesser ones.

Spirit of Place 182 points

Advantages: Alertness +3 [15]; Doesn't Fatigue [15]; Extra Fatigue 20 (only in its domain -10%) [54]; Higher Purpose (protect its domain) [5]; Speak with Animals [15]; Spirit Form (Unlimited Lifespan +30%, can use Poltergeist Effect, Possession, and Probability Alteration only in domain -10%) [120].

Disadvantages: Dependency (Domain; common, constantly) [-25]; No Extra Effort [-15]; Sense of Duty (to its domain) [-10].

Quirks, Features, and Taboo Traits: Affected by Astral Block, Repel Spirit, and Turn Spirit *except* in its domain [0]; Takes on characteristics of its domain [0].

Skills: Area Knowledge (Domain) IQ+4 [8].

Variations

Spirits of place vary depending on the places and cultures where they are found. Most often these variant spirits have Magery and spells relating to their specific domains. One College Only Magery (p. CI39) is particularly appropriate (e.g., Water Magery for river and sea spirits).

Nymphs: These are feminine spirits of natural phenomena found in Greek mythology. They are beautiful and alluring and sometimes abduct men to be their companions in the spirit world. Add Magery 1 [15]; Very Beautiful [25]; and the innate spell Charm at IQ+6 [14, includes Magery bonus] to the template above. Dryads are the spirits of trees. Naiads and nereids are the spirits of rivers and seas, respectively. 236 points.

Kami: Kami are nature spirits in the Japanese Shinto tradition. A kami is placed in charge of every natural feature in the world; they range in power from minor kami (similar to the template above) to powerful gods like Amaterasu, the kami (goddess) of the sun. More powerful kami have additional Extra Fatigue (sometimes *hundreds* of points) and many levels of Strong Will.

Regional Spirits: The domain of a spirit of place can be very large, like an entire country, or even a planet! "National" spirits like Uncle Sam in the United States or Britannia in



England may be considered spirits of place, with their entire nations as their domains. In some campaigns planets or even stars may have their own spirits watching over them. Regional spirits use the basic template above but have lots of Extra Fatigue and Strong Will, and their limitations are fewer because their domains are so vast. They also have much larger responsibilities to deal with. The -10% limitation for powers that work only in the spirit's domain could be reduced to -5% if the domain is huge; similarly, Sense of Duty (to its domain) might be worth -15 points for a huge domain such as a planet.

Spirits of Objects: Some spirits of place have *objects* as their domains rather than places. This includes particularly fine works of art, ancient weapons, mirrors, jewelry, and a wide variety of other items. In some cases the spirit is the ghost (see p. 59) of a previous owner of the item or its maker. In others it is the spirit of the item itself, "awakened" through mystical means. These spirits have abilities similar to those in the template, except that they lack Speak with Animals [-15] and have the Sounds and Visual Effects Only limitation on Spirit Form [-10], for a net -25 points. Drop the Area Knowledge (Domain) skill as well [-8]. A spirit of object will often use the Poltergeist Effect to move its object, either to protect it or to make it function (animating a sword to fight), and it can use Possession on anyone who touches its domain object (creating legends of haunted or "willful" weapons and other items). Its Probability Alteration may cause its object to fall into certain hands (in the form of a blessing or curse) or affect any rolls involving the object. A PC who possesses an object with such a spirit should take the object as an Ally or Patron. (He does not get points for it as an Enemy if it is nasty, though – after all, he could just chuck the thing.) 149 points.

Thought Form

Other Names: Artificial Elemental, Egregore, Servitor, Spirit-Form, Tulpa (Tibetan).

Type: Human.

Motivation: Free-Willed, Servitor, Mindless.

Thought forms are a fairly modern concept of spirits, although they could explain some ancient spirit ideas. A thought form is a spirit created by a person or persons with psychic ability, either as a short-term agent or as an independent being. Thought forms can be created deliberately through effort and training or accidentally by someone with a strong emotional focus and the potential to do so. This is similar to the psychic phenomenon of RSPK (see p. P47) and may even be the same thing.

Temporary thought forms exist to perform particular tasks, such as altering probability in a certain way, passing on a message, and so forth. These thought forms aren't even really entities – more like mindless, spiritual "robots" running a particular program. They usually expire when their tasks are complete. They don't really have game stats, but thought forms might be one of the mechanisms of ritual magic (see Chapter 6 for more information on ritual magic). Those affected by a ritual might sense the presence of a thought form nearby, although they may not know what the feeling implies.

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The body of literature on spirits is vast; this list barely scratches the surface. It covers material particularly useful in the creation of this book and inspirational material for GMs interested in a *Spirits* campaign. Older public-domain works (like those of Dante and Milton) are also available from "Project Gutenberg" online (<http://promo.net/pg>).

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