

G U R P S[®]

COVERT OPS[™]



BY WILLIAM H. STODDARD
AND HANS-CHRISTIAN VORTISCH

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

Assassins. Saboteurs. Terrorists.

They are the enemy. They are feared. They are famous . . . and infamous. They can be terrifying adversaries – or phenomenal heroes. They are covert ops.

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- ⊕ Countermeasures for operatives to circumvent.
- ⊕ Historical, speculative, and fantastic methods for covert operations.
- ⊕ Templates for covert operatives in any setting, from the street thug to the secretive poisoner, from the mercenary to the religious fanatic.
- ⊕ Guidelines for developing your own adventures and campaigns.



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GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition Revised and *GURPS Compendium I* are required to use this supplement in a *GURPS* campaign. The information in this book can be used with *any* game system.

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FIRST EDITION, FIRST PRINTING
PUBLISHED OCTOBER 2003

ISBN 1-55634-658-1



9 781556 346583
SJG02295 **6549**

Printed in
the USA

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ISBN 1-55634-658-1

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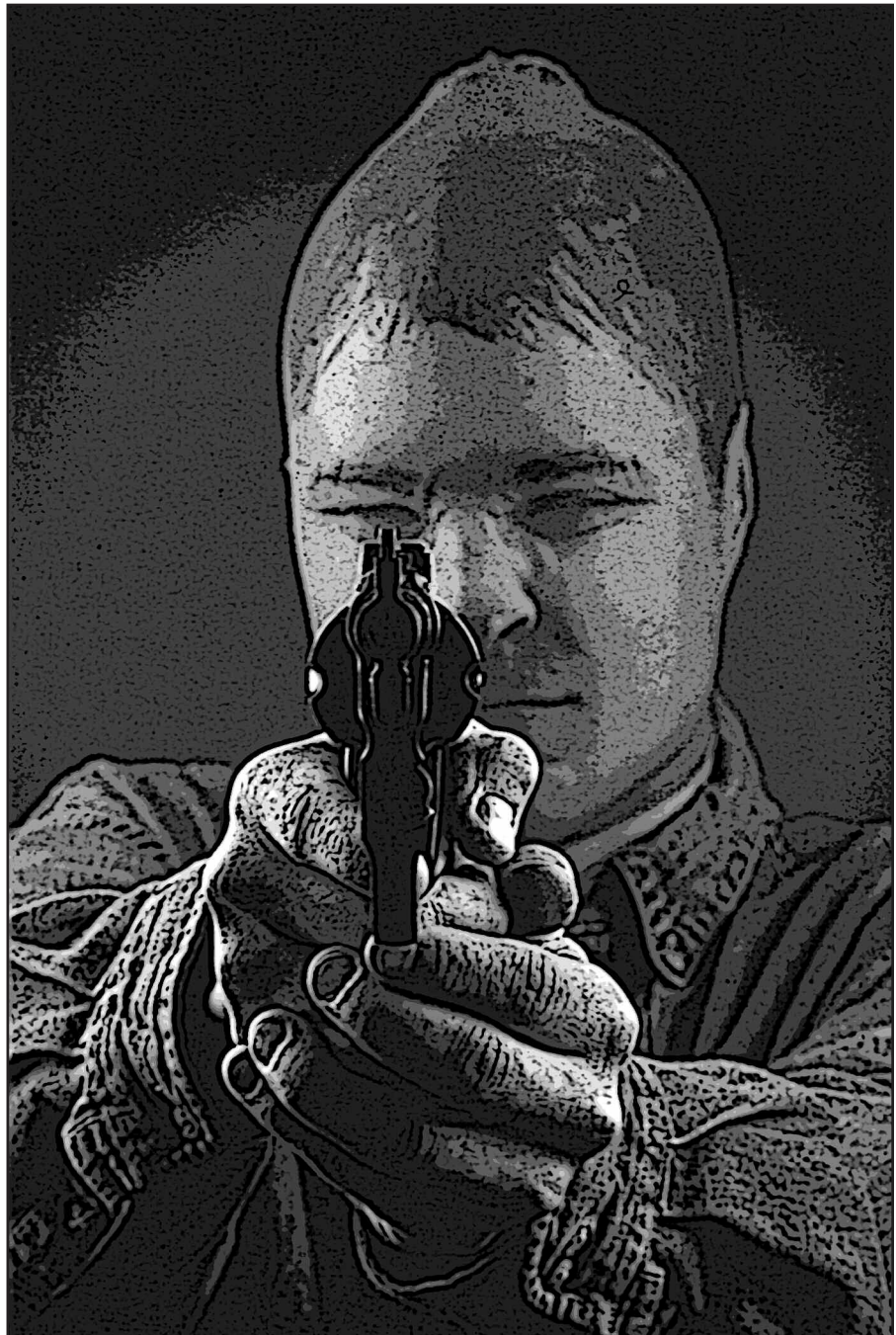
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About GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of the *GURPS* system. Our address is SJ Games, Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! Resources include:

Pyramid (www.sjgames.com/pyramid/). Our online magazine includes new *GURPS* rules and articles. It also covers *Dungeons and Dragons*, *Traveller*, *World of Darkness*, *Call of Cthulhu*, and many more top games – and other Steve Jackson Games releases like *In Nomine*, *Illuminati*, *Car Wars*, *Toon*, *Ogre Miniatures*, and more. *Pyramid* subscribers also have access to playtest files online!

New supplements and adventures. *GURPS* continues to grow, and we'll be happy to let you know what's new. For a current catalog, send us a legal-sized or 9"×12" SASE – please use two stamps! – or visit www.warehouse23.com.

Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata sheets for all *GURPS* releases, including this book, are available on our website – see below.

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Internet. Visit us on the World Wide Web at www.sjgames.com for 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, point your web browser to www.sjgames.com/mailman/listinfo/gurpsnet-1/.

The *GURPS Covert Ops* web page can be found at www.sjgames.com/gurps/books/covertops/.

Page References

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition*. Any page reference that begins with a B refers to the *GURPS Basic Set* – e.g., p. B102 means p. 102 of the *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition*. Page references that begin with CI indicate *GURPS Compendium I*.

Other references are AN for *Arabian Nights*, BE for *Bestiary*, BIO for *Bio-Tech*, C for *Cops*, CB for *Cabal*, CII for *Compendium II*, H for *Horror*, HT for *High-Tech*, J for *Japan*, LT for *Low-Tech*, M for *Magic*, MA for *Martial Arts*, ME for *Mecha*, MF for *Modern Firepower*, MIII for *Magic Items 3*, RO for *Robots*, SO for *Special Ops*, SPI for *Spirits*, STM for *Steampunk*, UN for *Undead*, UTT for *Ultra-Tech 2*, V for *Villains*, VE for *Vehicles*, VEL for *Vehicles Lite*, W for *WWII*, WWI for *Who's Who 1*, and WWII for *Who's Who 2*. The abbreviation for *this* book is CV.

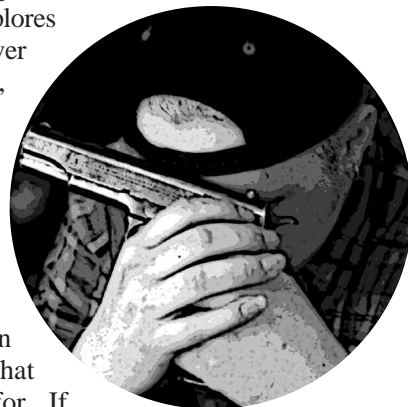
For a full list of abbreviations, see p. CI181 or the updated web list at www.sjgames.com/gurps/abbrevs.html.

Introduction

Covert operations are the other side of the coin from espionage. The spy attempts to find out by stealth what an enemy is doing, and conceal his knowledge. The covert operative attempts to do something to an enemy by stealth, and conceal what he has done. Very similar people are involved in both activities, but the risks are higher for the covert operatives.

GURPS Covert Ops explores these dangerous undercover missions: assassination, hostage-taking, sabotage, terrorism, and similar activities – and examines the people who carry them out.

GURPS Covert Ops lets you add covert operatives to your campaign with all the realism that *GURPS* players look for. If you're interested in modern intrigue, from the Cold War to the latest terrorist threats, you'll find the latest high-tech equipment and the organizations that supply it to their agents. Campaigns focused on secretive conspiracies or criminals can use this information, as well. Additional material looks ahead to the future of covert methods, and back to the hidden operations of history, and suggests ways to explore these themes in worlds of fantasy or science fiction. Character templates and optional rules provide for a range of play styles from the grimly realistic to highly cinematic thrills.



About the Authors

William H. Stoddard is a freelance editor and writer who lives in San Diego, Calif. As an editor, he specializes in academic material, ranging from computer science to the history of philosophy. As a writer, he specializes in roleplaying games. His work for Steve Jackson Games includes *GURPS Steampunk* and, most recently, contributions to *GURPS Blue Planet* and *GURPS WWII: Weird War Two*. In his spare time he edits *Prometheus*, the quarterly newsletter of the Libertarian Futurist Society, and plays with his cat, Rakshi, an aspiring killer queen.

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How to Get It

If an operative doesn't already have the tools required for the job – supplied by Allies, Patrons, his contractor, or from operations in the past – then he needs to acquire them. Most equipment can be bought over the counter from normal commercial sources. It is usually a good idea to pay in cash to avoid leaving a paper trail. Goods with a Legality Class higher than the area's Control Rating+2 (LC and CR respectively, see p. B249) can generally be bought this way. Items with a LC equal to CR+1 or below either require registration or are illegal, and can therefore only be acquired elsewhere.

There are generally five options: gray-market purchases, black-market purchases, smuggling, stealing, and building.

Gray Market

A gray market is an arena for exchange of goods and services through distribution channels that the manufacturer did not intend. The goods or services in question are not illegal, but the transaction is likely to be frowned on by regulators, governments, or companies. Gray-market goods are often advertised openly, if you know where to look.

Gray-market prices vary widely depending on the taxation, licensing, and regulation of the device in question. When items are heavily taxed, using a channel that avoids taxes or licensing fees can save up to 75% of the applicable taxes or licensing. Conversely, buyers may be willing to pay 10% to 40% extra to avoid the registration or background checks associated with an item's legal purchase.

Black Market

A black market is an arena for exchange of goods or services that are illegal for a person to procure. Buying on the black market is a crime; the goods may be stolen, or simply illegal for transfer or ownership. Current-inventory military hardware of unknown provenance frequently turns out to be stolen. This is usually verified by the item's serial numbers or other unique identifying parameters, such as the rifling and firing marks on bullets and/or cartridge cases (p. 105).

Prices are often very steep, with at least a 10% to 60% increase. Items that are illegal for everyone – illegal drugs, for example – don't have a "standard" price. Instead, prices fluctuate wildly based on the effectiveness of law enforcement. Stolen goods often sell for less than half their "normal" price, but draw unwanted attention from law-enforcement agencies if discovered.

Smuggling

Equipment that can be obtained elsewhere may be smuggled into the target area. The Holdout skill is useful here, depending on the object's size (p. 23). Smuggling into some areas is so difficult that only extremely profitable or innocuous goods are commonly smuggled in – for example, many aircraft hijackers don't even try to get guns onboard any longer, going for alternative weapons, such as explosives or special blades, instead.

Locating Gray- and Black-Market Items

A Contact with the proper connections can be used to locate gray- or black-market goods and services. The Contact's Streetwise roll is modified as follows for black-market goods:

LC	Rating	Modifier	Time
CR+2	Legal	+1	1 hour
CR+1	Registered	0	1 day
CR	Licensed	-1	2 days
CR-1	Security	-3	1 week
CR-2	Paramilitary	-6	2 weeks
CR-3	Military	-10	1 month

LC: The Legality Class of the item compared to the Control Rating of the local area. "Legal" indicates that the goods are stolen, but not otherwise illegal. *Class:* The level of restriction. *Modifier:* The modifier for Streetwise, Research, or contact Reliability. *Time:* The base time required.

Gray-market goods are more easily located (+2 to Streetwise). Goods for which there is little demand generally prove difficult to locate (-1 to -5 to Streetwise).

Modifiers:

- Metropolis (New York): +3.
- Major City (Seattle): +2.
- Large City (Indianapolis): +1.
- Small City (Spokane): +0.
- Town (Coeur d'Alene): -2.
- Rural Area: -4.

Without a Contact, an operative can take to the streets and use his own Streetwise skills, or alternatively, Area Knowledge-2 or Research-4. Each critical failure lets the authorities or another interested party know what the operative is trying to acquire. Depending on who finds out, this results in legal prosecution or a drive-by shooting.

Building

Building equipment may be more practical than smuggling it. Restricted hardware may be assembled from commonly available or unregulated parts. Information or parts for the equipment can be available commercially or on the gray market. For example, sound suppressors have been federally taxed, and thus very expensive, in the United States since 1936. Instead of selling complete assemblies, enterprising companies used to offer kits that allowed construction of a functioning suppressor with very little work. (This practice was made illegal in 1986.)

on the owner's property. A more-powerful model has a 4,000-yard radius, is \$15,000, 40 lbs., and is illegal because of its high radio-interference output.

Countersound Generator (TL7)

A computerized speaker and microphone system can cancel noise in an area, as if emitting silence. It works by producing sound waves with peaks where ambient sound waves have valleys and vice versa, canceling out ambient sounds. Factories use this technology to muffle the sound of machinery, but it has obvious applications to espionage.

Sonic Bug Stomper: A gadget that operates on this principle can be used to foil bugs. Unlike such expedients as playing loud music and flushing toilets, it does not alert eavesdroppers to the fact that their bugs have been detected – they hear only silence. A pocket-sized unit may suppress bugs in a 10×10' room. \$1,000, 1 lb.

Sonic Screen: A more powerful, but theoretical, device silences guards, muffles footsteps, suppresses ultrasonic sensors, etc. Explosions and gunfire are not completely silenced, but are less audible. Such a sonic screen projects a cone of silence 10 yards long by 3 yards wide at the base (but only 1 yard wide at the emitter). Anyone in the area is effectively deaf and mute; all Stealth rolls are at +3. Noises louder than a human shout are audible but muffled (-3 to Hearing rolls).

This technology is possible, but since there are no reports of its use, concrete cost and weight figures are unavailable. Unless the GM rules otherwise, assume that a sonic screen costs \$30,000, and that a realistic device consists of a backpack with a handheld emitter (20 lbs.), while a cinematic unit clips to a belt (3 lbs.).

Radar/Laser Detector (TL7)

This is a handheld device that detects radar- and laser-based security systems before they detect the user. It requires a successful Electronics Operation (Sensors) roll. \$350, 1 lb. The military version is backpack-sized and costs and weighs 20 times as much, but on a successful roll, it precisely locates the sensor and determines its type.

EMP Gun (TL10)

This device – which in spite of its name, does not necessarily look like a gun – generates a powerful but short-ranged electromagnetic pulse that is harmless to living beings, but disables electronic systems including computers, electronic keypads, robots, etc. It also permanently erases software and data stored on magnetic media. It has no effect on hardened or optical systems. A successful hit using Beam Weapons (Blaster) skills neutralizes the target's electronics on a roll of 16 or less on 3d. Subtract 1 from the chance of knocking out electronics per 20 points of combined DR and hit points that the electronics possess. For every point the roll succeeds by, the electronics are disabled for 2 seconds. Success by 10 or more, or critical success, permanently fries the electronics. SS 10, Acc 3, 1/2D 50, Max 150, Wt 4, RoF 1, Shots 10/C, Holdout -2, \$3,400.

Smart Materials

Current technology already includes memory materials that can change to a new shape with the right treatment – for example, a knife that turns into a hairbrush in a microwave oven. The object returns to its original shape with the right stimulus, such as a few sharp taps on a hard surface. Agents can use this to sneak knives or other melee weapons past a security checkpoint; in a cinematic campaign, it may even work for guns. Memory materials may have a distinct chemical signature that can be detected with appropriate sensors, at -4 to Electronics Operation (Sensors) skill.

A more-advanced application of this principle is material that is not confined to predefined shapes, but can sense its environment and adjust its form accordingly. For example, a reconfigurable lockpick could adjust its shape to fit any key-based mechanical lock, giving +4 to Lockpicking skill against such locks.

In a futuristic setting, nanotech offers a more radical option. A small sample of nanomechanisms, extruded onto a suitable raw material, can reshape it into a useful device. Useful “cannibal nano” designs require common raw materials such as aluminum, iron, silicon – in glass, for example – or organic substances. Nanomechanisms programmed to make a small atomic bomb are only useful if fissionable material is available! Cannibal nano weighs much less than the object it is programmed to construct, but costs much more. The details are purely speculative; GMs wanting a rule of thumb may use the following guidelines: TL9, 5% of object weight, 12× cost; TL10, 2% of object weight, 6× cost; TL11 or higher, 1% of object weight, 3× cost. Time required is 10 minutes per pound in a realistic campaign, 1 minute per pound in a cinematic one.

A different sort of intelligent material could have the ability to change its properties in response to external stimuli. For example, it may be able to shift from flexible to rigid. One application is “smart rope,” able to bend freely under normal conditions, but becoming rigid when given the proper command (when rigid, it has DR 10 and 2 hit points). Another application is reflex armor, ordinarily a flexible outer garment, but becoming a rigid plate on a strong impact.

Specifications for some devices based on smart materials are as follows:

Reconfigurable Lockpick (TL9): \$1,000, 0.25 lb.

Reflex Armor (TL9): PD 2, DR 15; PD 5, DR 30 if incoming attack detected (14 or less for bullets, automatic for muscle-powered attacks). Requires a power source – a B cell lasts three months; comparable batteries last 10 days. A full suit is \$4,000 and weighs 10 lbs.

Smart Rope (TL9): Maximum load 1,000 lbs. It costs \$10 per yard and weighs 0.2 lb. per yard.

Fantastic Guard Beasts

More exotic beasts can also provide protection. In a realistic setting at TL8 or above, animals may be genetically modified for enhanced trainability, general intelligence, keener senses, or deadlier combat abilities (see p. BIO98). A classical science-fiction setting may feature animals with psionic powers or alien animals with any number of exotic abilities. Animals with an empathic or telepathic bond to a human master are common in science fiction; catlike forms are especially popular.

In a fantasy setting, magical spells similarly modify animals, granting them abilities useful to their masters. Entire races of superior animals may exist. Or magic may form mental bonds between human beings (or elves, etc.) and animals, or simply make the animals more cooperative (see *Familiar*, pp. CI37-38).

In addition, animals with magical abilities may occur naturally, and mages may be able to command them and guard against undesired harm from those abilities. A wizard can have the entrance to his tower guarded by a clutch of basilisks or a giant three-headed dog.

Automata

The invention of computers made it possible to write programs safeguarding the security of a building or site. Such programs can monitor alarm devices, signal for help, lock doors and shut down elevators, or even operate weapons or security robots.

The first such systems become available at TL7; at TL8, systems with artificial intelligence (AI) can function in a much more sophisticated manner.

Such functions are best represented as skills. Watching for intruders uses Electronics Operation (Security Systems). At TL8, an AI can have the skill of Body Language to identify hostile or destructive actions, or even people who are planning such actions (see pp. 97-98). Identifying people who are authorized to enter a site uses the skill of Forensics. Various weapon skills can disable or kill an intruder.

Such skills are limited by a computer's Complexity rating. A standard computer has IQ equal to Complexity+3, a neural net computer has IQ equal to Complexity+4, and a fully sentient computer has IQ equal to Complexity+5. If the computer is capable of controlling weapons systems or robotic bodies, it also has DX equal to its (Complexity/2)+8. Its skill programs are equivalent to 1/2 point in a skill for Complexity 1, 1 point for Complexity 2, 2 points for Complexity 3, 4 points for Complexity 4, 8 points for Complexity 5, and an additional 8 points per +1 Complexity. For example, a neural-net AI system with Complexity 5 has IQ 9 and can learn Body Language, a Mental/Hard skill, at the 8-point level, or Body Language-11.

Computers can also be programmed with defenses against hackers or virus programs. Treat this as the skill of Computer Operation. The intruder uses the skill of Computer Hacking to break in; this may represent the capabilities of a virus, or a human operator at a computer workstation – or, in a cyberpunk setting, a human being who has jacked in.

Another defense against hacking is to have a computer that has no connection to the Internet or any other external communications route. Computers assigned to maintain physical security are normally set up this way.

Additional information on constructing computers is in *GURPS Vehicles* (see p. VE60-62).

Robots

A computer may be given control of a mobile body to enable it to restrain or kill intruders itself, rather than simply summoning human guards. This is usually envisioned as putting the computer inside the mobile body, like a brain inside the body of a man or animal. But if computers are large, a body able to hold one is too big and awkward to be practical. Instead, the computer is immobile and interacts with the body by wire, radio, infrared laser, or other means. The same thing may be done if it's important that all mobile units act together, rather than on their own initiative.

There is a risk to this: if the wire is cut or the signal is jammed, the remote unit freezes and does nothing. Intruders likely carry wire cutters or jammers.

A countermeasure is to give the mobile unit a small internal computer, which is normally in communication with a larger immobile computer. The large computer can operate the mobile unit remotely, or give it orders and update them as needed. If communication is cut off, the mobile unit is able to do something on its own. Of course, it may also be subverted, if operatives carry equipment for hacking into a security robot's brain. The fact that the robot is designed to take orders from outside creates a channel for false commands.

To design a security robot, see *GURPS Robots*.

Androids

Classically, an android is an artificial lifeform shaped like a human being. However, androids are envisioned as not having the same freedom of choice as human beings; they have Reprogrammable Duty, if not outright Slave Mentality, making them effectively robots made out of living flesh. More recent literature has portrayed clones the same way – not just as copies of an existing person, but as undergoing accelerated maturation, growing up without human contact, and being trained by virtual-reality experiences or direct brain imprinting. A different sort of android can have a biologically functional body, but be controlled by a computer. In effect, it is a robot with a flesh and blood body – the opposite of a cyborg, which has a human brain in a robotic body. *Transhuman Space* uses the term “bioshell” for this option.

Any of these artificial lifeforms can be programmed to serve as a guard. Presumably, this guard would be indifferent to its own survival and totally devoted to the person or site it is assigned to protect.

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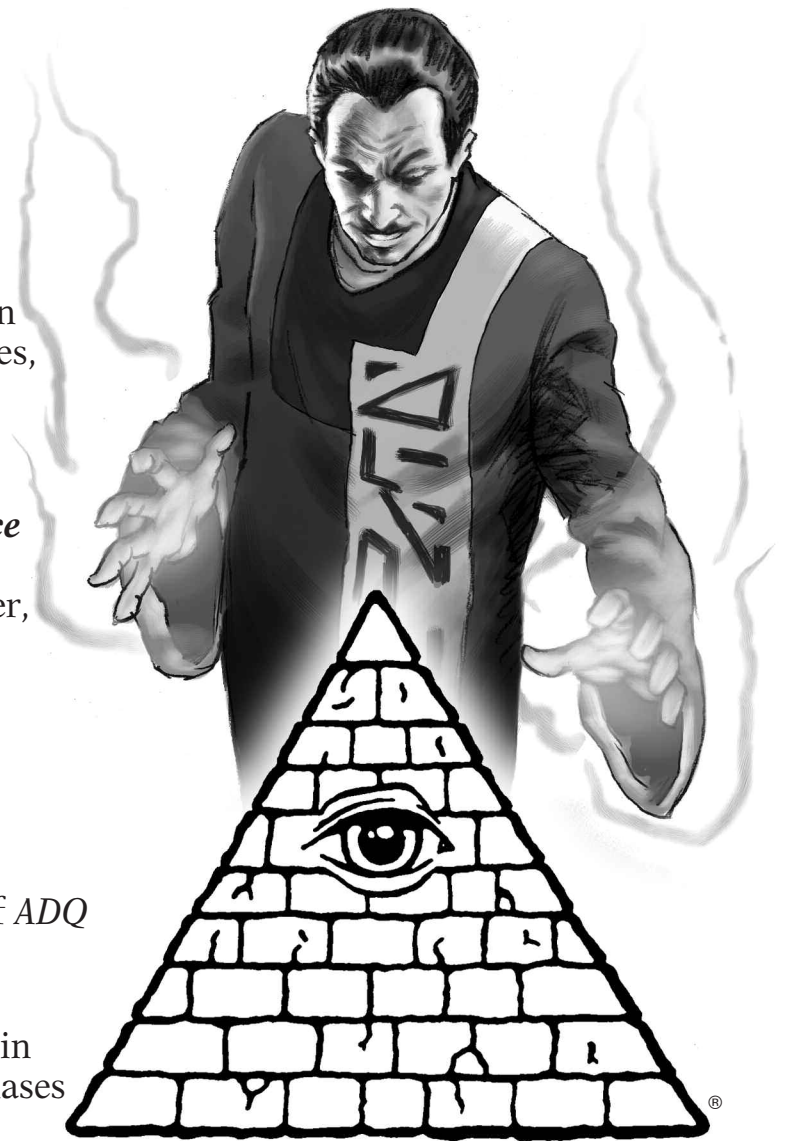
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