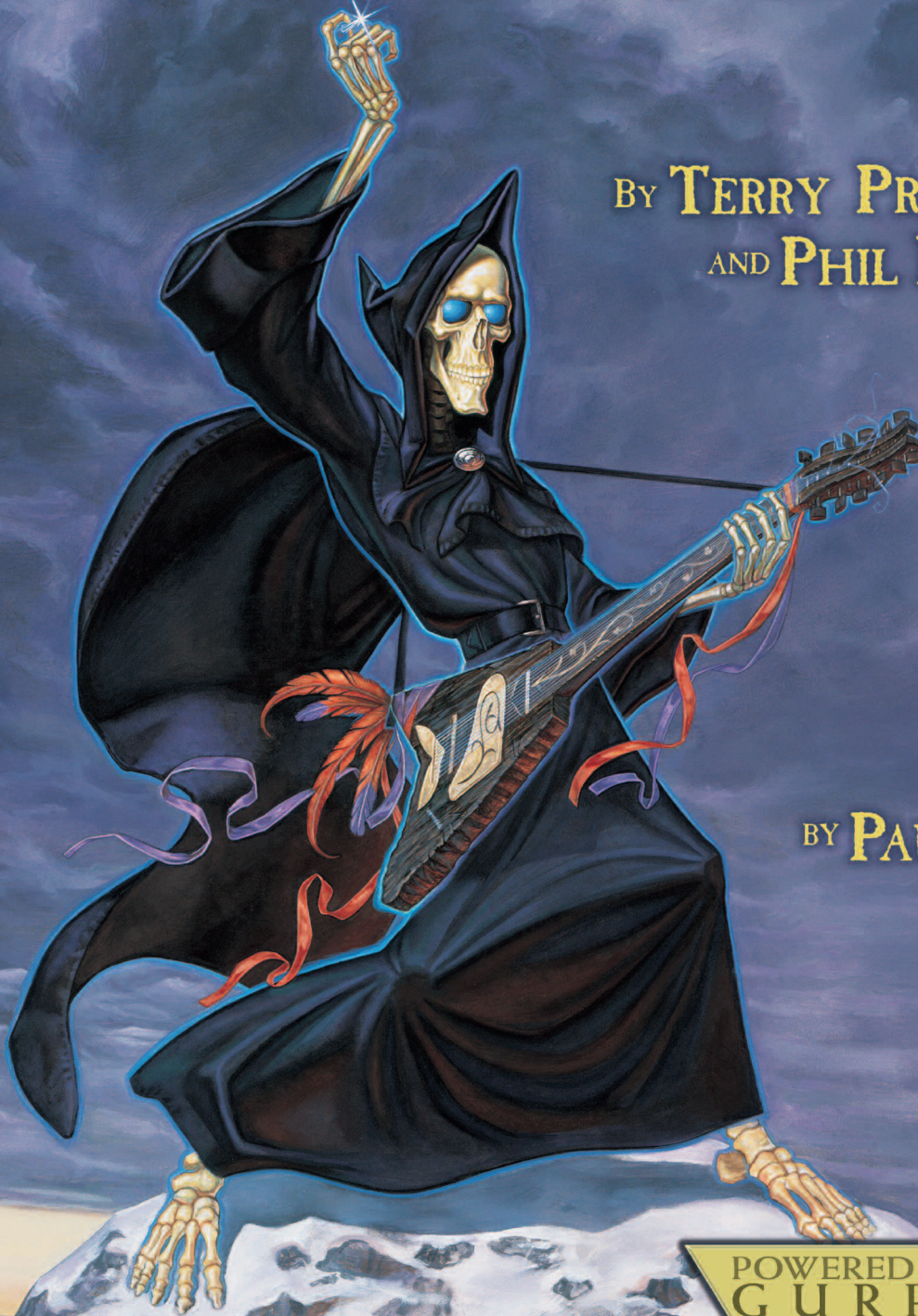


DISCWORLD

ROLEPLAYING GAME

BY TERRY PRATCHETT
AND PHIL MASTERS

ILLUSTRATED
BY PAUL KIDBY



POWERED BY
GURPS



STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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& TERRY PRATCHETT**

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DISCWORLD[®]

ROLEPLAYING GAME

Adventures on the Back of the Turtle

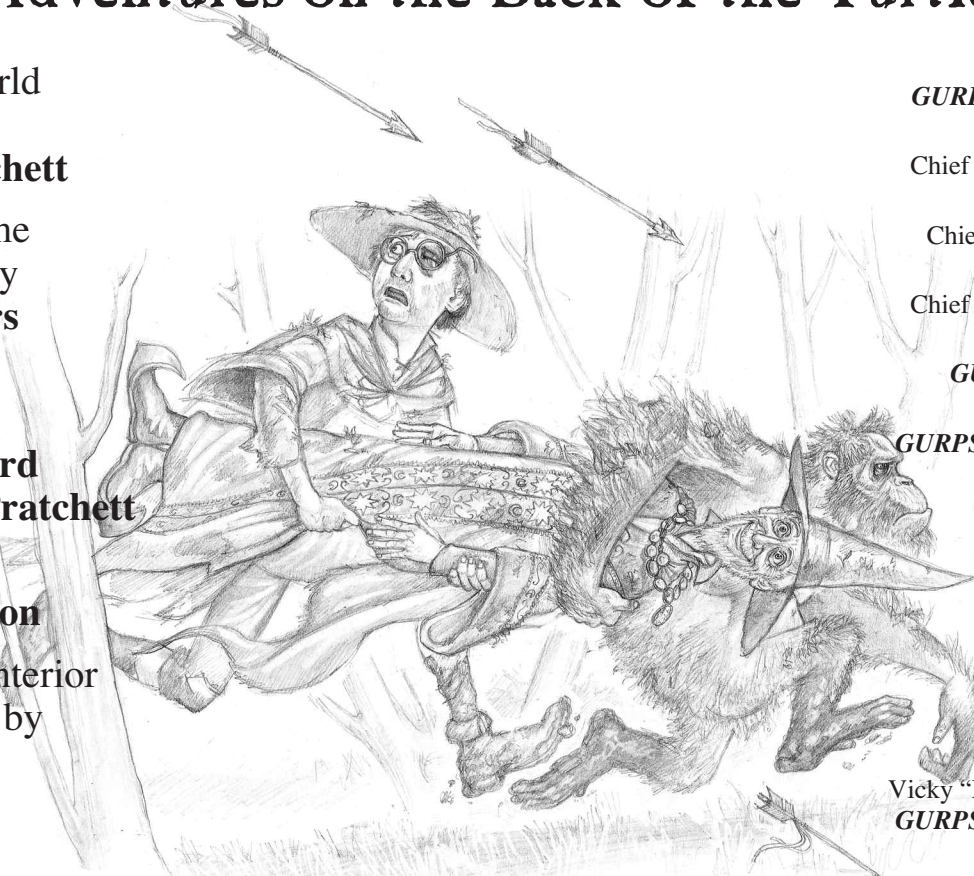
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Bibliographies. Bibliographies are a great resource for finding more of what you love! We’ve added them to many *GURPS* book web pages, with links to help you find the next perfect element for your game.

PAGE REFERENCES

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Lite* rules, included herein (see p. 207) and, where they exceed the scope of the “lite” version of the rules, to *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition (Revised)* and *GURPS Compendium I*. Any page reference that begins with a B refers to the *GURPS Basic Set*, while any that begin with a CI refer to the *GURPS Compendium I* – e.g., p. B102 means p. 102 of the *GURPS Basic Set*, while p. CI95 means p. 95 of the *GURPS Compendium I*.

Other page references also follow the conventions given on p. CI181, or the updated Web list at gurps.sjgames.com/abbrevs.html: AN refers to *GURPS Arabian Nights*, G refers to *GURPS Grimoire*, M refers to *GURPS Magic*.

INTRODUCTION

Somewhere . . .

There is a flat, circular world which rests on the backs of four elephants, which in turn stand on the back of a giant turtle, which swims through space. Magic works here. Well, most of the time. Some of the time, anyway. There are gods and heroes.

It is a fantasy world but with some haunting similarities to this one, and hence it makes a perfect setting for fantasy stories. Some of these stories have been told over the past 15 years or so in a series of novels by Terry Pratchett. (For convenience, this body of stories is hereafter referred to as *the chronicles*.) Now you can create Discworld stories of your own, using this book, and some players.

The Discworld is a comedy setting, but with room for occasional bits of tragic relief. Hence, this book is about running comedy games, and keeping the atmosphere right. But these stories are also about people, and games played in this setting can be as complex and character-driven as any you can set anywhere else.

So dive in. Don’t eat the meat pies, don’t frighten the swamp dragons, and be careful how you refer to the Librarian.



WHAT ELSE YOU WILL NEED

Well, nothing, really, except pencils, paper, and three six-sided dice. Oh, yes, and some silly people to play with . . . 2 to 6 make a good group. All the game rules you’ll need are in the *GURPS Lite* rules, at the back of the book.

TAKING IT FURTHER

Should you decide that you want to take this roleplaying stuff a bit further, the *GURPS Basic Set* is the “long version” of the rules in this book, with lots more advantages, disadvantages, skills, and things to do with them. *GURPS Compendium I* contains still more character features and optional rules. *GURPS Compendium II* contains further optional rules, and many GMs find it useful, but it is less relevant for Discworld games.

GURPS Discworld Also is the follow-on to this volume. It contains information about recent additions to the Chronicles, as well as additional places, people, and things to throw into your game. *GURPS Discworld Also* is fully compatible with the *Discworld RPG*; the present volume was in fact first published as *GURPS Discworld*, but was retitled for the convenience of those who reasonably expect Discworld books to be shelved under “D.”

GURPS Magic and *GURPS Grimoire* contain many, many additional spells and more material for magic-wielders. As magic is common on the Discworld, these books are *strongly* recommended, especially if players want to take the parts of wizards or witches. Other *GURPS* books may contain material of interest; see the sidebars on pp. 200-201 for some ideas.

The Discworld Companion (by Terry Pratchett and Stephen Briggs) is a further source of organised information on the Discworld, and so may be very useful to GMs. From the same authors, and perhaps even more useful, are *The Streets of Ankh-Morpork* (a map of the Disc’s greatest city) and *The Discworld Mapp*.





SOME WARNINGS

Spoiler Alert: This book is not written with the intention of giving away the plots of the chronicles. But it's impossible to talk about the state of things on the Discworld without mentioning how things got that way, and how recent events turned out. In other words, if you read this book from cover to cover, you may not get *quite* so many surprises if you read the novels later.

What It's Not: This book is not an attempt to retell the entire history of the Discworld, or even the history-so-far. For that, you need to read the chronicles. What *this* book attempts is to give a general feel for most parts of the setting, and to help you roleplay there.

About the Authors

Phil Masters has now been roleplaying half his life, which is a thought he finds . . . strange. He is the author, co-author, or compiler of several *GURPS* books and has written material for other games including *Champions*, *Warhammer*, and *Mage: the Sorcerers Crusade*. He lives in England with a wife who is smarter than him and a computer which is probably getting there.

Terry Pratchett, it turns out, wrote his first RPG scenario when Phil Masters was still running around the playground. It had a toilet in it. It also had an intelligent box called The Luggage, which walked around on legs. Some ten years later, when he had the idea of writing a fantasy novel that'd be an antidote to too many bad fantasy books, he remembered it . . .

Since then, the Discworld series has sold about 85 million copies (but who's counting?) in 38 languages worldwide, the books have achieved bestseller status in the U.K. and U.S. mainstream lists. *Sir Terry* was knighted for services to literature by Queen Elizabeth II. His numerous awards include a Carnegie Medal, Locus Awards, and an Andre Norton Award, while his documentaries have garnered a Grierson Award, several BAFTAs, and an International Emmy.

Adventures and Stories

Traditionally, roleplaying games are about having "adventures." Player-characters are expert at getting in and out of trouble, and do so for a living. In other words, they are useless hangers-on in a world full of people trying to do an honest day's work.

The Discworld is a very good setting for this sort of thing. However, it's also a good venue for a different sort of story; tales of people building communities, trying to avoid trouble, dealing with weird stuff because it comes to them, doing their best. The Discworld books are full of "adventures," but few of the characters are actively looking for that sort of thing, and some are desperate to avoid any sort of excitement whatsoever. There *are* some "adventurers," but they're a minority – just as they are in this world, really – and are generally regarded with that distrust always shown by people in real trousers towards those who persist in wearing tiny leather hold-alls whatever the weather.

This supplement is intended to assist both sorts of game, and not to impose either sort of story. Feel free to play either way, but most importantly, remember that you have a choice.



The Discworld is rather strange, even by the standards of fantasy settings. This chapter therefore deals with some questions of life and reality in such an eccentric world.

Why A Disc? Why The Turtle?

The Discworld, which looks like an extraordinarily unlikely object (at least, until one examines some terrestrial concepts of cosmic structure), can exist because it occupies a region of Highly Stressed Reality. There can be wizards, and trolls, and dragons, because the physical constraints that prevent them in other parts of the multiverse are relaxed – in fact, downright limp. There are still rules of existence, but they are permissive, not exclusive.

“There can be wizards, and trolls, and dragons, because the physical constraints that prevent them in other parts of the multiverse are relaxed – in fact, downright limp.”



Or, to put it another way, the Disc is the handiwork of a Creator working to a specification that was more poetic than usual.

Either way, it exists at the far end of the probability curve. It is consistent, in its way, but not *likely*. Furthermore, this improbability, and laws of narrative causality which have real force here, are important to more than just its origins. They pervade life on the Disc.

RULES AND PRINCIPLES

Most of the operation of the Disc can be derived from three basic principles:

1. Life Force
2. The Power of Metaphor and Belief
3. Narrative Causality

Life Force: Anything on the Discworld may develop, in some sense, life. This may be full intelligence and animation (trolls are walking, thinking rocks), intelligence alone (as with some wizards' staffs), or just the ability to have an attitude. While it cannot be proven that every object in the world has a viewpoint, it is often safest to assume it. And the mere fact that a building, say, has stood comfortably in the same spot for several centuries does not guarantee that tomorrow it will not develop a longing for the open road, or at least a better neighbourhood.

That doesn't mean that every random object the PCs have to deal with will have a mind of its own. Sometimes, a rock is just a rock. But magical adepts sometimes act *as if* any inanimate object had a mind.

Furthermore, the flow and balance of this life force is a dynamic thing, that sometimes requires management. (This, in a subtle way, is part of Death's job.)

Great A'Tuin

The Disc is borne through space on the back of a World Turtle, of the species *Chelys galactica*. This is a species, not just a unique specimen; a cluster of eight baby turtles, each bearing four elephant calves and a little Discworld in its geological youth, were once observed to hatch from moon-sized eggs that had been left in orbit round a full-sized star. They spent a little time orbiting Great A'Tuin, but have since departed on their own cosmic voyages. It is possible that they are the literal offspring of Great A'Tuin, but the turtle's gender remains unknown, despite heroic research programs.

Great A'Tuin is ten thousand miles long – slightly smaller than the Disc it carries. Its shell is encrusted with methane ice and pocked with meteor impacts; its eyes are like oceans. Its brain is the size of a continent. Wizards have tried for centuries to get a telepathic peek into its consciousness. They all forgot the joke that runs: “I've decided to dedicate my life to teaching a turtle to sing.” “Do you realise the enormity of what you're proposing?” “Yes, but what's time to a turtle?” Time is not of much importance to a turtle; to a really big turtle, time is *really* unimportant. Its thoughts move like glaciers – although it *does* think, and indeed it seems quite content with life.

Berilia, Tubul, Great T'Phon and Jerakeen

Even less is really known about the four elephants who stand on Great A'Tuin, and on whose backs the Disc rests, perhaps because it is even harder to get a look at them – they are well under the rim. They are not completely static, however; the Disc's sun and moon trace rather complex orbits, thus ensuring phases for the moon and seasons for the Disc, and every now and again, an elephant has to cock a leg to let one of them go past safely.

Nor is it clear how the Disc rotates round its hub, or how the elephants avoid severe chafing. There is some evidence that the direction of rotation changes at geological intervals, which may be part of the arrangement to avoid such problems.

Incidentally, it is likely that the Disc's moon generates its own light. It certainly seems to appear like our own world's moon, waxing and waning quite regularly, whereas a lunar cycle generated by the Disc's sun's motion coupled with the local physics of light would surely be too complex to contemplate.



The Sto Plains

The people of the Sto Plains consider themselves to be the most sophisticated on the Disc, because they have been civilised longest and have the most advanced technology (except perhaps for the Agateans, who are foreigners, and who therefore don't count), the best travelled (except for certain Hubland barbarians, who can't count), and the most broad-minded (except when dealing with foreigners, barbarians, and people who quibble).

The Plains are rich, in an agricultural sense, and well-populated. The black soil has been deposited over aeons by the flooding of the river Ankh, and is highly fertile.¹ It grows good cabbages.

The Plains are a patchwork of pocket kingdoms and city states. Since the land is all good, and there are few major mountains or watercourses, the boundaries of these nations are purely conceptual; they shift every time someone thinks his army is better than someone else's, or signs a royal marriage contract, or slips up at one of the Royal Geographical Societies (which generally consist of one retired cavalry officer who used to know how to read maps). The region is economically dominated by Ankh-Morpork, its largest city and port (see Chapter 5), but Ankh-Morpork doesn't bother to claim authority beyond its city limits. It doesn't need to.

Natives of the Sto Plains have few obvious common attributes in game-mechanical terms, although anyone brought up too near the Ankh may have inherited an Immunity to Disease. People susceptible to disease died out years ago.

QUIRM

A nice town in a wine-growing area overlooking the Rim Ocean, with flowers adorning its cobbled streets, and a famous floral clock. Quirm is not merely dull, but devoted to the idea of dullness; many of the inhabitants *used* to have adventures, and have consciously given that up. People go there to die, on the basis that after a few years in Quirm death won't offer many surprises.

Still-active adventurers will on arrival be offered a glass of local wine, a garland of flowers, and a table outdoors. If they don't get the hint, they will be told the equivalent of, "Been there. Done that. Do it somewhere else."

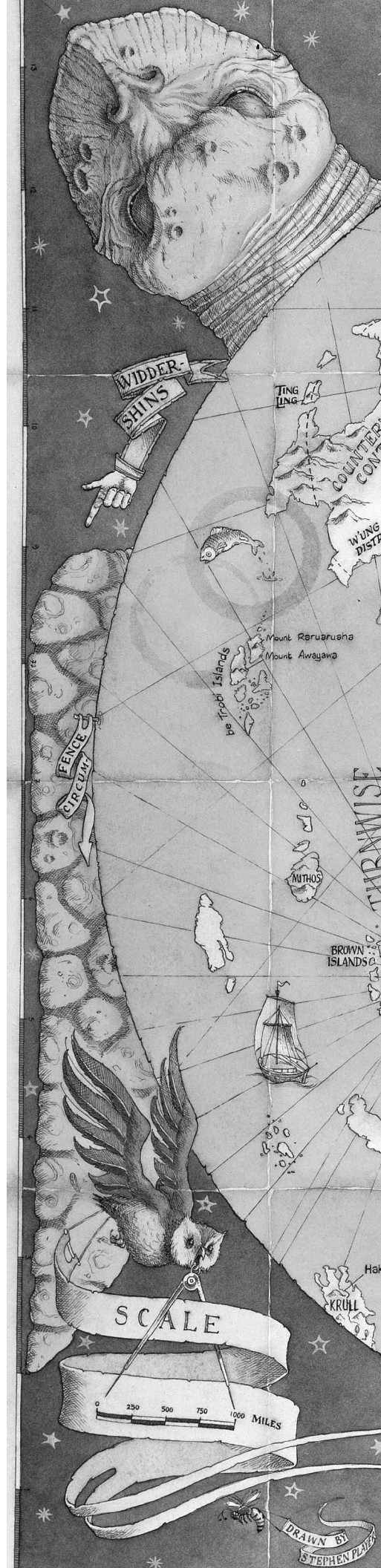
Quirm is famous for making cheese.

THE FOREST OF SKUND

A dense woodland, lying between the plains and the foothills of the Ramtops (see below). Its name means "Your Finger You Fool" in an ancient dialect; an early explorer pointed at it and asked a native what That was called. It is a magic-rich region (with a lot of small-to-medium-sized Very High Mana areas).

Casanunda the Dwarf (see p. 181) claims to have received the title of Count from the Queen of Skund, but in fact, the wood seems to be inhabited only by a handful of supernatural beings (it is natural territory for evil witches), just enough woodcutters and small villages for the former to terrorise, and a community of shamanic priests who appreciate the local magic-mutated fungi. Either Casanunda made the acquaintance of a witch with a particularly heavy power complex, or he is living up to his claim to be an outrageous liar.

¹After all, every ounce of it has at some stage been what is politely termed "fertiliser."



“... I Wille Make You A Barbearian Hero!”

Okay, so there is this setting. But stories need characters . . .

Starting Points

A lot of different styles of game are possible on the Discworld, and starting points levels are one thing that help determine how a game plays. Once the GM and the players have decided what sort of entertainment they are after, it's time to fix some numbers.

25-50 POINTS: PAWNS OF THE LADY

Many folk-tales and fairy-stories feature ordinary, unremarkable people who find themselves plunged into bizarre situations, and so this sort of thing naturally happens on the Disc. If the players are willing to have their characters rely on wits rather than raw power to solve their problems, this can make for an interesting game.

Starting with 25 points, and no more than 20-25 points of Disadvantages, produces PCs who can be moderately competent specialists, in a best-in-the-village sort of way. Few wizards or witches will be so low-powered, but students and trainees with just a couple of spells may be feasible. Going up to 50 points allows for characters who look like fairly credible heroes, although they would not be advised to try storming the evil demonologist's tower without first checking that the demonologist is out and that he doesn't bother with traps or guards.¹

One option is to start with low points, but to allow substantial Disadvantages, and to award generous experience. This produces plots similar to that of *Mort*, wherein unimpressive, even incompetent characters are plunged into adventures, and learn and grow through the experience. However, such a plot has to be limited in time; no-one can carry on learning and growing that fast forever. (Of course, the game can always mutate into a slower-changing series of adventures for the newly matured heroes.)

75-125 POINTS: HONEST WORKING ADVENTURERS

For stories with PCs who are capable of looking after themselves and taking a hand in their own destiny, but who do not have to save the Disc or alter the destiny of Ankh-Morpork every week, use standard *GURPS* starting values; 100 points, plus no more than 40 in Disadvantages.

Dropping the base to 75 points makes for more restrained peasants-in-the-street; raising it to 125 allows for slightly more impressive sorts.

The chief drawback to this starting level is that PCs may be too tough to feel comically stressed by problems, but not powerful enough to emulate the achievements of true heroes or great magic-wielders such as Cohen the Barbarian or Granny Weatherwax. However, it does make for *stable* games, and that may be preferable to trying to emulate the feel of the chronicles slavishly. RPGs are not the same thing as novels, and it's a mistake to try and make them work exactly the same way.

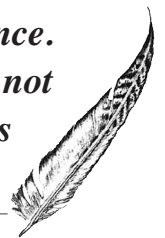
150-300 POINTS: SMALL GODS, LARGE HEROES, AND INFLATED WIZARDS

Comedy is not the same thing as incompetence. Some Discworld stories revolve around seriously capable individuals, who do get to save the Disc, repel extra-dimensional invasions, and dent the special effects budget. (Think of Carrot taking on the entire clientele of the Mended Drum, or the Silver Horde's conquest of the Agatean Empire.) Certainly, qualified Discworld spellcasters have vast abilities, even if they aren't always very clever about how they use them. Therefore, games may involve high-points-level PCs.

The snag with this is that the GM must come up with plots that stretch and employ such extensive skills, shaking the Disc without knocking it off its axis. Fortunately, there are always plenty of gods and other powers to help straighten matters out after especially weird days (although this plot device should be used with caution). There is also the example of Cohen and his Horde, who have been doing this stuff for years – and yet they still can't retire, because they've never got the hang of saving, and they don't know any other way to live.

However, if a game is going to involve high-powered PCs, it *is* useful to give serious prior consideration to the question of what sort of stories will be involved. A Barbarian Hero, a Doctor of Morbid Spellbinding, and a Genuan Court Assassin might all be 300-pointers, but it could be hard to bring them together for an adventure, let alone an extended campaign.

“Comedy is not the same thing as incompetence. ‘Funny’ is not the same as ‘stupid.’”



¹ Remember, incidentally, that any Differently-Pigmented-Lords you're likely to meet on Discworld probably know all about 'unknown secret passages,' and don't dress their guards in a uniform that conveniently covers their faces.



Goblins (and Gnomes)

Gnomes and goblins are the same species; a gnome is simply a goblin who chooses to live underground. They are the Disc's smallest humanoid race, and in consequence, its most reclusive; many humans believe them to be extinct, although one or two have shown up in Ankh-Morpork recently.

They range from 4" to 2' tall, tending to the lower end of that scale, and like most creatures of such a size, they tend to be quick on their feet and good at hiding. They have little culture of their own, beyond a fondness for setting up house in large mushrooms, which they outfit with windows and chimneys. (Though for all anyone knows, there could be whole hidden goblin cities in distant corners of the Disc.) They are basically hunter-gatherers, a lifestyle that has adapted well to human cities (even if that which is gathered there may already have an owner). They mostly speak Ankhian. No goblin has been known to use magic.

They are an easy-going race, in a slightly irascible way, and some have discovered the advantages of dealing with humans commercially; there are many jobs best done by tiny fingers, and a small payment from the human can convert to a lot of food or drink for the gnome. Some have been enslaved by humans, but this looks like terrible bullying, and other humans of a sentimental bent will often side with the small creatures if the situation becomes publicly known.

Gnomes usually make their own clothes, out of rat-skin or similar, and thus end up looking rather shabby and sordid; this sort of goblin outfit has a nominal value of \$1-\$10. If they really wanted to dress up, and could stand the humiliation, they could acquire superior dolls' clothes, or have something similar made up from a human tailor's scraps box; this would cost about \$5-\$20. Armour is not feasible for a creature this size; however, gnomes are physically very tough and can even survive being trodden on, and may well wreak a serious knee-bashing on the treader.

Goblins in Play

Goblin/Gnome PCs: Members of this species are rare in the human-dominated world, and should be played with a certain game-level caution; even one as tough as Wee Mad Arthur (see *Feet of Clay*) might have a difficult time of it in certain activities (and a lot of advantages at other times). However, for players who want a practical challenge and some interesting moments, this race could make an interesting option.

Goblin NPCs: Rustic goblins usually buy up their Camouflage, Stealth, and Survival, and carry a small weapon



(equivalent to a dagger) with which they are competent. They also usually have good Naturalist and Area Knowledge skills, enabling them to avoid most trouble. Urban goblins have skills appropriate to their chosen or enforced way of making a living, from Performance through espionage to pest control.

Goblin Character Package

Goblins/gnomes have -6 ST (-50 points), +2 DX (20 points), +6 Fatigue (18 points), Decreased Life Support (10 points), and +1 Passive Defence (25 points). They also have +3 to Camouflage (2 points) and +1 to Stealth (1 point). Their disadvantages are -6 Hit Points (-30 points), Inconvenient Size (-15 points), two levels of Reduced Move (-10 points), and Short Arms (-10 points), and they have the racial quirk of Mild Paranoia (-1 point).

Playing a goblin is a -40 point disadvantage. Those under 12" tall can take an additional +1 Passive Defence (+25 points), simply by virtue of being hard to hit. They can also buy their Reduced Move up or down one level (+/- 5 points); some of them are quick on their feet, but those feet *are* on short legs.

Note that gnomes are immensely strong for their size, and there is nothing to stop them buying their ST back up to near-human levels.irate, heroic gnomes have been known to overthrow human opponents.

Goblin Size: This race's size is not particularly correlated to their physical strength; some of the toughest individuals are also among the smallest. Players are welcome to decide on whatever height suits them best, and should then determine a suitable weight to match, from a pound or so for the smallest individuals up to six or seven, or perhaps even ten for a large and stocky goblin.



The Smell

A key feature of Ankh-Morpork – perhaps its defining feature – is its Smell. It is appalling; the consequence of having a million people living around a turgid river with no sewer system that they remember. Stories say that at least one invading army was defeated when they sneaked in at night, but their nose plugs gave out.

“A key feature of Ankh-Morpork – perhaps its defining feature – is its Smell.”

The citizens are very proud of the Smell. They erected a statue to that victory (although the stone of the monument has somewhat rotted away). People take chairs outdoors on summer evenings to appreciate it. And when they are obliged to travel away from Ankh-Morpork, they talk about their dreams of getting back to the Smell.

The Smell has little effect in game terms, although it makes it effectively impossible to trick an Ankh-Morporkian into thinking he or she is home when that isn't true. However, visitors from more refined cultures might have to make HT rolls for a few days after arrival to avoid a lot of gagging.



Ankh-Morpork is the oldest surviving city on the Disc (depending a little on definitions, of course), and the largest. Its population of about one million, suburbs included, is quite an achievement, given the existing technologies of transport,¹ water supply,² and waste disposal.³ It is, technically, two cities, separated by the River Ankh: Ankh, the slightly more prosperous of the two, is on the turnwise side of the river, Morpork to the widdershins. But only somebody trying to sell a house would bother distinguishing.

Most of the trade of the Circle Sea and the Sto Plains passes through Ankh-Morpork; it is the centre for mysterious industries such as wizardry, assassination, and banking. It is The City to which young people from the country dream of going, until they become old enough to warn young people against going there.

History

Ankh-Morpork grew up around Unseen University (see p. 109), which, being a magical establishment, makes questions of causality a little uncertain. The University grew around the Tower of Art, and a sort of service village grew up nearby. Later, the focus shifted down-river, towards the docks.

This dockside community lay on the site of what is now the Shades; the growing sprawl eventually took in the villages of Dolly Sisters and Nap Hill. Remains of ancient walls still poke up through later buildings, and some foundations in the Shades seem downright timeless.

Then, about 3,300 years before the present, came the Empire of the Kings of Ankh, which lasted about 1,300 years. This is long enough ago to be thought of as a Golden Age of Glorious Deeds. Surviving remnants include a sewer system, which is no longer connected to much in the way of surface plumbing. (Until recently it was known only to the Assassins' Guild.) Also, a ruin on a hill called the Tump might have been a castle back then. There is also a throne (actually a throne-shaped heap of dry rot held together by gilt and good intentions), and the legend of a Sword.

The fall of the Kings of Ankh was followed by seventeen centuries of the less mythical Ankh-Morporkian Kings; the crown belonged to anybody with soldiers to take it and the poor judgement to keep it. There were wars, betrayals, assassinations, family squabbles about who was going to swim the moat in leg-irons, and prophecies ending in “Beware!” or “Aaaarrggh.” The Monarchy was actually highly egalitarian; most wealthy families got to be “royal” for at least a generation.

All these monarchs were formally pretenders, since no-one knew what had happened to the Kings of Ankh. The population understood that the True King was the one who held The Sword, so a whole series of “true swords” were produced. (King Blad carried two bits of wood hastily nailed together, for fifty-one years.) The Sword is now considered lost, though like Atlantis and crashed flying saucers, it cannot ever be considered really gone.

¹ Poor.

² Worse.

³ What?



The Staff Spell

The enchanted staffs that are so important to Discworld wizard culture are produced by a spell which replaces the standard *GURPS* “Staff” spell (but **only** on the Discworld). This is technically an Enchantment, although it is used by many wizards who never bother with other spells in that college.

STAFF ENCHANTMENT

The wizard’s staff is a very important thing, as described on p. 131. Anyone touched by the staff is considered to be touched by the wizard for spell-casting purposes, so it is a useful way of extending the user’s reach, but its main practical importance is as a power storage device.

However, its symbolic importance is even greater. A wizard can only use a staff that he himself has enchanted, or that was passed to him willingly and with due ceremony by a predecessor. Furthermore, a wizard can only possess one staff at a time; after losing or discarding one, at least a month of preparation is needed before another can be adopted. Thus, wizards tend to regard their staffs as both a badge of office and an extension of their (considerable) egos.

Wizards either inherit staffs, or more often, receive their first (which may well last them a lifetime) on entering a magical college, or at least as soon as they advance far enough to learn this spell. Others acquire the staff on graduation; a few never do pick up the spell, but these individuals are considered eccentric. The spell is often cast (very) ceremonially (necessarily given its energy cost), with senior wizards assisting; this is part of most college’s ceremonies.

A normal enchanted staff can hold mana (magical energy, useable instead of Fatigue when casting magic) equal to its creator’s IQ + Magery at the time of enchantment. (Thus, wizards may choose to make themselves new staffs if they train themselves up extensively during their careers.) A staff made of sapient pearwood (see p. 129) can hold *ten times* as much energy. Metal staffs, let alone oct-iron, are always special cases, and subject to GM whim. Also, old staffs may increase their capacity over time; see p. 130. The energy can only be used by the staff’s current owner, who must be in physical contact with it at the time.

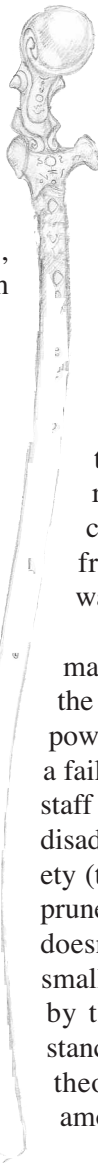
A staff with less than its full charge of energy recharges from the local mana at the following rates:

No-Mana Zone: No recharge.

Low Mana: 1d points/week (or 1 point/2 days).

Normal Mana: 1d points/day (or 1 point/7 hours).

High Mana: 1d points/hour (or 1 point/15 minutes).



Very High Mana: 1d points/minute.

Fixed rates are given for GMs who don’t want to roll too many dice, but variable rates better represent the uncertainties of Disc magic. Re-charging in Very High Mana zones is *always* chancy, and may involve weird special effects and side-effects, from dazzling octarine flares to the staff’s becoming infested by *something*. Mana levels of less than High are of course rare on the Disc, but are mentioned here for completeness.

Also, a wizard can transfer up to three points of his personal energy (fatigue) to recharge his staff by taking one minute to concentrate and making a Will roll, with -1 per point of energy transferred. On a critical success, the staff regains an extra point of energy free; on a critical failure, the fatigue is used up and wasted.

Extra enchantments may be cast on a staff, and it may also acquire extra abilities over time (see p. 130), at the GM’s whim. However, every time a staff gains new powers in any way, roll the current owner’s Will at -2; on a failure, the staff acquires a quirk. On a critical failure, the staff acquires a *serious* quirk, up to the level of a character disadvantage. These oddities may be of the ordinary variety (the staff smells funny, or grows shoots that have to be pruned weekly), or they may be personality traits (the staff doesn’t like to work after 11 PM, it won’t risk harming small woodland creatures). Details should be determined by the GM, and should be appropriate to the circumstances; as a rule of thumb, a disadvantage should have a theoretical points value equal to about three times the amount the Will roll was missed by.

The quirks and traits acquired by a metal staff are always unpleasant (they may be humorous, too – it all depends on which end of the thing you’re on), and any personality it develops will tend toward the malicious; either childish and nasty, or outright psychotic.

A wizard who starts with this spell may be assumed to have a standard staff created at his present ability level. A wizard with an inherited staff, or one that otherwise somehow has extra thaumic capacity, should spend \$200 of starting cash for every extra point of capacity. Possession of a sapient pearwood staff *also* requires that the character has the Sapient Pearwood Property advantage – see p. 55. For other rules on starting with inherited or otherwise special staffs, see p. 131.

Energy cost to cast: 64

Prerequisite: Magery and wizard training.

Item: A wooden or metal staff, at least four feet long (five to seven feet is preferred). May be decorated with other materials, if the wizard is pretentious or eccentric.





Death and the Afterlife

Death merely marks the end of a being's life, and sometimes transports souls away a little distance. It is sometimes said that souls go to the House of Death, but that is not how it seems to the occupants; perhaps a few pass through on their way to their own particular afterlife.

Because the point about the afterlife on the Disc is that, perversely, people get what they really expect. Hubland warriors get picked up by well-built blonde women on horseback and taken to a life of eternal feasting; those who have pursued a life of what they know is considered evil go to Hell (see p. 165); some souls are reincarnated, in forms that range from reward to punishment; and some are fated to hang around the world as ghosts, temporarily or for long periods, until something is resolved or just because that's fate.

Death himself appears to know the nature of afterlife arrangements in the Discworld universe, although strictly they fall outside his ambit, but he will not let on too much to living mortals. All else aside, sensible mortals who knew the truth would lynch hellfire-preaching missionaries on sight.

One constant, however, appears to be the Desert that souls cross after death. It's black sand under a starry night sky which, at the same time, is brightly lit – it might be like one of the 'seas' of the Moon. What happens to the soul on this trek appears to reflect the way they acted when alive. Those who know the old folk classic 'The Lyke Wake Dirge' will get the picture.

They find life, and individuality, immensely annoying, even hateful. They cannot act directly against it, but they can complain about it, and they have recently started taking subtle actions to make it less annoying (see *Hogfather*). The limits on their power are fortunate, because their theoretical control of matter, energy, and the laws of nature is absolute. They despise the Death of the Discworld, who is, by his nature, intimately involved with the cycle of life, and who has developed a personality and a degree of cold sympathy for living things. (Azrael, however, chooses to accept Death's behaviour.)

They never speak of themselves in the first person, because if they did it would indicate individuality – or rather, if they do, they instantly cease to exist. However, this makes little difference, as another one of them appears immediately as a replacement. Their hatred of life is actually a danger to them, because it makes them think like individuals.

PCs who somehow get caught up in the plots of the Auditors are in vast danger, although those plots are always quite subtle and indirect, and philosophical – they relate to abstract ideas. They are most likely to be opposed by Death, although beings such as Luck or even Fate (see p. 164) might be amused to frustrate them. However, all sides at the highest levels are bound by rules that any human will find hard to understand; mortals caught up in such affairs are largely on their own.

Major Powers Manifest

The great forces of the universe, as represented by the Old High Ones, may also be manifested on the Disc in a more local form. Mostly, however, these are very abstract entities; the only such event which humans consistently insist on personifying, and which therefore often shows up in personalised form, is Death.

Death

The Death of the Discworld is an emissary, or an aspect, of Azrael, but he is also a personification, imagined by humanity. Any paradox in this is not resolvable by PCs. His task is to separate life from its end. He is not a god; he neither requires nor accepts worship, and he happens whether people believe in him or not.

Death appears as a polished skeleton, seven feet tall. There are tiny points of light, usually blue, in his empty eye-sockets. He normally wears a robe of absolute black, and sometimes a black riding cloak with a silver brooch, showing his monogram, the Infinite Omega (an omega superimposed on a lazy-eight infinity symbol). HIS VOICE is felt within, rather than heard, and he is understandable in all languages, though his statements may sometimes be less than absolutely clear. It is equal to the Voice of Command advantage (p. 56). His scythe has a normal-looking wooden handle, and his sword has an intricate but conventional hilt, but their blades are an ice-blue colour, so thin as to be transparent. Both are, for all purposes, infinitely sharp, and can cut through anything. (If it ever matters, they ignore armour PD and all DR, and do triple damage.) Their purpose is to divide body and soul. Death usually uses the scythe, but royalty and a few other important people are entitled to the sword.

Under normal circumstances, Death can be seen only by cats, people with magical senses, and those he has come to collect. Persons in a heightened state



Elves

Elves are an extra-dimensional race who appear not too unlike humans. This is deceptive. Elves are, in a very true sense, monsters.

They occasionally manage to obtain access to the Discworld (and other worlds), and set to work amusing themselves. They are often later remembered as wonderful; the nature of their amusements is such that beings with *better* memories regard them as one might regard an intelligent plague virus.

Elves used to be widespread on the Disc, millennia ago, but they were driven away by the growing use of iron among native races, coupled with the determined opposition of local witches and other magic-workers. The decline of magic on the Disc may have robbed such defenders of some of their power, but it also reduced the number and reliability of dimensional gateways. They left behind a number of elf-human crossbreeds, some of whom retained a distinct social identity; eventually, these became known as, simply, elves, but they are more correctly called elf-kin.

TYPICAL ELF

ST: 11 **Move/Dodge:** 7/7 **Size:** 1
DX: 13 **PD/DR:** 0/0 **Weight:** 150 lbs.
IQ: 10 **Damage:** by weapon
HT: 11 **Reach:** by weapon

Elves can use human-style arms and armour, and some find it amusing to become good with weapons; others rely more on their powers. They are intelligent, although they do not include the sort of geniuses or extraordinary individuals that any human population produces. They usually know how to ride, handle weapons, and hunt; many also combine Interrogation and medical skills (which are not exactly used for healing). Elves rarely study, but being ageless, they have millennia of experience.

Powers: Elves have Absolute Direction, Ambidexterity, High Pain Threshold (which may help explain their complete lack of empathy), Immunity to Disease, 6 Levels of Magic Resistance that only works against illusions, Night Vision, Perfect Balance, and Second Sight, along with Disguise skill at IQ+1.

In addition, elves are all psionic, with a minimum Power 10 in Telepathy. Their usual skills are Aspect (the ability to radiate an impressive psychic “aura,” which causes others to respect and admire one; see *GURPS Psionics* for details), Illusion (again as in *GURPS Psionics*; grants the ability to manipulate others’ perceptions, once their minds have been entered with Telereceive, and is resisted by the victim’s Will; elves learn it with the Modifiers “Can Be Used Against Groups” and “Affects Own Appearance



Only”), Telecontrol, Telereceive (usually at very high levels), Telesend (again usually with high skill), and Mind Shield.

(As a special effect more than anything else, elves often sing while using their Telecontrol. This is not especially musical – they have to kidnap human bards for that – but it is part of their image, and their victims usually convince themselves it sounds wonderful.)



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