


PYRAMID



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SECRET MAGIC

MAGICAL TRADECRAFT

by Christopher R. Rice

BIBLIOMANCY
by David L. Pulver

ONOMANCY
by Jason "PK" Levine

THE WAY OF THE KEEPERS
by Michele Armellini

**THE STREET SIGN
OF THE FOUR**
by Loki Carbis

THE FIRST RESISTANCE
by David Lichtenstein

THE ACCIDENTAL MAGUS
by Jason Brick

**THE GUARD OF
THE BLACK LANDS**
by J. Edward Tremlett

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Article Colors

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

Pale Blue: In This Issue

Brown: In Every Issue (letters, humor, editorial, etc.)

Dark Blue: *GURPS* Features

Purple: Systemless Features

COVER ART

Pat Morrissey

INTERIOR ART

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Any sufficiently concealed magic is indistinguishable from reality, and secrets and sorcery both like to dwell in the shadows. This month's *Pyramid* is devoted to the world of hidden hocus-pocus, with secret magic!

In a magical world, assassins and spies might utilize subtle spells and potions to practice their *Magical Tradecraft*. Using the Ritual Path magic system presented in the *GURPS Monster Hunters* series, this article describes 23 new spells, four new potions, and tips for designing secretive snoops who dabble in the wizardly field.

Why don't we have direct proof of magic? Perhaps because it's deliberately being kept secret. Learn *The Way of the Keepers*: the importance of their underappreciated efforts (including lenses for different eras), the process for becoming a Keeper, and the details of their *GURPS* magical style – including a new *GURPS Magic* spell!

Where murderous mages dwell at the corners of their most horrific crime, you will find *The Street Sign of the Four*. Investigators can unravel this modern-day mysterious setup – including a final confrontation with four *GURPS* elemental mages.

Grimoires have long been favorite spell-storing spots for mages. Some wizards take this love affair one step further and focus on *Bibliomancy*, the latest Eidetic Memory offering from *GURPS Basic Set* co-developer David L. Pulver. Unleash your inner librarian with these 14 new *Magic* spells!

In a land where magic is suppressed, there is *The First Resistance*. This loose affiliation of wizards keeps the secrets alive while trying to undermine the conquering kingdom. Along with suggestions for using the group in *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy* campaigns, this article describes their methodology in *GURPS Thaumatology: Magical Styles* terms.

Not everyone sets out to be a mage, and some who do have forgotten their pasts – there are many ways to become *The Accidental Magus*. Although useful with any system, this article provides specific *GURPS* examples.

Magic is *haram* – forbidden – to Islamic peoples, and *The Guard of the Black Lands* ensures that residents and visitors of Egypt follow those precepts. This fictive Middle Eastern anti-magic organization is particularly suitable for *GURPS Monster Hunters* campaigns.

Giving of yourself completely can reap great rewards, as *GURPS Psionic Powers* author Jason "PK" Levine demonstrates in *Appendix Z: Onomancy*. Discover a trick employed by some die-hard "roleplayers" as you learn of their new take on secret identities and the Zeroed advantage.

This month's Random Thought Table explores how to use precognitive abilities *post-emptively*, while Odds and Ends includes a *weighty* *Murphy's Rules* plus a new, suppressed path to power for your *GURPS Locations: Worminghall* students.

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FROM THE EDITOR

SECRETS AND SORCERY

Is magic secret? It's the kind of question that comes up for an editor as he ponders an issue devoted to a "secret magic" theme. Let's suppose for a moment that magic is real in our world. This means one of two possibilities.

- *Magic is a terrifically kept secret.* After all, no one has conclusively demonstrated that magic exists, despite millennia of many of the world's smartest folks trying to show it's real. If magic does exist, then somehow it's been phenomenally good at keeping its secret.

- *Magic is a really, really badly kept secret.* Look at it from the other point of view: Even if we don't conclusively know that magic exists, we all know what it is. Let's say a guy with a pointed hat suddenly waved a wand and pointed it at you, resulting in you levitating 10' off the ground or turning into a newt. Your initial thoughts would probably drift more toward "That's *magic!*" more than "That is likely to be some form of advanced technology causing outcomes that I cannot distinguish from seeming violations of natural law!" Secrets are only

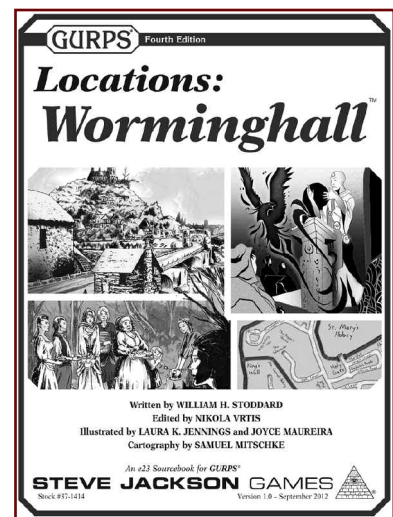
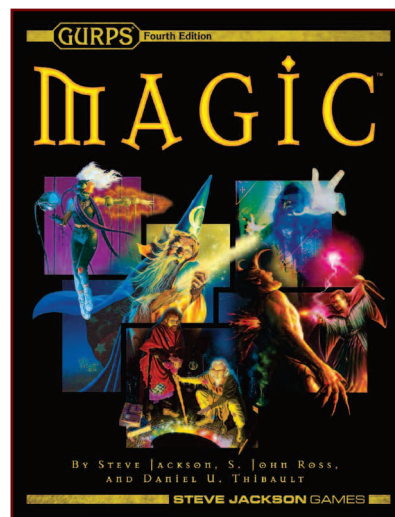
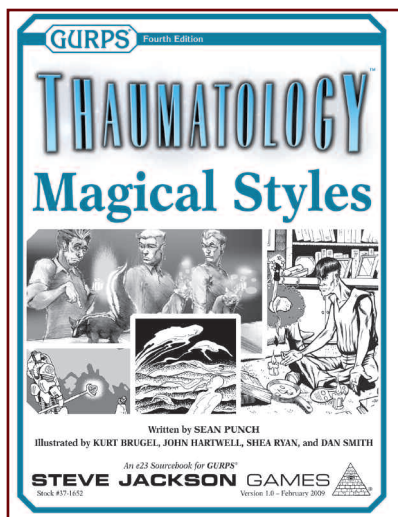
secrets if no one actually knows about them; if everybody in Gotham City knows that Bruce Wayne is Batman, then it's not a secret – even if you've never seen the billionaire playboy don his bat-themed body armor in front of you. The fact that everybody would immediately recognize and identify magic points toward it *not* being a secret.

Of course, the Occam's razor answer to this is that magic does not – in fact – exist. But where's the fun in that?

It's in this spirit of pondering the logistics and implications of secretive magic that we present this issue of *Pyramid*. We hope it contains enough inspiration to get your cauldron churning . . . quietly.

WRITE HERE, WRITE NOW

Speaking of quiet conjurers and private prestidigitator premises, how did this issue do at summoning something stealthily? Let us know how we're doing privately at pyramid@sjgames.com, or join the quasi-confidential community at forums.sjgames.com.



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Magic Bullet

Spell Effects: Greater Control Matter.

Inherent Modifiers: Damage, External Huge Piercing 3d (Armor Divisor (2)).

Greater Effects: 1 (x3).

This spell is cast as a charm on a projectile, usually a bullet. Once the projectile hits the target, he immediately takes 3d+3(2) pi++ damage. This is considered a linked attack, not a follow-up, and has to penetrate any DR the subject has on its own. However, since the subject has already been hit, he does not get a chance to dodge or block the spell! If the shot misses the target, the charm is still expended.

Typical Casting: Greater Control Matter (5) + Lesser Control Magic (5) + Damage, External Huge Piercing 3d+3 (Armor Divisor (2), +50%) (12). 66 energy (22x3).

*You know spies. Bunch of
bitchy little girls.*

– Sam Axe, in *Burn Notice*

Managram

Spell Effects: Lesser Create Magic + Lesser Sense Magic.

Inherent Modifiers: None.

Greater Effects: 0 (x1).

This spell allows you to instantly send a message of 200 words or less to another mage (one who possesses the Magery advantage) anywhere on the planet. The recipient knows who sent the message and may “decline” it if he wishes.

Typical Casting: Lesser Create Magic (6) + Lesser Sense Magic (2) + Range, 8,000 miles (41). 49 energy (49x1).

Mole

Spell Effects: Lesser Destroy Mind.

Inherent Modifiers: Bestows a Penalty, Caster’s Influence skills.

Greater Effects: 0 (x1).

While under the effects of this spell, the subject resists the caster’s Influence skill rolls at -5 for the next month. This is especially handy when cultivating an asset or (obviously) a mole within a organization.

Typical Casting: Lesser Destroy Mind (5) + Bestows a Penalty, -5 to resist caster’s Influence skills (32) + Duration, 1 month (11). 48 energy (48x1).

Sorcerous Silencer

Spell Effects: Greater Control Energy.

Inherent Modifiers: None.

Greater Effects: 1 (x3).

For one hour, this spell completely silences its target firearm.

Typical Casting: Greater Control Energy (5) + Duration, 1 hour (3) + Subject Weight, 30 lbs. (1). 27 energy (9x3).

Tin-Foil Hat

Spell Effects: Greater Strengthen Mind.

Inherent Modifiers: Altered Traits, Immunity to Mind-Affecting Magic.

Greater Effects: 1 (x3).

This spell is cast as a charm (usually on some form of head-gear) and makes the subject completely immune to all mind-affecting magic for the next hour.

Typical Casting: Greater Strengthen Mind (3) + Lesser Control Magic (5) + Altered Traits, Immunity to Mind-Affecting Magic (30) + Duration, 1 hour (3). 123 energy (41x3).

Waterboard

Spell Effects: Greater Create Matter.

Inherent Modifiers: Affliction, Choking

Greater Effects: 1 (x3).

This spell conjures water in the subject’s airway, causing him to choke; the subject may do nothing but fall down. While the spell persists, the target suffers the effects of suffocation (p. B436). This may be stopped by the caster ending the spell, or by having an ally try a First Aid roll to clear the subject’s airway (roll at -2 before TL7). Each attempt takes two seconds. Subjects with Doesn’t Breathe or Injury Tolerance (Homogenous) are not affected.

Typical Casting: Greater Create Matter (6) + Affliction, Choking (20) + Duration, 10 minutes (1) + Subject Weight, 300 lbs. (3). 90 energy (30x3).

SHAKEN, NOT STIRRED

These new potions are especially useful to undercover operatives, who often mix them into other innocuous things like drinks, yogurt, etc. The costs do not include the energy discount associated with potions; this must still be calculated by the caster in accordance with the ingredients he uses.

Blood Cipher

Spell Effects: Lesser Sense Mind x2.

Inherent Modifiers: None.

Greater Effects: 0 (x1).

This special elixir is not drunk. Instead, it is used to write a message to one or more people. When preparing to write the message, a drop of the recipients’ blood must be added to the potion. After the message is composed, the magic takes effect and turns the writing into coded gibberish. From that point on, only those whose blood was mixed into the ink can comprehend the note; it appears garbled to everyone else. This effect lasts for a year, after which time, the message can be read by anyone.

Typical Form: special.

Typical Ingredients: abacus bead, chalk dust from a teacher’s blackboard, feather from a raven, iron gall ink, slide rule, writer’s quill.

Typical Brewing: Lesser Create Magic (6) + Lesser Sense Mind (2) + Lesser Sense Mind (2) + Duration, 1 year (21). 31 energy (31x1).

THE FIRST RESISTANCE

BY DAVID LICHTENSTEIN

The War of Conquest ended with the Battle of the Horns, and the armies of the Middle Kingdom scattered, leaderless. The Middle Kingdom was conquered by the Severans, and that marked the end of the Third Age. Even without their army, the people there determined to resist the occupying forces. However, unlike the recently conquered, neighboring Sredni and Ravnin, they chose not to leave their cities for a life of desperation and hunger. Instead, they pretended to become loyal subjects of the new conquerors while building secret cells of resistance.

Any resistance was fraught with danger during those first years. The Severan occupation force outlawed the possession of any weapons other than knives and the practice of any magic other than the most simple food and healing spells; scores of wizards were publicly executed for no crime other than knowing now-illegal spells. The Severan wizards were merciless in their use of Mind-Reading and Compel Truth spells to seek out any Midlanders who sought to win back their freedom with arms or magic.

The organized resistance movement had to be very subtle. Those with no talent for magic tried to stockpile weapons or poison the Severans' food supplies, but their successes were limited. It is said that the first teacher of the First Resistance style was the great wizard Ruth the Elder who went into hiding in the City of Umber when it was first conquered. She taught her magic to those who wished to learn to resist the occupation using stealthy magic. The unique elements of the style developed into their present form under the hands of her first students, Liam the Black and Cybelle Shadowhand.

Little discrimination exists among those who resist the Severan occupiers. The First Resistance style is taught to anyone who wishes to learn it and who is committed to making the lives of the occupying army more difficult. Humans and dwarves tend to be the plurality practitioners, but many other races have been represented among the students of the First Resistance.

First Resistance in Dungeon Fantasy

The history behind the creation of the First Resistance style and the culture that might lead to an adventurer learning it is a significant addition to a *Dungeon Fantasy* campaign. However, it may be relatively easy for such a background to be explained by having the person be from a distant land questing to find artifacts or allies to help free his country.

In a *Dungeon Fantasy* setting, the First Resistance style is certainly not limited to humans and dwarves. Any race whose background allows them to have learned the style may take it.

A character using the wizard template in *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 1: Adventurers* should not take 30 points in spells. Instead, they need Fast-Talk (A) IQ-1 [1], Camouflage (A) DX-1 [1], Stealth (A) DX-1 [1], Style Familiarity (First Resistance) [1], Far-Casting (Daze) [1], Limited ER 1 (First Resistance) [1], and Secret Mage [1], for 7 points. The also should have the following 23 spells (H) IQ+1 [1] or (VH) IQ [1]: Apportation, Boost IQ, Bravery, Daze, Delay, Extinguish Fire, Fear, Find Weakness, Foolishness, Ignite Fire, Keen Hearing, Mind Reading, No-Smell, Panic, Persuasion, Purify Air, Seek Earth, Sense Emotion, Sense Foes, Sense Life, Truthsayer, Weaken, and Wisdom. Such a wizard would be of the second stripe, just shy of earning his third stripe.

STEALTHY SPELLCASTING

The First Resistance style is the magic practiced in secret by the Midlander resistance in the cities of Umber, Sallisburg, Tzavolgorod, and other places in the Middle Kingdom. It focuses on persuasion, mind reading, and other subtleties. Experienced practitioners of the First Resistance could be formidable battlefield mages, but they almost never show their power in such a blatant way.

Those who practice the First Resistance style still have to live under the heel of the Severan occupation, and thus keep their magic use and rebellious activities a secret. Nearly all such mages have other, more mundane vocations used to deceive the Severans. Liam the Black was an apprentice cooper, and Cybelle Shadowhand went unnoticed as a street beggar.

FIRST RESISTANCE

7 points

Aside from the style's perks, First Resistance training does offer one major benefit that most other styles do not. Students of this style are exempt from spell prerequisites from outside of the college of the spell they are currently learning.

ODDS AND ENDS

ANYTHING FOR POWER

by William H. Stoddard

Students at Worminghall University (*GURPS Locations: Worminghall*) pursue the medieval tradition of *image magic*, a scholastic approach, where Symbol Drawing (Image Magic) is used to gain bonuses to spell casting rolls. Each spell has its own diagram, representing the planetary influences and other affinities that favor it, and calling upon them.

Some mages aren't content with this slow, safe approach. They look for shortcuts to power – and sometimes find them in the grimoires of *ritual magic*.

Symbol Drawing (European Ritual Magic) isn't a *boost* to magical power; it's a *source* of magical power (see p. B224 for the distinction). Its symbols are the names or the sigils of spirits. Casting a ritual magic spell means invoking a spirit and asking for its aid. The ritual represents, among other things, the formal courtesies required for such a request. If the request isn't presented acceptably, the aid will be denied (a failure) and the request may even be punished (a critical failure, and often a cause for Fright Checks). The effective skill of the caster is the lesser of his skill with the particular spell and his skill with Symbol Drawing (European Ritual Magic).

This form of Symbol Drawing can be aided by taking extra time (p. B346); given the dangers, ritualists who are even partly sane do take that time! Spirits also respond to sacrifices. These amount to bribes, and provide bonuses equal to those from a bribe offered to a Contact (pp. B44-45). However, each spirit wants bribes in a specific form, and with appropriate presentation, which demands a Ritual Magic roll. The darker spirits expect blood sacrifices! Bonuses from sacrifices, unlike bonuses from extra time, benefit *both* the Symbol Drawing roll and the roll to cast the spell.

Ritual magic can be used, in principle, to cast most of the standard spells. But most practitioners prefer to cast spells that aren't part of image magic: necromantic spells, curses, and Divination (Crystal-Gazing or Gastromancy) – see the appendix to *Worminghall* for the full list.

Necromantic spells, in particular, offer ways to communicate with spirits and thus to recruit new spirits into one's service. (Identifying an appropriate servant may call for a roll against Hidden Lore (Demon Lore or Spirit Lore.) Such research can also be conducted by questioning a person who acts as a voice for the spirit, through the benefit of Channeling or Medium, or by being the subject of the spell Divination (Gastromancy).

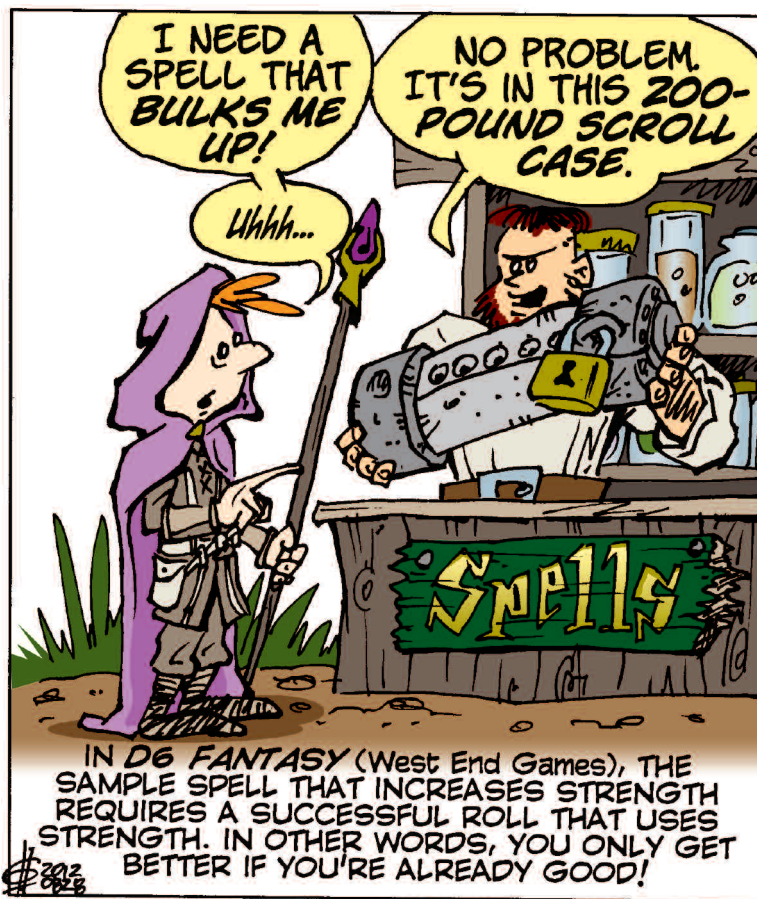
Getting the spirit to leave again can be a problem! Ritual mages often study Exorcism for their own

protection, even though few of them avoid the -4 penalty for lacking holy support.

The Church forbids ritual magic because it involves "praying" to spirits for help and even offering them sacrifices – violating the commandment against worshipping other gods. This condemnation also applies to mediums and channels. Some theologians consider the ritual mage's Magery, which enables him to make spirits listen to his prayers, as a specialized form of mediumship. Orthodox doctrine holds that all the spirits who answer such appeals are demons and deceivers. Despite the risks and costs, some mages will do anything to gain knowledge or power.

MURPHY'S RULES

BY GREG HYLAND



Got a *Murphy's Rule* of your own? Send it to murphy@sjgames.com

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

GURPS rules and statistics in this magazine are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition*. Page references that begin with B refer to that book.

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