PYRAMID
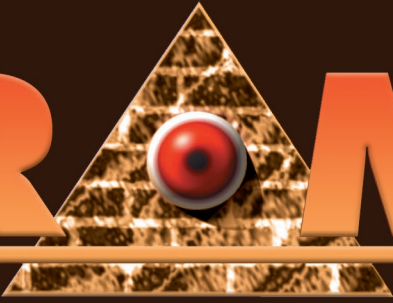
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ALTERNATE DUNGEONS

POINTLESS SLAYING AND LOOTING
by Sean Punch

DUNGEONS OF MARS
by Phil Masters

FROM THE BOTTOM UP
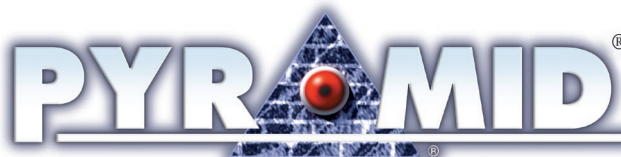**by Matt Riggsby**

GOOD DUNGEONS
by David L. Pulver

**DUNGEON FANTASY
VIDEO GAMING**
by Christopher R. Rice

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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All orc and no play makes Jack a dull boy . . .

ARTICLE COLORS

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

Pale Blue: In This Issue
Brown: In Every Issue (humor, editorial, etc.)
Green: Columnist
Dark Blue: GURPS Features
Purple: Systemless Features

COVER ART
Eric Wilkerson

IN THIS ISSUE

Everyone loves good old-fashioned crypt-crawling, especially as exemplified by the best-selling **GURPS Dungeon Fantasy** line. But sometimes you want to shake things up. Do things differently. Take your crypt-crawling capers into new and exciting directions. This month's *Pyramid* is here to help.

Are **GURPS** character points getting in the way of having fun *right now*? Then get rid of them, and get on with *Pointless Slaying and Looting!* **GURPS** Line Editor Sean Punch presents a new system for creating characters without character points ("pointless" – get it?). Although specifically geared for **Dungeon Fantasy** campaigns, it also provides tips for designing your own trait packages, plus sample archetypes, abilities, flaws, and wildcard skills.

For a fantasy game that's out of this world, explore the *Dungeons of Mars.* Phil Masters – **GURPS Thaumatology: Alchemical Baroque** author – examines the key features of planetary-romance adventures, including technology, powers, characters, monsters, and locations.

Why should good guys have all the fun? See how the *fodder* half lives and work your way to the top, *From the Bottom Up!* Matt Riggsby – the city planner of **GURPS Locations: Hellsgate –** shows you how to become a **Dungeon Fantasy** *monster*-adventurer, with seven new **GURPS** templates and lenses, plus suggestions for making monstrous campaigns.

Not all crypts and dungeons were created by sinister masterminds or long-dead evil cults, as this month's Eidetic Memory reveals in its exploration of *Good Dungeons*. David L. Pulver – the lone surviving scribe of a trip to **GURPS Banestorm: Abydos** – ponders the numerous reasons why good guys would want to hole up underground, and why anyone would want to raid their hiding places.

When lots of people hear "RPGs," they think "computer games." Now you can really blur the lines and bring electronic roleplaying to the tabletop with *Dungeon Fantasy Video Gaming*. Frequent *Pyramid* tinkerer Christopher R. Rice serves up **GURPS** game mechanics for over a dozen video-gaming tropes, including a new template, new abilities, and more.

This month's issue wraps up with a look at the big picture from Random Thought Table. Whether you're seeking to play a Martian, monster, or multifaceted mimic, this issue of *Pyramid* will have you playing faster, roaming farther, and having more fun than you ever thought possible!

FROM THE EDITOR

A TOTALLY NEW EXPERIENCE!
(Still With Elves, Of Course)

Whenever polls are done of what gamers like – and which sales figures seem to bear out – almost invariably the hierarchy has fantasy gaming at the top. There are certainly a couple dozen humanities/sociology paper topics around the reasons of why that is; a good starting point is noting that few modern-day problems can be resolved by hitting them with swords.

Regardless, fantasy is king, and folks like dungeon-fantasy gaming . . . and based on the popularity of **GURPS Dungeon Fantasy,** you really like dungeon-fantasy gaming with **GURPS.** But sometimes you want to push the limits of what "dungeon fantasy" means. This issue is here to help, by starting with the baseline foundation of crypt-crawling treasure-hunters and going from there.

What's interesting is that the "dungeon fantasy" foundation is so strong, the mere evocation of it conjures specific ideas and trappings. It's unl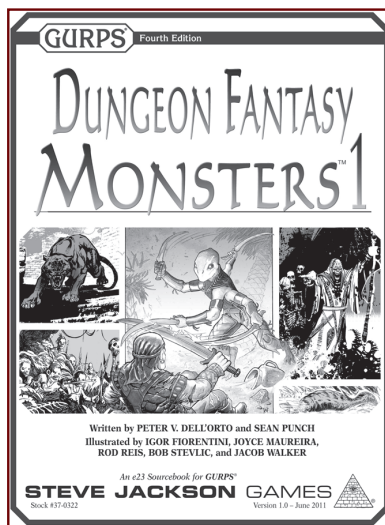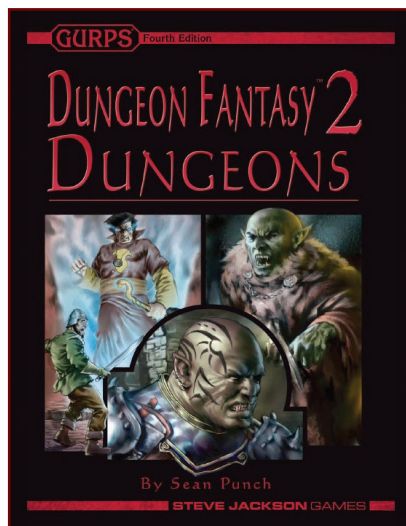ikely we could do – say – an "Alternate Space Opera" theme for *Pyramid,* because there isn't a cemented notion of what would be in a space-opera issue that could be rallied against; "space opera with steampunk-flavored ships" would still be recognizable as space opera.

However, "alternate dungeon fantasy" gaming *does* leave a lot of room for ideas and experimentation, and we're proud to present some amazing ideas here for shaking things up while maintaining those aspects of fantasy that gamers seem to love . . .

. . . mostly starting with the ability to solve problems by hitting them with swords.

WRITE HERE, WRITE NOW

So, was our trip to the dungeon alternate enough for you? Was there something you especially liked . . . or something that should be locked at the bottom of a dungeon? Let us know how, via a private scribe directed to **pyramid@sjgames.com**, or the mad magi working publicly around the clock at **forums.sjgames.com.**

Weapons

In dungeon adventuring, one of the most important options for technology is destruction. Seriously deadly advanced tech can play havoc with dungeoneering games, but fortunately for the GM, weapons encounter special problems in a technologically declining or restricted society. High-tech weapons may need expendable ammunition that isn't at all easy to manufacture, or they could consume insane amounts of power. Very-high-tech weapons also may have built-in "access control" systems that make them unusable for adventurers who just happen to pick them up (see *GURPS Ultra-Tech,* p. 150).

All this in turn means that high-tech weapons that are *designed* for low-tech use or circumstances of minimum support or supply will be the equivalent of highly desirable magic items, e.g., the partisan needler on p. 140 of *Ultra-Tech.*

"Dying Mars," for one example, has strong effective limitations on firearms: severe shortages of both metals and chemicals suitable for explosives manufacture (see *GURPS Mars,* p. 116). The setting has some guns, but most are TL4 – single-shot weapons that won't cause too much trouble in dungeon games, especially given that they fire lightweight clay or glass bullets with abysmal armor penetration. The setting also has a few weird-tech options courtesy of the Cave Martians. For reference, see the table below for two relatively common Martian sidearms; check *GURPS Mars* for more explanation.

Armor

Advanced armor could be an even bigger problem than high-tech weapons; even the fanciest high-TL body armor doesn't necessarily require power cells, rarely has security locks, and can have DR values that make the wearer functionally immune to swords and arrows. The GM just may have to declare that it's very rare, perhaps because offense regularly outpaces defense in ultra-tech societies, so that armor is seen as pointless among the people who might otherwise have made it. Also, very advanced societies may end up equipping all their troops with complex power armor, which *does* require power cells and difficult maintenance. (And if only the king has a working suit of the old stuff . . . don't annoy the king, okay?) If advanced armor does show up anyway, it can always be limited to a few individual pieces that cover only one part of the body; the GM should then apply hit location rules, of course. This can lead to interesting details in fights scenes, as skilled fighters who normally go for head shots are forced to diversify against opponents wearing "magic" helmets.

"Dying Mars" is a setting that's notably light on armor; by the book, most non-nobles are limited to leather or bone armor. (Bone armor is discussed in *GURPS Low-Tech;* even if Martian craftsmen can treat it to avoid it being semi-ablative, it still only gives DR 3 while being fairly heavy.) Players might want to fudge this a little for dungeoneering adventures; dungeon survival for frontline fighters is all too often dependent on decent protection. Adventurers in the setting may gain access to metal armor, as a necessity of their profession, though they might have to pay more for it – which in turn might mean more of them choosing to operate as "swashbucklers" rather than "knights."

OTHER POWERS

Relic or imported gadgets aren't the only possible source of exotic abilities, even in the absence of magic.

Psi

Given the soft-science-fiction/science-fantasy mode of many of these stories, psionics are another option. Psionic adepts may well be the "wizards" and "clerics" of the setting – natural talents with lengthy specialist training, from either secular colleges or religious seminaries, which unlocked their psionic gifts. Alternatively, psionic power may be a side effect of lengthy training in exotic *physical* disciplines, making adepts more like monkish martial artists who can add psi powers on top of their combat skills.

If psi is going to, in effect, replace magic for most adventurers' purposes, a wide range of effects should be available. Raid *GURPS Psionic Powers* and its supporting material, rather than merely employing the limited psi powers documented in *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 3: The Next Level* or *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 14: Psi.* It will often fit the feel of these sorts of settings best to split Animal Telepathy out from Telepathy, and to divide Psychic Healing into Biokinesis and Psychometabolism, as discussed in *Psionic Powers.*

Martian Weapons

Guns (Pistol) (DX-4 or most other Guns-2)

TL	Weapon	Damage	Acc	Range	Weight	RoF	Shots	ST	Bulk	Rcl	Cost	Notes
4	Flintlock Pistol	1d-1(0.5) pi++	2	20/210	1.3/0.005	1	1(20)	7	-2	2	$250	[1]
5+1	Peroxide Pistol	1d imp	2	66/720	0.85/0.002	3	10	8	-1	1	$450	[2]

Notes

[1] The flintlock pistol is already fine (accurate *and* reliable) quality, with an Acc bonus that bends the rules in *GURPS Low-Tech* (Martian gunsmiths are very experienced, and have access to unusual materials), and can't be upgraded to fine again. It has Malf. 15. A very fine (reliable) version would cost $375, and would have Malf. 16.

[2] The cost of the peroxide pistol has been increased to bring it into line with firearms in *GURPS* Fourth Edition generally. Similarly, ammunition and propellant should cost $10 per 125 darts. Even so, these prices may only apply in areas where TL5+1 equipment is generally available – meaning mostly the Underground Empire and the trade quarters of the larger Marineris city-states. In areas where the pertaining technology is strictly TL4, multiply all these costs by four. Of course, that doesn't stop the pistol from being popular among wealthy Martians. The cost of poisons to go on the darts is up to the GM.

FROM THE BOTTOM UP

BY MATT RIGGSBY

The traditional dungeon crawl has a band of human-ish adventurers going down deep holes in search of treasure, fighting tougher monsters, and getting bigger rewards the deeper they go. But almost from the beginning of fantasy role-playing games, there's been a desire to do it the other way around: Monsters come up from the depths of the dungeons to raid the surface world for loot and strike back against those who come down to attack them. These guidelines let you do just that. *Be* a thing! Defend your stuff! And work your way to the top, from the bottom up.

MONSTER CHARACTERS

To play a monster character in *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy,* it helps to have character templates. These fall into three categories. A few are cheap racial lenses, which may be applied to the regular adventurer templates normally. Most monsters, though, are more expensive. Several cost too much to reasonably apply to the standard templates. But they *can* be added the cheaper templates from *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 15: Henchmen*, turning supernumeraries into capable monsters. Finally, a few are sufficiently expensive that they require full-blown templates of their own.

BLOB

250 points

The blob is a sentient entity related to slimes, oozes, and similar jellied hazards. Unlike its corrosive brethren, it relies on mere physical force. A blob's usual approach is to sneak up on its prey (for a large mass of protoplasm, it's remarkably stealthy), grab it, and crush it to death or encase it with a fast-hardening secreted resin for later consumption.

Blobs are very hard to hurt with regular weapons; they have a thick skin, but if pierced, the undifferentiated protoplasm within simply flows back together and the wound quickly seals itself. They can extend pseudopods to manipulate tools, albeit clumsily. Though they have slightly odd personalities, their ability to move quietly and observe their surroundings in detail makes them good scouts. They're not great combatants, but they do a reasonably good job of hiding, which allows them to act as traps.

Attributes: ST 16 [60]; DX 13 [60]; IQ 10 [0]; HT 12 [20].
Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d+1/2d+1; BL 51 lbs.; HP 16 [0]; Will 10 [0]; Per 12 [10]; FP 12 [0]; Basic Speed 6.25 [0]; Basic Move 6 [0].
Advantages: Ambidexterity [5]; Binding 2 [4]; Chameleon 1 [5]; Constriction Attack [15]; Damage Resistance 3 (Tough Skin, -40%) [9]; *and* Injury Tolerance (Diffuse) [100].
● 30 points chosen from among Acute Senses [2/level], Amphibious [10], Doesn't Breathe (Gills, -50%) [10], Peripheral Vision [15], Stretching [6/level], additional Binding [2/level], additional Chameleon [5/level], or additional Damage Resistance (Tough Skin, -40%) [3/level].
Disadvantages: Bad Grip 1 [-5]; Increased Consumption 1 [-10]; Invertebrate [-20]; No Legs (Slithers) [0]; Social Stigma (Monster) [-15]; *and* Weakness (Salt, 1d/minute) [-20]. ● -30 points chosen from among Bad Grip 1 [-5], Bad Temper [-10*], Bestial [-10], Curious [-5*], Gluttony [-5*], or Odious Personal Habit [-5 to -15].
Primary Skills: Brawling (E) DX+2 [4]-15; Camouflage (A) IQ+1 [4]-11; Stealth (A) DX+1 [4]-14; *and* Wrestling (A) DX+2 [8]-15.
Secondary Skills: Four of Forced Entry or Swimming, both (E) DX+1 [2]-14; Climbing (A) DX [2]-13; or Observation, Survival (any), or Tracking, all (A) Per [2]-12.
Background Skills: Four of Shield (E) DX [1]-13; Axe/Mace or Shortsword, both (A) DX-1 [1]-12; Holdout (A) IQ-1 [1]-9; or spend 1 point on any unchosen secondary skill at one level lower.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

Blob Power-Ups

Possible power-up for blobs include a more sophisticated network of light-sensitive spots (360° Vision); external digestive processes (Innate Attacks, notably corrosive ones); the ability to split into independent bodies (Duplication (No Sympathetic Injury, +20%; Shared Resources, -40%) [28/duplicate]); and extra limbs in the form of Extra Arms and Strikers. Blobs have no upper limit on ST. However, as they get stronger, they get bigger, occasionally increasing their SM. Use the Growth advantage as a guideline to determine maximum ST for any given SM.

VIDEO-GAME ACHIEVEMENTS UNLOCKED

Beyond new types of characters and abilities, there are plenty of other ways to infuse the video-game spirit into your *Dungeon Fantasy* campaign.

5' CORRIDORS AND 10' CEILINGS

Many games feature "mini-maps" or "radar screens" that allow players to see enemies, items, places of interest, and so on. In **GURPS**, this is best defined as the Para-Radar Scanning Sense advantage (p. B81).

Mini-Map: 3D Spatial Sense [10] + Para-Radar (Always On, -10%; Extended Arc, 360°, +125%; Nuisance Effect, cannot be used to target unseen targets with supernatural abilities, -5%; Penetrating, +50%; Reduced Range, 1/10, -30%) [92] + Shtick (Character's "footprints" can be "seen" on Para-Radar) [1]. *Notes:* This ability lets you "see" everything 20 yards from your current location from a 360° arc. It works in any environment and is effectively undetectable. You always know which way north is and receive bonuses to certain skills (see *3D Spatial Sense,* p. B34). When in an enclosed area, make an IQ roll – Engineer (Mining) if underground, Architecture or Urban Survival if in a building. Success allows you to build a mental map of the area, even if you've never been there. Finally, you *always* know where you've been in an area and can follow your mental footprints to and from any location you've visited with no roll. It cannot be used to target detected subjects. *103 points.*

If *all* player characters or important NPCs have this ability, this is simply a design switch.

We Need to Go Deeper

GURPS Dungeon Fantasy is at its nature "beer and pretzels" gaming and may not suit all gaming groups. Of course, the GM could easily change this by using additional game mechanics. He could even run a traditional fantasy game with some *Dungeon Fantasy* elements. For example, a setting with virtual-reality or similar technology (along with magic or psionics) could present a game within a game. The characters take the roles of players in a high-fantasy video game where their avatars use the iconic template from *Dungeon Fantasy 1.* This allows the GM to run two types of games at the same time. It would require more work during character creation and "leveling up" would become more complicated, but it offers a greater variety of potential challenges.

DOTS ON A MAP

In many video games, overland travel is *boring*, so the designers create a way to justify avoiding it in game. This usually takes the form of some kind of teleportation, often called "warp points." From a game perspective, this is best designed as a network of gates or portals in the campaign setting. Optionally, the following ability could be used instead (which might also be a campaign feature if the GM allows).

Point-to-Point Teleport: Warp (Accessibility, Must have been to location previously, -20%; Blind only, -50%; Cannot Blink, -50%; Extra Carrying Capacity, Extra-Heavy, +50%; Gyroscopic, +10%; Immediate Preparation Required, 1 minute, -30%; Reliable 10, +50%; Special Portal, Warp points, -40%) [20]. *Notes:* This allows the user to travel through a series of portals or warp points that he has previously visited. He must spend a minute preparing first, but is subject to the usual rules for Warp. He also cannot evade attacks, doesn't need to make a Body Sense roll, and can carry up to his Extra-Heavy encumbrance with him.

QUICK, SAVE THE GAME!

Video games often allow players to save their game at fixed points or before specific events. In **GURPS,** this best translates as Extra Life (Copy, -20%) [20]. In a more meta-gaming sense, The GM could require that players keep records of their character as they are when they "save the game." Some games allow an infinite number of lives – but they cost gold or other tangibles. In such games add, "Cosmic, Point cost is deducted from character's equipment and/or money" (+50%). This is calculated as $12,500 (or 2.5 × Average Starting Wealth for the campaign). If the character doesn't have enough money or gear to cover the cost, he can instead go into debt (if the GM allows) or removes the advantage from his character sheet.

If a specific location or area is required to "save" your character, add "Accessibility, Save point" (-20%). In such games, the GM should permit players to purchase any number of levels of Extra Life or set a hard limit. One level of Extra Life per 100 points is fair, allowing most delvers to have up to two levels. If you can "autosave" your character at specific points, this is a +20% enhancement.

Another option might allow characters to have "unlimited lives." This would be Unkillable 3 [150] *plus* Regeneration (Fast; Unkillable only, -40%) [30]. The character would then "re-form" at a predetermined spot, but without his gear. If he has any Signature Gear, these re-form with him.

The GM might design dungeons or the town to have specific "respawning points" where dead characters come back to life instead of where they last saved the game. If the GM is using warp points (see *Dots on a Map,* above), both warp points and save points should be in the same area. He could even extend this to monsters. For instance, all slain monsters in a particular dungeon might "respawn" every couple of hours.

If all of this is too complicated, the GM could simply rule that the Resurrection spell costs *less* than normal.