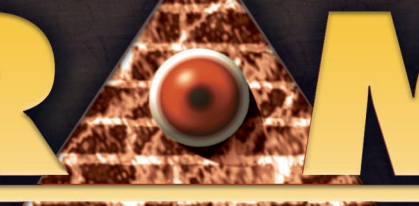


# PYRAMID<sup>®</sup>



Issue 3/91 May '16

## THAUMATOLOGY IV

### TECHNOMYSTICISM

by W.A. Frick

**THE THAUMATURGY  
OF METALLURGY**  
by Ted Brock

**TECH SUPPORT**  
by Matt Riggsby

**DARK ALCHEMY**  
by David L. Pulver

**THE TOME OF THE BLACK ISLAND**  
by J. Edward Tremlett

**CODEX DUELLO**  
by Christopher R. Rice

# STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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Magic should never be boring! If you're looking for something new to add a *spark* to your games, then this *Pyramid* is for you. Believing is seeing.

With the rise of technology, strange spirits have come into existence, thriving in the wonders of the modern world. Harness their power with the secrets of *Technomysticism*. Get a strange, powerful new lens for the *GURPS Monster Hunters* techie template, information on available abilities, and *GURPS* stats for sample tech spirits. As a bonus, learn how to use these mechanics with alternate tech levels, weird science, and the netrunning rules from *Pyramid* #3/21: *Cyberpunk*.

If your fantasy setting has some unexplored faraway areas, then that might be where *The Tome of the Black Island* was created. This systemless article presents lore on how this most dangerous grimoire was created and the mad wizard who compiled it. It also includes suggestions for rituals contained therein as well as several adventure ideas.

Crazy wizards who want to fill their shelves with strange brews should turn to *Dark Alchemy*. This month's Eidetic Memory brings you 11 potions from the workshop of David L. Pulver, author of *GURPS Banestorm: Abydos*. Dabble in artificial blood, quaff some liquefied memories, or fall victim to corpse powder . . . if you dare!

Broaden your understanding of the intersection of magic and metal by learning about *The Thaumaturgy of Metallurgy*. Unleash the Metal spells of *GURPS Magic* into their own college with dozens of new and updated spells – from Walk through Metal to Celestial Shotgun – plus other tidbits such as stats for metal elementals.

When wizards disagree, there must be a codified system to resolve those powerful clashes – and thus there must be the *Codex Duello*. Frequent *Pyramid* archmage Christopher R. Rice discusses what's necessary to have mages duel, how magic works when participating in a duel, plus relevant character traits and useful new equipment. Get tips for how to apply the rules to *GURPS Magic* spells, *GURPS Thaumatology: Ritual Path Magic* castings, *GURPS Thaumatology: Sorcery* abilities, and even *GURPS Psionic Powers*.

This issue also includes a Random Thought Table where it's not what you know but who knows you, as well as a *Car Wars* article that's all about the tech. Whether you're clashing atop a tower, unearthing an island tome, or taming the ghost in the machine, this issue of *Pyramid* is bound to have something that makes your game magical!

### ARTICLE COLORS

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

*Pale Blue:* In This Issue

*Brown:* In Every Issue

*Green:* Columnist

*Dark Blue:* *GURPS* Features

*Purple:* Systemless Features

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# FROM THE EDITOR

## WHAT-IF MAGIC

A couple of times a week on Twitter, we post short campaign, adventure, or story ideas under the hashtag #GURPShook as a way to showcase the creativity and do-anything spirit of **GURPS** (and maybe the opportunity for Your Humble Editor to occasionally slip in a terrible pun). This month, we did one story hook in particular:

*On this world, magnets fail to work in a no-mana zone, as does anything magnetic.*

Of course, the idea is that magnets are somehow magical. But the larger implication works in reverse: What if magnetism is just another expression of a greater magical force?

It's this kind of lateral thinking that allows the "what ifs" that make the arcane-themed issues of *Pyramid* so special, where we look at the magical possibilities of technology or metal or fortune.

The amazing thing is that **GURPS** is robust enough to handle just about anything you can throw at it. The core and

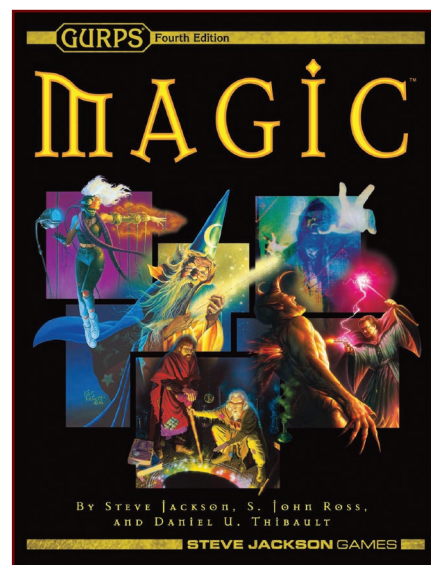
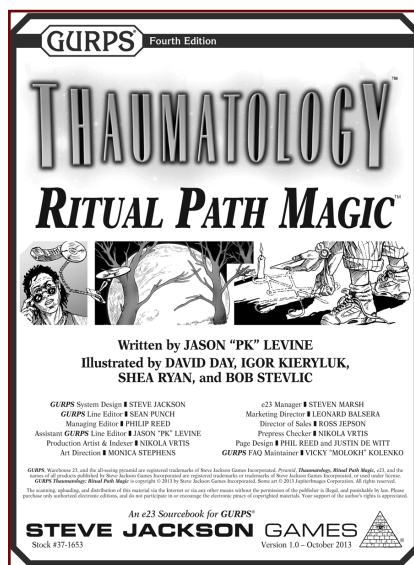
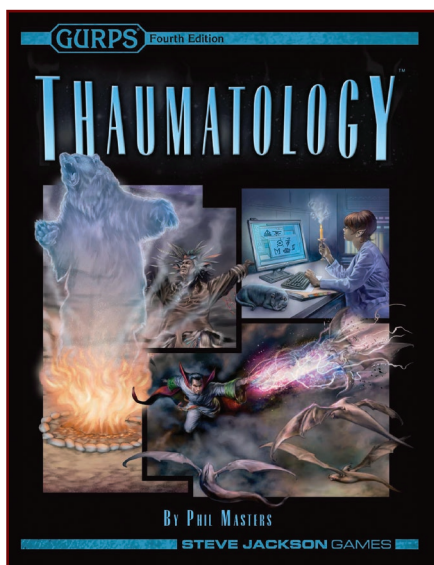
add-ons allow for considerable creativity, and the forums become hotbeds of activity when they're faced with a challenge.

Many campaigns have spawned around a certain flavor of magic or magical variant, while other settings have thrived on having lots of smaller, tangentially related forms of magic, where alchemy and Ritual Path magic mingle with strange one-off mystical types only practiced by a few.

Magic is all about possibilities. With this issue of *Pyramid*, the realms of the impossible just became very doable indeed.

## WRITE HERE, WRITE NOW

How magical was this issue of *Pyramid*? Did we pull a rabbit out of our hat that you weren't expecting? Are any of these offerings going to be part of your bag of tricks from now on? Or did any of our efforts at sawing someone in half work out a bit squishier than you would have liked (metaphorically)? Let us know via private missives to [pyramid@sjgames.com](mailto:pyramid@sjgames.com), or through the talking spirit boards at [forums.sjgames.com](http://forums.sjgames.com).



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If you win, it takes 1d burning damage per level of Surge. See *Electrical* (p. B134) for details on the results.

*Statistics:* Burning Attack 1d (Based on HT, +20%; Cybernetic Only, -50%; Malediction 2, +150%; No Incendiary, -10%; PM, -10%; Surge, +20%) [11/level].

## Power Supply

8 points/level

You can power an electrical device just by touching it. You must Concentrate for a second and spend 2 FP to establish the current. After that, you can sustain it for as long as you remain in electrical contact with the device you're powering. Once you stop touching it, it loses power after 10 seconds unless it has a rechargeable battery; in that case, giving it power charges the battery to last for *twice* as long as you maintained contact, up to its normal full capacity.

Higher levels enable you to power more devices at once, provided they're all in electrical contact with one another (all plugged into outlets on the same circuit, etc.). At level 1, you can provide enough power to use a single computer, complete with console and standard peripherals (monitor, speakers, desktop printer, etc.). Higher levels increase the amount of devices exponentially – level 2 powers four times as many devices (a small server room or DJ booth). Level 3 powers nine times as many (the offices in a small building); and so on.

*Statistics:* Create Electricity (Accessibility, Only to power electrical devices, -50%; PM, -10%) [8/level].

## Remote Control

20 points

By making an appropriate operation skill roll (Computer Operation, Electronics Operation, or Tech Wiz!), you can issue remote commands to any computerized or electronic device you can see. You take a penalty equal to the controlling computer's Complexity, as well as normal range penalties (p. B550) if you aren't in contact with the device (physically or across a network), and -1 per device already under your control.

Your influence is complete – you can order the device to do anything of which it is normally capable – and lasts for as long as you continue to Concentrate. Unless someone comes in to reset it (or it has some automated system that does so periodically), it will continue operating indefinitely with any programming changes you make; if you turned it off, it will stay off until someone switches it back on, and so forth.

*Statistics:* Mind Control (Cybernetic Only, -50%; PM, -10%) [20].

## Repairing Touch

18 points

You can fix a computer or electronic device by praying over it. This works exactly as for normal healing (p. B59), but repairs damage, malfunctions, burnouts, short circuits, and so forth, to restore a machine to working condition. The GM determines the FP cost and/or skill penalty (use an appropriate repair skill, or Tech Wiz!, in place

of IQ) to fix a particular device, depending on size, types of components, and what's wrong with it.

*Statistics:* Healing (Faith Healing, +20%; Cybernetic Only, -50%; PM, -10%) [18].

## Spirit of Necessity

4 points/level

You can pull a minor electronic device, battery, spare part, tool, or other electronics-related gizmo out of your pocket, even in spite of not mentioning having it before. Each level allows one such miraculous pocket-pull per gaming session; you may take as many levels as you like.

*Statistics:* Gizmo (Accessibility, Small electronic device or electronics-related object only, -10%; PM, -10%) [4/level].

## WEIRD SCIENTIST

Those with access to *The Power of Weird Science* (on pp. 4-6 of *Pyramid* #3/46: *Weird Science*) or *GURPS Powers: The Weird*, and the will to do weird, can use the rules there to design a *weird scientist*. Make changes to the techie template as for the technomystic lens, save that all Technomystical talents and abilities are replaced by Weird Science equivalents. It's an even bet whether the character will benefit more from Inventor! or Tech Wiz!, as neither is necessary to use his powers; he might opt for Science! instead of either. And without the need for Discipline of Faith, he's more apt to be Curious or Oblivious.

### *Bits and Pieces and Magic From My Hand*

The weird-science rules could potentially apply to any number of abilities, limited only by a player's imagination and a GM's patience – an “etheric scientist” might select from Mysticism (*Champions*, p. 43), a “psychotronic engineer” might simulate certain Psionic abilities (*Champions*, p. 45), and an expert in “animal magnetism” might activate Bioenhancement abilities (*Champions*, p. 40). In any case, the normal power modifiers are replaced with Weird Science (*Pyramid* #3/46, p. 4) or Weird (*The Weird*, p. 19), both also -10%.

Which abilities, and how many a particular weird scientist may have, is up to the GM. He may wish (or allow the player) to create a list of around 20 Weird Science abilities, mixed and matched from other powers. He could allow different abilities based on the scientist having IQ or better in relevant skills – Engineer (Psychotronics), Expert Skill (Psionics), and/or Physics (Paraphysics) to focus psi-energy; Biology, Esoteric Medicine, and/or Physiology (Human) to use Bioenhancement; and so on. Alternatively, the GM may allow a weird scientist to select *any* 18 abilities, +1 per level of the Weird Science skill he has above IQ.

In cases where the Weird Science power ends up covering a large number of widely varied abilities, it would be fair to raise the cost of Weird Science Talent to 10 or even 15 points/level.

# EIDETIC MEMORY

## DARK ALCHEMY

BY DAVID L. PULVER

The set of elixirs collectively referred to as “dark alchemy” represent formulations that are associated with necromantic and thanatological practices. (The existing elixirs of Lichdom, *GURPS Magic*, p. 217, and Reanimation, *Magic*, p. 217, may also be considered to be part of the same family group.) Certain of the elixirs described below normally are illegal in many jurisdictions, including Cannibalism, Cerebral Preservation, Corpse Powder, Liquefied Memories, Nightmare Extraction, and Zombification. The other elixirs listed here are usually unrestricted, though they may be uncommon or considered somewhat disreputable by association.

In a *GURPS Banestorm* campaign, the techniques for formulating dark alchemy elixirs are known to the alchemists in the hidden city of Abydos (see *GURPS Banestorm: Abydos*), where, like necromantic magic, they are quite legal. However, familiarity with some of these elixirs may have spread beyond that cursed city. In other campaigns, it is possible that this knowledge could be unique to certain races who are associated with necromancy or death – e.g., ghouls or banes (see *GURPS Fantasy Folk*) – or might simply represent the individual researchers of eccentric alchemists, liches, or alchemist-mages.

### *Artificial Blood*

This pale elixir is an artificial substitute for blood. Each dose is equivalent to 2 HP worth of blood. As it is an alchemical substitution, it can nourish creatures that must feed on human blood, such as vampires, even if this is a mystical rather than physical requirement. Although its purpose may be benign, it is often considered sinister for this reason.

*Duration:* 1 week.

*Form:* Potion.

*Cost:* \$250/\$450.

*Recipe:* \$100; one week; defaults to Alchemy-1.

### *Bella Mortis*

This ointment must be rubbed over the entire body of an intact cadaver that has not experienced significant decay (generally, no more than a day old). If applied to a corpse, the body swiftly regains the look and feel it possessed in life just

before death. It loses stiffness, and pallor, and does not further decay until the elixir’s effects wear off. At a casual glance, an otherwise uninjured corpse appears sleeping rather than dead, until the lack of breath is noticed. (This elixir also plays havoc with any forensic attempt to determine time of death; it’s as if the death occurred a moment ago.) It has no effect on a live person.

*Duration:* 1 week.

*Form:* Ointment.

*Cost:* \$250/\$450.

*Recipe:* \$100; 1 week; defaults to Alchemy-1.

### *Blood Compatibility*

This elixir allows a living subject to accept blood transfusions and organ transplants from incompatible donors, or even from other species, without experiencing rejection. An unfortunate side effect is that the subject is at -3 on HT rolls to resist diseases or infections during the period (unless he is also completely immune to disease). Also, blood or organs taken from the subject while he is under the influence of this potion are (permanently) safe to transfuse or transplant to anyone without rejection.

*Duration:* 1 month.

*Form:* Potion.

*Cost:* \$500/\$900.

*Recipe:* \$200; 2 weeks; defaults to Alchemy-1.

### *Cannibalism*

A living person who drinks this hostile elixir suffers a terrible curse: they can only derive nourishment from flesh and blood of their own species. Ingesting any other type of food results in retching (p. B429), immediately regurgitating it; this doesn’t prevent them adding non-proteins, e.g., salt with their food.

*Duration:* 1 week.

*Form:* Potion or powder.

*Cost:* \$500/\$900.

*Recipe:* \$200; two weeks; defaults to Alchemy-1.

Attacks can cause damage, in which case they do Thrust damage equal to the duelist's mST. Attacks can also be used to grapple, lift objects, etc., in which case, they have a Basic Lift as appropriate to the duelist's mST. Treat the latter as Telekinesis (p. B92) with a range covering the full size of the Partition (p. 31). Lastly, attacks can inflict an appropriate Affliction (p. B35), with each point of basic damage translating as +10% worth of any listed modifier except for Heart Attack or Coma (unless it's a lethal duel). Use *Modifying Dice + Adds* (p. B269) to turn dice into a flat numerical value.

*Example:* If your mST was 14, you'd inflict 1d damage if you attacked directly or could inflict up to +40% worth of Afflictions since 1d = 4 points.

Optionally, for 2 FP, duelists can add modifiers to their damage; each 10% worth of modifiers reduces the damage inflicted by 1 point. Limitations can be added as well to offset the cost, but never give *additional* damage. Adding Melee Attack (p. B112) to create conjured weaponry lasts for Magery  $\times 3$  seconds, as long as the mage doesn't cast other spells.

Duelists attack by making a roll against DX, Innate Attack, or DX-based Sports (Mage Dueling), plus Magery. All attacks are assumed to be ranged "spells" and use the standard range penalties (p. B550), though this may change if another type of duel is used (p. 31).

### Defenses

A duelist can dodge any attack. Or he may parry, if holding a magically summoned weapon (*Attacks*, pp. 31-32), staff, wand, or similar item. If neither is a valid tactical option for whatever reason, he may instead throw up a temporary magic barrier to reduce damage; this requires a successful roll against (attack skill/2) + 3, modified by Enhanced Block (Magical), Combat Reflexes, and Enhanced Time Sense. To figure out how much damage it stops, roll thrust damage

for the defender's mST – or swing damage if he chose All-Out Defense (Increased Block). Against afflictions, this must equal or exceed the "damage" rolled by the attacker to stop it, though leveled afflictions may be reduced to a lower level (e.g., a 6-point "terrible pain" affliction would not be stopped by a 3-point barrier, but *would* be lowered to "severe pain").

### Damage

All damage is taken from FP (*not* HP) in nonlethal duels. When a duelist reaches 0 FP, he experiences the usual effects (p. B426), except he never suffers HP damage or a heart attack. Instead, he remains unconscious until he returns to 1 FP, at which point he regains consciousness. Defensive traits that protect against magical attacks function normally. In this instance, Magic Resistance or Mind Shield are effectively Damage Resistance.

Lethal duels use the same rules, but cause *HP* damage instead of FP loss. This damage can be burning, crushing, or toxic (duelist's choice). Optionally, those involved may cause *twice* as much if it's a small piercing attack, three-quarters as much if it's a cutting or large piercing attack, or *half* as much if it's corrosion, huge piercing, or impaling attack.

## THE SATISFACTION

Once the mage duel is finished and there is a clear winner, the outcome depends on the beginning stakes. If a duel was to the death, then the opponent's demise might be all that's at stake, but doesn't need to be. If the duel was fought for "honor," the winner's actions that culminated in the duel (whatever they were) are assumed to be correct. If it was over some other matter like property, law, etc., then the winner is assumed to secure whatever outcome best favors him.

There may be additional benefits for the winner, even if the duel itself does not settle the matter that provoked it. For example, this could add +4 to contested, reaction, or skill rolls (increase this to +6 if the duel was to the death) for a day. Likewise, if the duel was over a point of law, then the winner might gain +4 to his reaction rolls to persuade a jury to his side, or to Law skill rolls.

In some campaigns, winning a duel might result in a longer-lasting reaction modifier. For the next 1d weeks, winners of a mage duel have a reaction bonus of 1d-2 (minimum 0), while losers take a 1d-2 (minimum 0) penalty. Multiple wins or losses are additive, though no bonus can rise above +4 or fall below -4. This bonus applies to duelist enthusiasts and enemies or allies of the opponent. It also adds to rolls during a Rush (p. 31).

### *Magic Dueling Leagues*

The GM might wish to co-opt these rules for battles of honor to blood sports where mages (or *teams* of mages!) compete with one another. The rules for duels would stay as presented, but Sports (Mage Dueling) would become an important skill! A creative GM could even make special rules regarding positions like modern sports, "instant win" conditions, and so on. For campaigns featuring magical implements like wands or staves, the rules could become hockey-like, specifying which areas of contact are allowed and which are not (no high-staving!).

## DUELS AND EXISTING SYSTEMS

While the rules above are generic enough to be used for any campaign's magic, here are a few useful guidelines for existing systems.

### STANDARD MAGIC

*Magic* relies on the dueling rules as is, but the GM can let casters use their

*Test your mystical might in a duel!*

damaging or afflicting spells (or anything else the GM will allow) in a duel instead of the ones granted by the Partition.

In nonlethal duels, this means all damaging spells inflict an equivalent amount of FP loss in place of their usual damage.

Calculate mST normally, but mages can use their best spell for their skill bonus (see *Fighting Fit*, p. 31).

## ABOUT *GURPS*

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