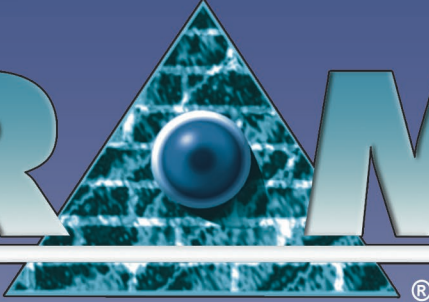


PYRAMID[®]



Issue 3/105 July '17

CINEMATIC MAGIC



CHI SORCERY

by Christopher R. Rice

GOURMET ALCHEMY

by Michael Kreuter

LIGHTS! CAMERA! MAGIC!

by Steven Marsh

THEO-NECROMANCY

by David L. Pulver

SUPER-SORCERY!

by Kelly Pedersen

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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
- Green:* Columnist
- Dark Blue:* **GURPS** Features
- Purple:* Systemless Features

COVER ART
Bob Stevlic

IN THIS ISSUE

Sometimes magic is steeped in shadows – a subtle, ephemeral thing. Other times, it flies across the screen with lens flare and a symphonic score! This issue of *Pyramid* is devoted to the latter.

The magic system of **GURPS Thaumatology: Sorcery** is great for many campaigns, but when you’re trying to emulate the workings of a comic-book universe, sometimes you need *Super-Sorcery!* Discover the tweaks and additions necessary for making this **GURPS** magic system work more like what’s in your favorite comic universe, take up the cloak by donning the super-sorcerer template, and learn the first entries of your mysterious spellbook.

Some magic comes from the heart, mind . . . and fist; the path is revealed with *Chi Sorcery*. **GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 19: Incantation Magic** co-author Christopher R. Rice expands the idea of chi powers for martial artists (from **GURPS Martial Arts**) into its own variant of the *Sorcery* system, with new powers and awesome abilities. Discover how to tap magically into blind fighting, iron skin, the phoenix heart, and 20 more breathtaking effects!

When the impossible happens and gods die, enterprising magicians experiment with *Theo-Necromancy*. In this month’s Eidetic Memory, **GURPS Banestorm: Abydos** author David L. Pulver provides insight and inspiration into what can happen after a god dies – including a **GURPS** spell to summon the being as a ghost! You’ll also get a number of exciting ideas for how to work deceased deities into your games.

Half the fun of magic is sharing it with allies . . . especially if you’re a practitioner of *Gourmet Alchemy*. Discover a new way to model alchemical potions as *powers*, perfect for using on yourself or pouring down the gullet of a needy ally.

Heroes can sometimes tip the world to their favor; perhaps it’s because they heed the call of *Lights, Camera, Magic!* In this short Appendix Z, discover how to adapt the **GURPS Power-Ups 5: Impulse Buys** system to a magical framework that can make situations both more cinematic *and* complicated for those fighting the good fight.

This issue also includes a Random Thought Table that provides some other ideas that can amp up the cinematic aspects of your favorite spell-slingers. With this issue of *Pyramid*, all of Hollywood’s blockbuster budgets can’t compete with your imagination!

Hey, everyone can see all this trippy magic stuff, right?

– Harley Quinn, in Suicide Squad

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FROM THE EDITOR

LET'S ALL GO TO THE MOVIES

As summer continues (at least for the northern hemisphere), the movie complexes and television services continue releasing amazing feats of cinematic mastery. But what if “movie magic” is a bit more real than people know?

This is another loose-themed issue, looking at movie-ready forms of magic . . . or not-quite magic!

Of course, “cinematic” is often just a frame of mind, and the right gaming group can make the most mundane of campaigns feel like a \$250 million blockbuster. Still, the right *options* can inspire those gaming groups to be even more awesome.

“I MADE AN ORIGAMI HAT OUT OF MY MOVIE TICKET!”

That raises an interesting point: I’m always curious to hear about how *GURPS* fans actually *use* the material we make . . . both here in the pages of *Pyramid* and the rest of the *GURPS* line. I’ve read forum reports, blog posts, and emails, and it seems that the answer is: It depends. Some folks treat us like an Ikea store, picking the pieces they want and making more or less what’s advertised on the package. Others experience

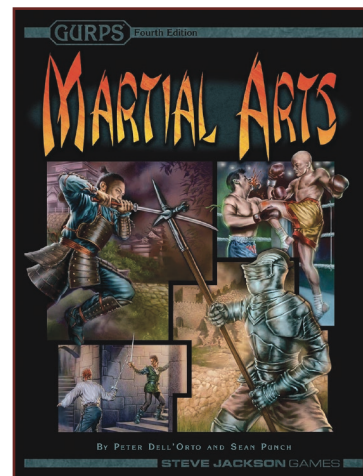
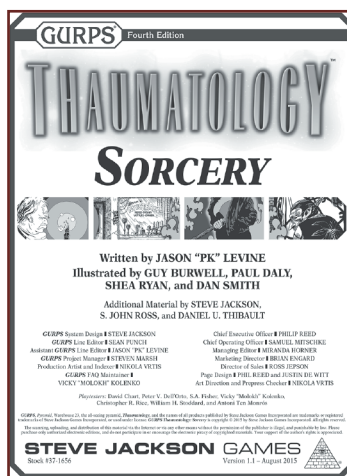
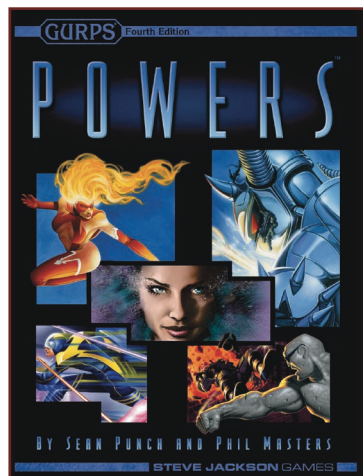
GURPS like a home-improvement store, selecting their planks of gaming lumber and forging their own cool projects out of the nails of rules and the screws of inspiration. (I think that metaphor got a bit away from me . . .)

One of the biggest strengths of *GURPS* – it can be practically anything to anyone – is also one of its biggest challenges: Obviously we can’t create material that’s useful to everyone in all cases, but are we making enough coolness that’s applicable to enough groups? One of my personal guiding principles for *Pyramid* since darn-near I started is for some bit of each issue to be applicable to everyone; it’s a tall order, and I’d love to hear how close our fans think that we’re getting.

WRITE HERE, WRITE NOW

Of course, the best way to let us know how you’re using the various *GURPS* goodies we produce is to actually . . . let us know! You can write to us privately via email at pyramid@sjgames.com, or join the public hive of creativity at forums.sjgames.com.

And if you have any cool ways you’ve used our “hardware,” we love to hear about that, too. There are a lot of talented *GURPS* gamesmiths out there!



Additional Material: Peter Dell’Orto and Sean Punch

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You can perceive the ebb and flow of chi in others or the local area. At level 1, you can only detect the presence or absence of chi with a Per roll (plus range penalties, p. B550). Level 2 refines your awareness; once you've located a particular source of chi, an IQ roll allows you to detect even tiny changes in it. Level 3 allows you to determine the exact distance you are from your subject. Level 4 means that as long as you succeed on your Per roll to locate your target, you automatically succeed on the roll to analyze your subject. Level 5 turns this ability into a passive sense, letting you maintain it indefinitely; while "on," you may use it as a free action and the GM will even roll for you (but at -4). Additionally, you now may perform a special variation of *Evaluate* (p. B364) against other chi sorcerers; success means you gain +4 to resist the next chi ability they use against you.

Statistics: Level 1 is Detect Chi (Chi Sorcery, -15%; Vague, -50%) [7]. Level 2 removes Vague [+10]. Level 3 adds Precise [+20]. Level 4 adds Analyzing [+20]. Level 5 adds Reflexive [+8].

BODY CONTROL

Body Control abilities are not flashy and many of them lack the "Obvious" keyword. They make the user a dangerous foe nonetheless.

Anatomic Control

Keywords: None.

Full Cost: 22 points for level 1 + 7 points/additional level.

Casting Roll: HT.

Power Modifier: Chi Sorcery

-15%

Abilities with this power modifier require you to draw energy from within yourself or from the environment. Either way is tiring and thus each use of an ability costs 1 FP. You must also take a -10-point Disciplines of Faith, Vow, or similar disadvantage that involves spending 1d hours per day exercising and meditating and paying double for food due to a special diet and other ritual consumables. Alternatively, you can take two appropriate -5-point disadvantages that have equivalent requirements. If you neglect your daily ritual or your disadvantage(s), your power fails the first time you call on it when you're under stress. Roll a die and consult the following:

Roll	Result
1-2	Unstable Chi
3-4	Yin Imbalance
5-6	Yang Imbalance

You need 1d days of (25 - Meditation Skill) hours of meditation to restore your inner balance, minimum of one hour per day.

Those who have access to Body Control abilities, but not Chi Projection automatically suffer from yin imbalance – while those with Chi Projection abilities, but not Body Control automatically suffer yang imbalance. Those with access to both, or Universal Ki only, roll normally.

Chi-Limited: This special limitation is identical to Chi Sorcery except that it doesn't include the 1 FP cost. Use it for linked traits and advantages which already cost fatigue. (In other words, as Magical is to Sorcery, Chi-Limited is to Chi Sorcery.) -10%.

Yin Imbalance

The user's yin energies become dominant, with the following effects.

- Bully (use Will to resist) or reduce the self-control number by a step if the martial artist already has this disadvantage. This is largely expressed as a tendency to make spiteful remarks.

- Killjoy (use Will to resist), or reduce the self-control number by a step if the martial artist already has this disadvantage.

- Noticeably clammy skin (treat as Distinctive Features).

- -2 to HT rolls to resist disease.

- -3 to HT rolls to resist the effects of cold; reduce his cold-temperature band by 10°F.

- +3 to HT rolls to resist the effects of heat; increase his heat-temperature band by 10°F.

- Body Control abilities get +1 to activation rolls, while Chi Projection abilities are at -1 to use.

Yang Imbalance

The user's yang energies become dominant, with the following effects.

- Impulsiveness (use Will to resist) or reduce the self-control number by a step if the martial artist already has this disadvantage.

- Lecherousness (use Will to resist) or reduce the self-control number by a step if the martial artist already has this disadvantage.

- A quirk-level desire for easy pleasures.

- Noticeably hot, dry skin (treat as Distinctive Features).

- -2 to HT rolls to resist disease.

- -3 to HT rolls to resist the effects of heat; reduce his heat-temperature band by 10°F.

- +3 to HT rolls to resist the effects of cold; increase his cold-temperature band by 10°F.

- Chi Projection abilities get +1 to activation rolls, while Body Control abilities are at -1 to use.

Unstable Chi

Every hour roll 1d. On 1 or 2, the user has a yin imbalance, with all its effects; on 5 or 6, he has a yang imbalance, with all its effects. In either case, all his Universal Ki abilities become unusable as well. On a 3 or 4, he is *temporarily* in balance and must roll again the next hour *or* whenever he activates one of his abilities, whichever comes first.

Third, the dead god's spirit may be willing to make a pact with the spellcaster. Shamans, demonologists and other spirit-wranglers are more likely to be interested in this sort of dealing. The rules for doing this are laid out at length in *GURPS Thaumatology*; the mechanics detailed under *Assisting Spirits* (*Thaumatology*, pp. 90-94) are appropriate for dealing with a dead god. Everything about spirits in that section is applicable to a ghost of a dead god.

The former god may have several possible motives for agreeing to such an exchange. He may be desirous of any contact after having been trapped in a hell or spirit world. Like a ghost, he may have certain desires he wishes to perform before he can "pass on" into nothingness, such as revenge upon whatever beings killed him, or vengeance against the people who ceased to worship the god, resulting in his spiritual demise. He may also see the necromancer or shaman who is contacting him as a chance to reestablish his cult and worship. In this case, his dealings with the mortal summoner may be explicitly aimed toward this end – for instance, he may trade favors in exchange for efforts to repair temples, locate sacred relics, or find individuals who were descended from the peoples or priests who had worshiped the god. He may encourage the summoner to become his priest.

Some dead gods can be presented as major ghosts (possibly haunting a temple or religious relic). Others may be a more single-minded embodiment of whatever sphere they ruled while alive. For example, a dead solar deity may now be little more than a very strong fire elemental. (You can use the *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 9: Summoners* template for a small elemental, with most of the available lenses and increasing ST to 30+, IQ to 15+ and Will to 20+.) Other dead gods, when summoned, may have power similar to a Spirit of Place (see *Dungeon Fantasy 9*, p. 24), the power having collapsed to the point where it can only really be exerted around the ruins of the god's last temple, sacred city, place of death, or some other relevant location. Dead evil gods may be reduced, in effect, to powerful demons (a fate that was common enough for gods in the real world, e.g., Canaanite deities provided the templates for Christian demons).

Summon Divine Ghost

Information; Resisted by god's Will

Talk to the spirit of a dead god. The subject resists at -5 if the caster was a worshiper of the god. If the spell succeeds, the

subject will answer one question, to the best of his knowledge as of the time he died, and one more per minute he remains. If the spell fails, that caster (or ceremonial group) may not summon that god's spirit again for one year. A critical failure means the caster summoned a malign god's spirit, who lies deliberately.

Modifiers: -5 if you don't know the god's full name. -1 if it has been more than a week since the subject's death, -2 if more than a month, -3 if more than a year, -4 if more than 10 years, -5 if more than 50 years, and -6 if more than 500 years.

Duration: 1 minute.

Cost: 40 to cast. 10 to maintain. Halve these costs if the spell is cast at the site of death or using a physical relic of the god; quarter these costs if *both* conditions are met.

Time to cast: 5 minutes.

Prerequisites: Magery 3 and Summon Spirit.

Item

Staff, wand, or jewelry. Usable only by mages. The item does not give the ability to cast the spell, but gives +2 to skill. *Energy cost:* 1,500.

Using Other Spells on Divine Ghosts

A divine ghost is a spirit. The following spells can be used on a spirit of a god: Affect Spirits, Astral Block, Bind Spirit, Command Spirit, Entrap Spirit, Ghost Weapon, Materialize, Sense Spirit, Solidify, and Turn Spirit. Bind Spirit and Command Spirit require a type; for dead gods, this is "Divine."

ADVENTURES IN THEO-NECROMANCY

The following plots offer ideas for adventures that feature theo-necromancy.

The Order of the Crystal Skull

The Order of the Crystal Skull is a cabal of powerful necromancers, who are devoted to the advancement of this most secretive and maligned of the magical arts. Seven years ago the members of the order met together in their once-every-decade conclave, only to receive news of unprecedented portent. Their arch-magus, the great Simon Necrophidus, was tiring of his centuries-long life and wished to select a successor and heir.

This was no empty honor. Besides great prestige, the office of arch-magus had direct control over the magical treasures of the order that had accumulated over the last nine centuries of its existence. Numerous mages within the order coveted the chance to use artifacts such as the Harp of Bones, Engine 666, or the Coffin Stairway. They also lusted after the arch-magus' occult library that included such lost works as the Gravestone Tablets, the *Stamford Lich Diaries*, and the *Book of the Death of the Soul*.

Dungeon Fantasy

The GM who is hosting a *Dungeon Fantasy* campaign may prefer to use the rules in *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 9: Summoners* instead of *GURPS Thaumatology*. The relevant rules are in *Spirits and Servitors* (Chapter 2 of *Dungeon Fantasy 9*). Using the dungeon-fantasy cosmology described in that work (see *Dungeon Fantasy 9*, pp. 39-40), a dead god's spirit would likely be banished from the Land of the Gods and instead be trapped in the Spirit Realm or Hell until summoned. If using the more detailed cosmology, a dead god may be trapped in the Ethereal Plane (like other ghosts) or, more evocatively, the spirit is condemned to the horrific Outer Void, dodging Elder Things. (In such cases, souls may either be pathetically grateful to be summoned, or completely mad!)

The GM should give a chance for the adventurers to acquire new recipes. If the GM is going with the option of a predetermined list of possible Elixirs, new Elixir recipes make excellent loot, though discussing and trading recipes with other alchemists – or even cooks! – is another way the alchemist can acquire new Elixir recipes. Spending time discussing the recipes with others is a good occasion to permit rerolls on any critically failed Elixirs, because the adventurer may have gained new insight.

A situation can occur where an alchemist creates an Elixir, then switches to another Elixir, and upon switching back to the first, critically fails the roll. When this happens, it should be assumed that while the recipe was easy enough to find, he's out of some of the ingredients that had been used last time that recipe was created and can't figure out any substitutions to make. As such, finding new ingredients could cause to allow rerolls on critically failed Elixirs. This is an excellent chance for a rewarding side quest to acquire new materials!

DIFFERENT RECIPES AND INGREDIENTS

For a compromise between “finite list of Elixirs” and “the players can define anything they want,” the GM can give the player a set of tools with which to create a specific category of Elixirs in accordance with the above system. Finding new recipes could expand this the category. This category could be broad (“any Innate Attack”) or limited (“Burning Attacks,” “Toxic Attacks,” “Fatigue Attacks,” etc.). For example, someone could start with a selection of recipes for “Innate Attacks” and the means to design any Elixir that can be defined as an Innate Attack. Perhaps later, he might find a recipe that allows him to create Elixirs based off Regeneration, and still later, Binding.

The GM could define particular ingredients that are needed in order to add make certain kinds of Elixirs or to add certain modifiers. Perhaps Innate Attack is a general recipe, but requires chili peppers for Burning Attacks and deathcap mushrooms for Toxic Attacks. Perhaps alchemical sulfur is required to make pastilles. If the GM goes for this option, the Trigger on the Elixir should be increased, since substitutions will be less likely and the alchemist will have to keep track of specific ingredients. For suggested ingredients and their effects, see *GURPS Magic*, p. 22; *GURPS Thaumatology*, pp. 99, 247-252; and *The Material Difference* in *Pyramid* #3/66: *The Laws of Magic*.

Limited Recipe Examples

Cyclic Toxic and Fatigue Attacks: These recipes allow the alchemist to create Elixirs with a variety of Innate Attacks that are either Toxic or Fatigue attacks that deal cyclic damage. The ingredients required are poisonous mushrooms.

Regeneration: These recipes permit the alchemist to create Elixirs based off Regeneration. This requires honey. If the alchemist substitutes coffee beans, he can modify it to regenerate Fatigue instead.

Burning Attacks and Irritants: These recipes explain how to create Elixirs based off of burning attacks or Afflictions with

irritating conditions. Spicy foods are required ingredients for burning attacks and pain or choking. Poisonous mushrooms can cause retching.

Fortifying Elixirs: These recipes help the alchemist to create Elixirs with attribute buffs and resistances. With spinach or other high-iron foods, he can design Elixirs that add ST, including Lifting ST or Striking ST. With coffee, he can create Elixirs that add DX and Combat Reflexes. With ginseng, he can buff IQ or add Eidetic Memory or Lightning Calculator.

Protective Elixirs: These recipes permit the alchemist to make various defensive Elixirs. Ginger allows for Doesn't Eat (Cast Iron Stomach). Foods high in vitamin C can provide Resistant to Disease. Poisonous materials can offer Resistant to Poison. Foods high in iron can provide DR.

GOURMET ALCHEMISTS IN DUNGEON FANTASY

A gourmet alchemist in *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy* is basically a kind of specialized artificer. Instead of Gadgeteering, he has Gaston's Cookbook. Take the template in *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 4: Sages*, and replace Dungeon Artificer 4, Gadgeteer, and 6 points of other traits with Gaston's Cookbook 30 [76]. This will allow the gourmet alchemist to make 30-point Elixirs to start out with. Increasing this upper cap by 5 (for another 12 points) is a good investment when the alchemist has bonus character points to spend.

EXAMPLE ELIXIRS

These will find a home both in and out of fantasy.

Silver-Tongue Spirit

This Elixir goes down smooth and gives you the Voice advantage for the duration.

Statistics: Potion [15] + Voice [10]. 25 points.

Poor Man's Paut

In a jam, the alchemist can provide someone with extra Fatigue to burn. This grants +4 FP for the duration.

Statistics: Potion [15] + FP+4 [12]. 27 points.

Regenerative Ointment

After rubbing this ointment on a subject, that person recovers 1 HP per minute for the duration.

Statistics: Ointment [16] + Regeneration (Fast) [50]. 66 points.

Ox's Potion

Drinking this bitter-tasting, viscous fluid gives the imbiber two levels of Lifting ST and Striking ST for the duration.

Statistics: Potion [15] + Lifting ST 2 [6] + Striking ST 2 [10]. 31 points.

ABOUT *GURPS*

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of *GURPS* players. We can be reached by email: info@sjgames.com. Our address is SJ Games, P.O. Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Resources include:

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Or explore that hashtag for ideas to add to your own game! The *Pyramid* web page is pyramid.sjgames.com.

Gamer and Store Finder (gamerfinder.sjgames.com): Connect with other people and places playing our games. Add yourself to our database so they can find you as well!

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.

Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Errata pages for *GURPS* releases are available at sjgames.com/errata/gurps.

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition*. Page references that begin with B refer to that book, not this one.

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