GURPS® Fourth Edition

FANTASY™

By William H. Stoddard

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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FANTASY™

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Introduction

Fantasy is the realm of the imagination. If a fantasy writer wants to tell stories about dragons, wizards, or fairy kingdoms, he doesn't need historical documentation or scientific explanations – he can just imagine them. This gives writers more freedom than any other genre.

But "more freedom" doesn't mean *unlimited* freedom. The reader has to believe that the characters and events are possible *in the world of the story*. A fantasy world with its own logic – what critics call the *inner consistency of reality* – yields more interesting stories than a world where anything can happen.

In roleplaying games, one source of that consistency is the rules system. A good set of rules isn't a barrier to the GM's imagination . . . it's a tool for making everything he imagines hold together. ***GURPS Fantasy*** shows how to run the fantasy campaign you really want.

A great resource for creating fantasy comes from the legends, myths, and folklore of the past. Everyone knows about dragons, so readers and players are already halfway to believing in them. ***GURPS Fantasy*** describes many legendary beings, creatures, and objects, and gives advice on using ***GURPS*** for your own fantasies.

The final chapter puts it all together in a new fantasy setting, Roma Arcana, based on the legends of ancient Rome in its darkest and most exciting time. If you want to start a new campaign in a familiar but exotic setting, Roma Arcana is ready to play. If you're using the Infinite Worlds framework from the ***GURPS Basic Set,*** *Fourth Edition*, you can fit Roma Arcana into it as an alternative history, at once familiar and weird. And if you'd like to design your own original world, Roma Arcana is a model you can follow.

About the Author

William H. Stoddard is a freelance writer and editor living in San Diego, California, in an apartment crammed with books. He was introduced to RPGs in 1975 and has played them ever since. His main other hobby is research; new game books give him an excuse for even more library visits than he would make anyway. His previous work for Steve Jackson Games includes ***GURPS Steampunk*** and four other books, as sole or co-author, as well as contributions to numerous other books.

He dedicates this book to the memory of Felon, *felis optimus maximusque,* who supervised the writing of its earlier drafts.

About *GURPS*

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of the ***GURPS*** system. Our address is SJ Games, Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! We can also be reached by e-mail: **info@sjgames.com**. Resources include:

Pyramid (**www.sjgames.com/pyramid/**). Our online magazine includes new ***GURPS*** rules and articles. It also covers the ***d20*** system***, Ars Magica, BESM, Call of Cthulhu,*** and many more top games – and other Steve Jackson Games releases like ***Illuminati, Car Wars, Transhuman Space,*** and more. *Pyramid* subscribers also get opportunities to playtest new ***GURPS*** books!

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Internet. Visit us on the World Wide Web at **www.sjgames.com** for errata, updates, Q&A, free webforums, and much more. The ***GURPS Fantasy*** web page is **www.sjgames.com/gurps/books/fantasy/**.

Bibliographies. Many of our books have extensive bibliographies, and we're putting them online – with links to let you buy the books that interest you! Go to the book's web page and look for the "Bibliography" link.

GURPSnet. This e-mail list hosts much of the online discussion of ***GURPS.*** To join, point your web browser to **www.sjgames.com/mailman/listinfo/gurpsnet-l/**.

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.

Chapter One

Planning the Campaign

And, as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.
– William Shakespeare,
A Midsummer Night's Dream

David Rhys brushed carefully at the unearthed clay tablet. Its surface was hard, as if it had been fired, but he didn't want to risk damaging the cuneiform inscription. The words were Hittite, but in some peculiar dialect, archaic or simply early. There was something about ". . . that which defeats the sorcerer . . ."

"Professor!"

Moving with exaggerated slow care, he turned partway toward the ladder that Andrew Jenkins had just descended. "Have you found something?" he asked.

"Rose said I should ask you to have a look. It's some sort of forge, she thinks, and there's some sort of sword there. It looks rusted, so it might be iron."

Rhys said, "I'll be there in a minute. I have to get this tablet properly packed. Tell her to wait for me."

Fantasy occupies the middle ground between history and myth. History attempts to describe what actually happened. Realistic fiction is as close to history as possible; it may not have actually happened, but the reader believes its events *could have* happened. Myth attempts to describe what captures the imagination; a good story creates its own sense of truth. Fantasy has elements from both. Its heroes escape the limits of human existence. Their actions and their abilities can be larger than life. And they face challenges and perils that are also larger than life.

Most of the preparation for a fantasy campaign goes into the development of the setting. However, the setting exists for the sake of the campaign. It's much easier to decide what to include after deciding what kind of campaign it needs to support. This applies to all kinds of gaming, but especially to fantasy. A fantasy campaign offers a wider range of possibilities; narrowing them down takes more work.

This chapter explores the different fantasy campaigns by considering three categories: genre, setting, and scope. If you're basing a campaign on a favorite book or film, these definitions of genre and setting can help you bring it into clearer focus.

Genres

Genre is a way of predicting what people will like. If two stories (or two campaigns) are in the same genre, people who enjoy one will usually enjoy the other. Each genre has its own audience, typical challenges for characters to face, and certain backgrounds for the action. Each genre also emphasizes certain emotions and moods.

Few stories are pure examples of any *one* genre; some have elements from *all* of them. The same is true of campaigns. Statements about genres are guidelines, not unbreakable rules. Genre definitions can help suggest things to include in a campaign to get the effect you want.

High Fantasy

If fantasy occupies the middle ground between myth and history, high fantasy is closer to myth.

Myths are about gods; high fantasy is about demigods, heroic warriors, and powerful magicians. But there's more to it than that. In a high fantasy campaign, the power level is a means to create wonder and amazement.

Magic should still evoke this wonder. For thousands of years, myths and folktales made flying a symbol of power. The gods lived in heaven and flew down to earth, or sent winged messengers on errands. Sorcerers wove flying carpets, and cunning inventors made artificial wings. Now, millions of people fly all over the world – and it's not much more exciting than taking the bus. Routine use can turn anything from a wonder into a convenience. If magic, especially powerful magic, is common and reliable, then it's just another technology; it won't *feel* mythic.

Several things help keep magic amazing. First, distribute it unevenly. Intensely magical events stand out more if they contrast with a less magical background. Second, stress its unpredictability, even to people who use it regularly. Third, if possible, make some magic unknown – not just to the protagonists, but to everyone . . . perhaps even the gods.

Characters in a high fantasy setting may encounter true powers of the world – gods or other mythic beings. Often, these encounters will be conversations instead of battles. Facing mythic foes in combat should frighten even the most capable adventurers. However, attracting such beings' attention raises the heroes above ordinary mortals. Gods may single out the greatest or worthiest mortals as their champions, or even as potential future recruits to godhood – or as problems to remove before they ascend to real power.

Godhood is more than a name. It is a condition of being . . . Being a god is the quality of being able to be yourself to such an extent that your passions correspond with the forces of the universe, so that those who look upon you know this without hearing your name spoken. . . . One rules through one's ruling passion. Those who look upon gods then say, without even knowing their names, "He is Fire. She is Dance. He is Destruction. She is Love."

– Roger Zelazny, ***Lord of Light***

Low Fantasy

Low fantasy, is closer to realistic fiction than to myth. Low fantasy stories focus on people's daily lives and practical goals; magic provides a way to achieve those goals, and makes it interesting. A low fantasy campaign asks what it's like to live in a world of monsters, magic, and demigods.

Most low fantasy magic is evenly distributed in the world, not sharply focused in certain places. Its effects are predictable and knowable. Low fantasy magic is less a source of wonder than a toolkit.

Characters in low fantasy are more concerned with practical goals, less with great passions. A high fantasy traitor might be motivated by passionate jealousy, tempted by the devil, or perversely sympathetic to

Myths and Games

If fantasy falls between history and myth, then where does myth fall? If it's possible to run a fantasy campaign, is it possible to run a mythic campaign? It depends on the myth.

Some myths are much like adventure stories. In Norse legend, Thor and Loki go to Jotunheim, the land of the frost giants, and have adventures there. For example, they visit a giant's house and engage in sporting competitions with its residents. This could be an episode in a role-playing campaign, especially if the players like a touch of comedy.

During one of the contests, Thor tries to empty a drinking horn that's magically linked to the ocean, and drinks so much that he causes the first tides. Action on this scale is beyond the scope of any spells, enchantments, or powers in most fantasy games.

Characters in myths are personifications of cosmic forces. Stories that emphasize this personification are often adventure stories, love stories, or murder mysteries, and can turn into game scenarios. However, the cosmic forces inspire other kinds of stories – stories that explain the world's origin, prophesy its end, or express horror at its inhuman vastness.

Nothing prevents cosmic forces from entering a game. But they're usually best presented through pure storytelling (see *Mythology,* pp. 76-77, for some suitable stories), not through rules. The powers of mythic beings are never fully measured, nor their motives fully understood.

the other side; a low fantasy traitor wants 30 pieces of silver. Merchants and criminals are minor figures, or entirely absent, in most high fantasy. In low fantasy, they are not only prevalent, they may be the heroes.

Dark Fantasy

Dark fantasy borrows the mood of horror. It portrays magic as ominous . . . more likely to harm than help. Supernatural beings are powerful and indifferent to human concerns, if not outright malevolent; their attention is feared, not sought. Remember the ancient custom of talking about "the fair folk" (faeries) or "the kindly ones" (the Furies of Greek myth) to avoid giving offense. Any use of magic, even for virtuous purposes, should have a price.

The elaborate mythologies that underlie much high fantasy also form an essential element in dark fantasy – but in dark fantasy, most people may not even have heard of them. In the darkest settings, the ultimate truth may be *maltheistic* (p. 32), and the heroes may be doomed to struggle hopelessly against evil and horror.

A great theme in dark fantasy is the hero's sacrifice. This may be his life, willingly given to kill a foe or close the gates of hell; wounds and scars that will never heal; madness; or his own corruption by using evil to defeat worse evil. He faces constant fear – not only for himself, but also for the people he defends. Dark fantasies often end in tragedy. Their heroes have appropriate traits, from tragic character flaws to curses or unhappy destinies.

Light Fantasy

Where dark fantasy is full of grim consequences, light fantasy avoids them. Its goal is to amuse the audience (or the players). Inspirations for this kind of fantasy include Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, with its faeries playing tricks on mortals, and fairy tales with happy endings. Dark fantasies are often tragedies; light fantasies are usually comedies.

Naturally, characters in light fantasy have to face problems and threats along the way. These threats usually aren't lethal or irreversible. If the heroes get turned into something icky, there will be a way to turn them back. If they face a monster, it will have some unexpected weakness. Many light fantasy plots deal with complications instead of threats; for example, a heroine may have to find odd magical ingredients to free the hero from a spell.

Spells in light fantasy always risk going wrong in unexpected ways. Supernatural beings are eccentric or tricky, controlled by peculiar rules that give clever mortals ways to get the better of them. Learning their names (see *True Names*, p. 14) is a classic example, as in the fairy tale "Rumpelstiltskin." The same theme shows up in stories about wishes going wrong, or about making bargains with the Devil and wriggling out at the last minute.

In some ways, light fantasy relates to low fantasy. Putting everyday people and practical problems together with mythical beings and powerful magic is a natural source of humorous incongruities.

On the other hand, some light fantasy comes closer to high fantasy. Stories influenced by classic swashbuckling adventure, such as Steven Brust's *The Phoenix Guards*, have heroes who face real danger, but take it lightly, or even welcome it out of a sense of personal honor.

Sword and Sorcery

The focus of sword and sorcery is adventure, and the mood it produces is excitement. The settings for sword and sorcery campaigns allow as much adventuring as possible. Well-organized civilizations are rare. Empty lands roamed by barbarian nomads, corrupt and decadent city-states, or the haunted ruins of earlier civilizations offer more entertainment – and have fewer inconvenient laws. Backgrounds for sword and sorcery are often just quick sketches. Elaborate worldbuilding isn't the point of this genre; what matters is that there are armies to conquer, monsters to slay, and ruins to loot.

Classic sword and sorcery usually makes the swordsmen the main heroes. Sorcerers might be threats to the hero or the people he protects, as in Robert E. Howard's Conan series and C.L. Moore's Jirel of Joiry stories. Or they might be the heroes' mentors and patrons, as in Fritz Leiber's tales of Lankhmar. More recent sword and sorcery often has heroes who can work magic. They may be equally skilled at nonmagical combat, or belong to teams of adventurers where some members provide the swords and others the sorcery. Adventurer teams have been the basis of most fantasy roleplaying, all the way back to the original ***Dungeons & Dragons***.

Magic for adventurers has to be fast, largely designed for combat effectiveness. The wizard adventurer isn't a scholarly recluse or a clever trickster, but a human artillery weapon. Or, if his powers are subtler, he needs nonmagical combat skills to keep himself alive. Either approach avoids scenes where everyone else fights and the wizard takes cover and waits for the battle to end.

Sword and sorcery can resemble any other genre, but focuses mainly on action and combat. The sword-and-sorcery version of high fantasy features impressive spells, epic heroes, and battles that decide the fate of kingdoms. The dark version is full of evil sorcery and terrifying monsters. The low version often sends adventurers into gritty urban environments to contend with thieves' and assassins' guilds or corrupt priests and aristocrats. In light sword and sorcery, the heroes have to deal with flashy rivals and their own bad judgment. A campaign focused on adventure can be in any of these styles.

On the Borders

A number of other genres have some kinship to fantasy. Some have clearly fantastic elements, but aren't usually classified as fantasy and may appeal to different audiences. Others appeal to fantasy audiences and are classified as fantasy, but lack one or more typical elements.

Christian Supernaturalism

Not everyone regards supernatural forces as fantasy. Millions of Christians (as well as adherents of other religions) believe that the supernatural is real and omnipresent. A number of novels, such as Frank Peretti's *This Present Darkness*, portray these supernatural forces in war in the modern world. Such novels aren't usually considered fantasy, and the supernatural powers aren't described as magic. This is partly semantics, but reflects a real point of theology: If supernatural events come from God, the right way to describe them is not "I cast a spell" but "my prayers were answered by a miracle." A campaign based on this assumption wouldn't require the tools presented in this book, though the rules for clerical magic (p. B242) might be useful. Anything that looks like magical spells will be a snare of the Devil, and its effects will be illusions (see *Glamour*, pp. 20-21).

Exotic Lands

This genre has little or no supernatural content, but includes all the other trappings of historical fantasy. The settings are remote countries, the heroes are often aristocrats, and their feats transcend the normal limits of probability. Many stories in this genre, from *The Prisoner of Zenda* and the Titus Groan novels to *The Princess Bride*, take place in nonexistent lands, which makes them fantasy by one definition (see *Fantasy Worlds*, p. 10).

Martial Arts

Martial arts films, especially Japanese *chambara* and Chinese *wuxia* movies, have heroes with superhuman or supernatural gifts, often explained as mastery of *chi* (life energy). Heroes run the gamut from those who are simply amazingly skilled, to those with esoteric powers or who cast spells and work magic. These are "distant land" settings for Western audiences, but not for audiences in Japan or Hong Kong; many take place in the legendary past. The abilities of real martial artists are impressive enough, and legends of their superhuman feats help make outright fantasy elements acceptable to both Asian and American audiences.

Paranormal Romance

During the past quarter-century, romance writers such as Sharon Green, Melanie Jackson, Kathleen Nance, and Robin Owens began exploring themes from science fiction or fantasy. Time travel is the most popular; it allows a present-day heroine fall in love with a man from the chivalric past. As a rule, time-travel romances don't have time machines or other scientific props, or explore the logical paradoxes of visiting the past. The time travel is effectively magical, even if there's no other magic in the story. Other "romantic fantasy" novels have mortal heroines who fall in love with supernatural beings, or portray the romantic effects of magical or psychic talents.

Worldbuilding is less common, though books classified as futuristic romance may be set on other planets with fantasy aspects, such as Owens' *Celta* (see *Other Planets*, p. 10). These books focus primarily on romantic relationships instead of the setting's details, much as sword and sorcery emphasizes action and combat over setting.

Superheroic Adventure

Comic book superheroes include magicians and magically empowered characters: Dr. Fate, the Spectre, Wonder Woman, Captain Marvel, Dr. Strange, Thor, and Promethea, among others. The uniqueness of the superhero, or the supervillain, is part of the classic formula. The presence of magic does not change the world any more than the technological spinoff of other superheroes' amazing inventions. Magical characters may become involved with various magical worlds: the Christian heaven and hell, the realms of the Greek and Norse gods, or the land of dreams or death. Typically, only a superhero or supervillain can visit these other planes.

Supernatural Horror

What's the difference between supernatural horror and dark fantasy? That's a good question. Critics don't agree on the answer, or whether there even is a difference.

Supernatural horror is akin to Christian supernaturalism in its view of magic. Human involvement in magic is perilous and often reflects sinful pride; salvation comes from faith in a higher power. In dark fantasy, heroes defeat the horror with their own courage, or discover ways of using magic against it.

In any case, the boundary between the two is debatable. Which side a campaign is on, or a book, or a film, is often a matter of opinion.

Crossovers

Fantasy is a rich genre all by itself – but ***GURPS*** allows GMs and players to combine different genres. GMs may want to run a campaign of "fantasy plus": fantasy and another genre, working together.

Cyberpunk

Cyberpunk started out with the idea that future computers, or virtual reality, might *look like* magic. But what if things that just look like magic collide with things that really *are* magic? A cyberpunk future might have elves, dwarves, and orcs living in postmodern cities, as in the classic roleplaying game ***Shadowrun***. Magic might enhance the skills of programmers, or summon spirits to inhabit computers as a shortcut to artificial intelligence. Conversely, cybermages might use computers to aid magical rituals. Can a chat room host a ceremonial magic spellcasting?

Espionage

If magic did exist, would the government tell us? Spies and secret agents already live in an occult world. Perhaps it has darker secrets than anyone knows, and illuminated operatives guard them . . . or steal them. A team may work for a government's paranormal investigations agency, the Vatican, a cabal of sorcerers, or a supernatural power. They may even be supernatural entities, sent from heaven, hell, or the faerie realms to intervene in human affairs.

Police Procedural

"Criminals are a cowardly, superstitious lot" – but if magic works, some superstitions might pay off. The police may deal with everything from succubus streetwalkers and thieves' cantrips to murderous curses and blood sacrifice. Every department may house a Sorcerers, Witches, And Thaumaturgists team – or individual police officers may pick up tricks that they can't talk about in public.

Retrotech

Steampunk combines the antique charm of gas lamps and airships with technological speculation about mechanical computers and wireless electric power. However, the age of steam was also fascinated with the supernatural, from the Arabian Nights and Gilbert and Sullivan to high ritual magic, spiritualism, and theosophy. Two ***GURPS*** sourcebooks, ***Castle Falkenstein*** and ***Deadlands***, combine steampunk and magic. The technological fancies of earlier ages also work well, from the clockwork automata of the 18th century back to the legendary inventions of Daedalus. Retrotech also may use magic to enhance technology.

Swashbuckling

The swashbuckling era saw the creation of scientific astronomy, physics, and anatomy – and the pursuit of occult and supernatural lore, often by those same early scientists. In a magical setting, spymasters such as Walsingham and Richelieu can employ diviners and sorcerers along with assassins and cryptographers. Swashbucklers themselves may favor flashier magic as well as swordplay, as in Steven Brust's *The Phoenix Guards*. For a more freewheeling setting, move the campaign to the pirate-ridden Caribbean, where slaves create new magical traditions as protection against their masters (see Tim Powers' *On Stranger Tides* or the film *Pirates of the Caribbean*).

War Stories

War is one of genre fantasy's main themes – usually based on pre-gunpowder weapons and tactics. However, modern warfare could combine with fantasy. World War II makes a perfect setting for a cryptic fantasy campaign, with British and German occultists casting spells on each other and seeking out potent mystical relics (see, for example, Katherine Kurtz's *Lammas Night*).

Westerns

The Old West certainly forms part of American mythology, but most people aren't aware of Western folklore's supernatural elements. Magic must be integrated into a Western setting with care. Wizards throwing fireballs could upstage gunslingers, and destroy a central motif of the Western genre. Subtler magic is better.

The theme of conflict between civilized and tribal societies – "cowboys and Indians" – can be enhanced if the tribal peoples have access to supernatural powers that civilized people have forgotten. In classic Westerns, the civilized people will be the heroes; in subversive treatments, American Indians have spiritual insights whose loss is a profound tragedy. They may also provide a refuge for other "uncivilized" elements, as in Pat Murphy's lycanthropic Western, *Nadya*. Or civilized people may have their own magic. For example, many gamblers in the ***Deadlands*** setting have supernatural powers, and *Hoyle's Rules of Games* is a grimoire!

Westerns could be a model for campaigns in other historical eras. Ancient Persian Empire nobles learned to "ride well, shoot straight, and tell the truth." Their Zoroastrian faith in a cosmic battle between good and evil, with lying as the ultimate evil, could inspire a struggle between their civilization and tribal savages such as the Greeks. Zoroastrian magi able to hurl fire and lightning could even substitute for gunslingers.

Settings

Setting focuses on the nature of the specific campaign world – as seen by the Game Master. Fantasy stories describe things that don't exist in the real world – often, but not always, magic. In some stories, the magical or fantastic elements are secret; the heroes know about them, or learn about them, but the everyday world goes on unaware. In other stories, society embraces the magical or fantastic elements. Either option provides several approaches. ***GURPS Fantasy*** focuses on creating magical worlds and running campaigns in them – though much of its content is also useful for running fantasy campaigns set in the real world.

Fantasy Worlds

Openly recognized fantastic elements produce a setting separate from the "here and now." GMs can make this separation in a variety of ways.

Separation from the real world, all by itself, can make a story or a campaign fantasy. In literature, many consider Mervyn Peake's Titus Groan novels fantasy, even though they contain no magical elements.

For some critics, "high fantasy" includes every story set in a fantasy world. That's a useful definition for some purposes, but different from the one this book uses. A completely invented world can be much closer to history or even present-day reality than to myth. Fritz Leiber's Lankhmar stories and China Miéville's *Perdido Street Station* and *The Scar* are set in invented worlds, but their great cities have realistically corrupt politics and their heroes' motives are seldom noble.

Far Away

Fantastic things can happen in distant countries, especially ones that few people visit. Tibet, or Haiti, or the Balkans may provide homes for supernatural forces forgotten by civilized people. At the simplest, this blends into travelers telling strange stories, knowing that no one can check them.

This rationale worked much better in the 19th century than now. Improved transportation and communication mean that no place is remote any more. There are no hidden lands.

GMs, however, can set a hidden land in the recent past, a century or two ago. People in those eras didn't expect magic in their own lives or their own countries, but when large parts of the world were unmapped, surprises were imaginable. Tim Powers' treatment of the Caribbean Sea in *On Stranger Tides* is a good example.

Another method is simply to ignore the problem. Yes, on an island off the coast of Europe, there are dragons and wizards, and the people there all know about them, but people from other countries think they're just folklore. This approach usually works best in humorous fantasy (see *Absurdist Fantasy*, p. 13).

The classic example of this kind of fantasy is *The Wizard of Oz* and its many sequels.

> *In the civilized countries I believe there are no witches left; nor wizards, nor sorceresses, nor magicians. But, you see, the Land of Oz has never been civilized, for we are cut off from all the rest of the world. Therefore we still have witches and wizards amongst us.*
>
> – *L. Frank Baum,* ***The Wizard of Oz***

Other Planets

After the exploration of the entire Earth, writers turned to other planets as settings for fantastic adventures. A few decades ago, the moon, Mars, and Venus were far enough away. With our solar system mapped, writers have turned to planets of other stars to give their imagination license.

Most stories of alien worlds envision only scientifically explainable strangeness, even in planetary romances such as Edgar Rice Burroughs' Mars novels or the Planet Krishna stories of L. Sprague de Camp. Some apparently supernatural elements actually have psionic or other science-fictional rationales, such as James H. Schmitz's *Witches of Karres*, the spells and sorceresses of Marion Zimmer Bradley's Darkover, or the Hindu gods of Roger Zelazny's *Lord of Light*. Other stories envision distant worlds where magic still works, as in several of Andre Norton's novels, including *Star Gate*. C.S. Lewis offers a high fantasy treatment in *Out of the Silent Planet* and *Perelandra*, whose hero, Ransom, visits Mars and Venus and finds them ruled by angels.

The Past

Like distant lands, the past has some advantages that the present lacks.

If the setting is the historic past before 1730, the great majority of people believed in magic. Roleplaying these people includes roleplaying their belief in the supernatural – which makes the actual supernatural easier to work into a story or campaign. The legends of historical societies such as Greece or Japan provide source material with which the players may be already familiar, limiting the need for long explanations.

A campaign set in prehistory draws on no such sources. However, it has more room to make them up, since prehistory is still largely unknown. The remains of magic might have disintegrated in the past few millennia, or might lie undiscovered beneath the soil of some remote country (see *Relic Fantasy*).

Campaigns set in the past may explore the reasons for the disappearance of magic; it's a natural theme for them.

Both Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* and Howard's Conan stories are set, at least nominally, in the prehistoric past. Larry Niven's *The Magic Goes Away* is a recent yet classic treatment of the disappearance of magic. Fantasy set in the historic past includes many Arthurian novels. Roleplaying settings include the Mythic Europe of ***Ars Magica*** and the Camelot of ***King Arthur Pendragon***, in historical periods, and the world of ***Exalted***, in an invented prehistory.

The Future

A less popular approach, but one that several interesting stories pursue, sets magic in the future. This actually offers several different hybrids of fantasy and science fiction, depending on which future the campaign uses.

Motifs, Part 1

Fans of any genre expect certain types of content – they look for them in new works, and miss them if they're absent. Here are some elements that are especially common in fantasy roleplaying.

Bardic Gifts

In legend, ancient Celtic bards were sacred. No one could punish them for what they said or sang, and kings and warriors feared their satires. Bards in many cultures have magical powers, often involving superhuman persuasiveness. In a number of religious traditions, the gods speak through poets (sometimes an inconvenience, as when the Queen of Faerie gave Thomas Rymer "the tongue that cannot lie").

Cook's Tour

Heroes visiting a fantasy world, or a new country in such a world, often travel to all its interesting places and hear their stories. Even if the forces of evil are close behind, the heroes have time to go look at the tomb of an ancient king.

Duels

In real wars, armies trained to fight as units normally defeat armies of warriors who fight as individuals, even if the warriors are individually better fighters (see *War in Fantasy Settings*, pp. 186-194). However, fantasy often focuses on individual heroes. The important combat is man-to-man, skilled warrior against skilled warrior, with the rest of the army fading into the background, or even standing still and watching while the leaders fight it out. Other sorts of conflict, such as wizards' duels, also emphasize individual power and skill instead of organization. A traditional wizards' duel (as in the ballad "The Two Magicians") involves repeatedly changing shape.

Flashy Magic

Real-world magical rituals, like real-world technology, require long, slow, careful preparations. Magic in fantasy worlds could be much the same. However, a lot of fantasy employs magicians who can throw fireballs or hurl each other across a room with a gesture. Such abilities also help them deal with swordsmen who have quick reflexes and limited respect for the sanctity of life.

Fools

Clowns, fools, and jesters often have a parody of bardic immunity: they can imitate or mock warriors and aristocrats in their master's court, unpunished, because everyone agrees that they don't know what they're saying. This freedom of speech made them irresistible to writers long before genre fantasy came into being; Shakespeare's characters include some memorable fools. Fools in literature are often intelligent men wearing a mask of stupidity or insanity.

Healers

If magic's good for anything, it's usually good for taking care of the sick and wounded. Most people don't want to fantasize about real medieval medicine. Healing spells can stop bleeding, cure diseases, or even restore lost body parts, often with the aid of magical herbs. Other herbs may provide reliable contraception; unwanted pregnancy seems to be rare in fantasy.

Letter of the Law

An old proverb warns, "Be careful what you wish for," and folk tales describe many wishes that go awry because they are carelessly stated. In a magical setting, a wish, spell, or prayer will come true, but not necessarily the way the speaker meant it. Making sure the wording leaves no room for unpleasant surprises provides work for people who would become lawyers in realistic settings.

One form is a near-future "return of magic." This may result from the collapse of world civilization followed by a renewal of magic, perhaps in a quasi-medieval setting. Another good approach is to have magic reappear in a high-tech world, as in the roleplaying game ***Shadowrun***. Either way, the setting is still recognizably Earth, with magic as a recent development.

In a far future Earth, magic may coexist with remnants of very advanced technology, perhaps no longer fully understood. The details of its reemergence can be vague; in thousands or millions of years, they could have been forgotten. Jack Vance's *The Dying Earth* is a classic treatment that influenced the portrayal of magic in fantasy roleplaying. A very different treatment is the hyperurbanized future of Walter Jon Williams's *Metropolitan* and *City on Fire*.

A further variant is outer space fantasy, with an interstellar civilization using magic. This is different from planetary romance, where the dominant civilization is technological and rationalistic, and magic exists only on a distant planet. In outer space fantasy, the dominant civilization is magical and magic is the only way to travel between the stars. Magic may coexist with technology in such a setting, or replace it. Melissa Scott's novels *Five-Twelfths of Heaven, Silence in Solitude*, and *The Empress of Earth* offer a treatment of this theme based on Hermetic magic.

Alternate History

A number of fantasies are alternative histories, diverging from actual history at specific branch points. In such settings, a specific different choice in the past led to the discovery or preservation of magic, often in an otherwise modern world. This approach works well either for exploring a world similar to the present day or the recent past, but where magic works, or for sending people from here and now to such a world.

Randall Garrett's Lord Darcy stories offer a carefully worked out alternative history for their magical setting, with a divergence in the Middle Ages. John M. Ford's *The Dragon Waiting* branches off earlier, with the Roman emperor Julian's successful restoration of paganism. Robert Heinlein's "Magic, Inc.," Poul Anderson's *Operation Chaos*, and Harry Turtledove's *The Case of the Toxic Spell Dump* are lighter treatments, focused mainly on magical parallels to 20th-century technology. ***Castle Falkenstein*** presents a game world in the same spirit, though without a specific point of divergence or detailed timeline. And, of course, see ***GURPS Infinite Worlds***.

Other Planes

Other planes, or other dimensions, offer another way to send people from the present day into a realm of magic. This basic idea accepts the nonmagical world known to 21st-century science as simply one realm in a larger universe. In other realms, magic remains powerful.

Magical realms include dreamlands, faerie realms, spirit worlds, heavens, hells, and archetypal worlds (see *Magical Realms,* pp. 34-36). There may even be multiple dimensions in complex arrangements, as in the Cabal setting (p. B543). Other planes tie directly to Earth – possibly to a fantasy Earth, or the otherwise nonmagical 21st-century Earth. Their relationship with Earth should define how their magic works and how humans gain access to them.

Stories of this type include Odysseus' visit to the underworld in the *Odyssey* and Thomas Rymer's journey to the faerie realms in "The Ballad of True Thomas." From the 20th century, two of the best examples emphasize dreamlands: H.P. Lovecraft's "The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath" and Neil Gaiman's *The Sandman*. E.R. Eddison's Zimiamvia trilogy offers a different sort of other plane – the archetypal reality of which Earth is a shadow, and one man's personal heaven. In roleplaying, other planes are a major element of the ***World of Darkness*** games.

In a sense, the virtual realities of cyberpunk are another sort of alternate plane where different natural laws exist. Usually these simulations can't directly change external reality, but the hero of *The Matrix* and its sequels gains superhuman powers in both worlds.

Separate Realities

A fantasy world may be a realm of its own, with no relationship with Earth and the present day, or only a vague one. Its origins may be mythological instead of scientific; it may be a disc floating in space, or a flat world roofed over by a tangible sky. The only requirement is that it be consistent with its own basic premises. Its people may offer a reflection of Earth's inhabitants, or they may have their own, entirely different history and cultures.

This is probably the most widely used type of setting in recent fantasy. The Middle-Earth of J.R.R. Tolkien's *Silmarillion* is this type of world; so are Ursula Le Guin's Earthsea, Steven Brust's Dragaera, and Terry Pratchett's Discworld, among many others. In roleplaying, ***Hero Wars*** focuses on the separate world of Glorantha.

Multiple Realities

A number of fantasy novels occupy a middle ground between these last three options: separate realities roughly comparable to Earth, but accessible through some higher-level reality. In contrast to alternate histories, whose divergence is measurable by how long ago two histories split, separate realities differ in kind, like works of art. And the passage between the two usually involves a "higher plane" which connects them. The passage usually requires technology, not magic. Roger Zelazny's Amber series, whose heroes can "walk through shadow" from one world to another,

and the various universes embedded in C.S. Lewis' *The Magician's Nephew* are good examples of this idea. In a different approach, Fletcher Pratt and L. Sprague de Camp's *The Compleat Enchanter* portrays travel between separate realities by concentration on each reality's logical axiom, with no higher reality in between.

Fantasy in the Real World

Setting fantasy in the real world creates a different problem: explaining what keeps the fantastic elements hidden. This kind of fantasy occurs most often in the present. However, they can take place in the past, as hidden events that didn't make the historical records (many novels by Tim Powers use this approach). This kind of fantasy has various names: modern fantasy, urban fantasy, or (if set in the past) secret history.

Some critics define "low fantasy" as any fantasy story set in the real world. However, a real world setting can include the kind of mythic elements this book classifies as high fantasy. In C.S. Lewis' *That Hideous Strength*, for example, a reawakened Merlin in modern England summons the spirits of the planets to destroy a conspiracy inspired by Hell, and Neil Gaiman and Terry Pratchett's *Good Omens* has an angel and devil teaming up to stop the Last Judgment. This kind of averted apocalypse, where mythic forces threaten to turn the real world into a fantasy world, and the heroes have to stop them, is a motif of fantasy set in the real world. (The seasonal plot arcs of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, for example, involved apocalyptic threats.)

Relic Fantasy

The setting may include objects or even living beings from a forgotten time when magic was common (see *The Past*, p. 10). Buried beneath the ruins of ancient cities, stored in museum basements, or passed down as heirlooms, these items grant mysterious powers and lost knowledge to guardians who discern their secrets. Such items may only contain a weakened trace of their old magic, or may work at full strength for someone with enough faith or luck. This assumption is especially popular in children's fantasy, as many stories by E. Nesbitt and Edward Eager demonstrate.

Portal Fantasy

A relic could be the gateway to a fantasy world, where magic is real and recognized. The portal can be a hidden road or path, a tunnel, a door or gate, or even a piece of furniture, as in C.S. Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*. Mirrors offer an interesting variant, both in the whimsy of Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass* and in the sinister dark fantasy of Robert Heinlein's "The Unpleasant Profession of Jonathan Hoag."

The portal may be just a vehicle to get the protagonists into the fantasy world, where the real story takes place. However, they may spend much of their time in the everyday world, doing things influenced by their experiences on the other side of the portal. Most of C.S. Lewis' Narnia stories are overt fantasy, but *The Magician's Nephew* is this kind of cryptic fantasy, with much of the action occurring in turn-of-the (20th)-century London.

Wainscot Fantasy

In some fantasies, there's not just one portal to a world of magic, but many portals, all leading to the same hidden realm. Different locations in the everyday world link to different locations in the magical world. Often the portals lead underground, to a hidden city beneath the surface of an everyday city; Neil Gaiman makes the subway/underground image explicit in *NeverWhere*, and the hundreds of miles of caves, tunnels, and sewers underneath Sunnydale play a similar role in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Smaller-scale variants involve imaginary societies of mice or rats living behind the baseboards or wainscots of houses – the source of one name for this genre. The rogue hero of Fritz Leiber's *Swords of Lankhmar*, the Grey Mouser, is magically shrunk to rat size, visiting an entire rat city under the ground.

From one angle, classic cyberpunk fiction such as Vernor Vinge's "True Names" and William Gibson's *Neuromancer* is a kind of wainscot fantasy, taking place in a virtual reality inside the computers of a future everyday world. Both Gibson and Vinge emphasize the point by comparing their netrunner heroes to wizards and computer programs to spells.

Illuminated Fantasy

A different way of concealing the magical reality is not to hide it at all; ordinary people's mental limitations keep them from seeing the magic. Robert Shea and Robert Anton Wilson's *Illuminatus!* trilogy gave this style of fantasy its name, though it's only one element in their complicated story. Nancy Collins made it a recurring theme of her Sonya Blue novels. This setting only works if all the important characters are "illuminated" and thus able to perceive the hidden truths – which often means that they're magically gifted. For a role-playing game treatment, see ***Mage: The Ascension***, with its concepts of coincidental magic and Paradox. Forces other than the supernatural or psychological may keep magic secret in an illuminated setting. Magic may be useful to governments and other powerful organizations, which conceal it to protect their own interests. Stories based on this assumption can combine fantasy with espionage or covert operations (see *Crossovers*, p. 9). Tim Powers' *Declare* is a good example of this kind of fantasy.

Absurdist Fantasy

Especially in film and television, magic may be concealed simply by a combination of flimsy coverups and most people's disbelief in it. The 1960s television series *Bewitched* is a classic treatment of this theme, inspired by the film *Bell, Book, and Candle*. The earlier *Topper* films (and the novel by Thorne Smith) are similar. (*I Dream of Jeannie* combined this approach with relic fantasy.) The key to this approach is usually humor. The audience laughs at the plight of the everyday person caught up in magic, but who tries to keep it secret from everyone else.

There is no substitute for good manners – except fast reflexes.

– Steven Brust, ***Jhereg***

Motifs, Part 2

Here are more motifs common in fantasy fiction. For more on the topic, see Diana Wynne Jones' book *The Tough Guide to Fantasyland*.

Lingua Franca

Dealing with people who don't speak the same language you do is slow, difficult, and unexciting. So is working through translators or using a partly learned language. Jokes about inaccurate translation are funny the first time, but get old quickly. Most fantasy settings have a "common tongue" that everyone speaks. Even in exotic races and cultures, somebody will know enough of it to settle practical questions such as the price of a meal or whether a captive can be ransomed, or to tell a story that reveals some key bit of plot-advancing information.

Nonhumans

Humans in fantasy often share the world with another intelligent race, or even many such races. Usually these look like humans, except for being taller or shorter, thinner or thicker, more beautiful or ugly, and so on. Players going into a fantasy campaign are likely to ask if they can play elves or dwarves.

Outlaws

Folklore often makes outlaws into heroes, who defend the common people against the predatory aristocracy. Fantasy outlaws often take this job seriously, and have Codes of Honor to match. The ideal outlaw isn't a brutal thug, but an honorable nobleman driven into exile by a misunderstanding or the conquest of his country. He protects the weak, treats women politely, and gives away most of his loot (see *Bandit*, p. 116).

Riddles

Riddles are a favorite recreation in many fantasy societies; often there are formal rules for "the riddle game." This can turn into a kind of duel for scholars or wizards, with serious consequences. Riddles can also be a store of knowledge and a way to introduce useful information to the heroes. Prophecies and oracles may take the form of riddles.

Taverns

Need a place to stay for the night, out of the rain? There are taverns in every city or town, in many villages, and sometimes on lonely roads halfway to nowhere. They nearly always serve excellent beer, and they're a place to meet local people with rumors to pass on, quarrelsome drunks, or mysterious potential fellow adventurers.

True Names

In many magical traditions (p. 164), knowledge of a thing's name grants power over it. Wizards hide their true names; in some cultures, everyone does so, going by a nickname or "use-name." Discovering a foe's true name can be an important plot element. Some foes are obliging enough to turn this into a riddle.

Visions

Adventurers may see visions foreshadowing their futures – sometimes in dreams, sometimes via magical devices such as mirrors. Typically, these are incomplete and ambiguous; they can't provide enough useful information to *prevent* the encounter that they foreshadow! Instead, their function develops a mood, in both the protagonists and the audience. Good visions are like good film trailers, generating anticipation but not giving the plot away.

Women Warriors

In real history, almost all the warriors were men. However, present-day fantasy often has women learning to use weapons and going to war. Some fantasy societies simply treat men and women equally, even in historical settings where this didn't really happen. Others have cultures where women are equal or superior, or groups of women with special privileges and duties.

Scope

The scope defines the point of view of the characters. How much of the setting do the player characters actually see? One campaign may take them all over the world; another may confine them to a single building. Different choices of *scope* allow different ways of linking adventures together into a campaign – and require the GM to do different kinds of preparation.

Point Campaigns

In a point campaign, all the adventures take place in a single location. The oldest example of this approach is the "underworld adventure" from ***Dungeons & Dragons***. Other single locations include a village or city; a battlefield or besieged stronghold, in a military campaign; or a community of mages and their students. In campaigns that focus on action, the location is often deserted, except for lurking monsters. Fantasy literature offers models for a campaign set in a living community, such as the aristocratic household in Mervyn Peake's Gothic fantasy novels.

Because the action stays in a single place, a quick sketch can portray the rest of the world. The GM can put all his effort into creating the site of the adventures, mapping every path or corridor and describing the abilities of every inhabitant. It's easy to make point campaigns *leveled*, so that adventurers encounter deadlier foes as they become more capable, by making sure the routes through the site reach the easier adversaries first (see *Into the Labyrinth*, pp. 171-175). Leveled sites also provide a way of progressively revealing deeper secrets, particularly in a campaign about initiation into hidden knowledge. A single site can be a microcosm, a miniature model of the entire world.

Point campaigns tend to be limited. Eventually the battle is won or lost, or the dungeon has been explored from top to bottom, or the students have learned all the master wizards can teach them. If the GM wants to keep the campaign going (or the players insist on it!), one way to do so is to send the PCs to a new site and run a new point campaign there, with greater challenges.

Area Campaigns

The location of an area campaign is the entire world. It's the opposite extreme from a point campaign: wide instead of narrow in scope. This, too, appeared in the first version of ***Dungeons & Dragons***, as the "wilderness adventure," devoted to exploring a landscape.

Area campaigns give a panoramic view of their settings. They can include many different climates, living creatures, races, and civilizations. When adventurers explore a large area, whether looking for something specific or out of simple curiosity, a GM can show off a whole world as an imaginative creation. Having this kind of landscape open before their characters gives players more freedom than any other type of campaign.

To make this work, the GM maps out the entire world, or as much as existing transportation can get to. Some detail has to be lost. Maps need forests but not trees, and cities but not rooms. If players will spend more time in a particular place, its map can be more detailed – but the GM can't know in advance what places will attract the players' interest. Area campaigns usually require GMs to improvise locations and encounters; they're well suited to GMs who like making things up as they go.

Arc Campaigns

Television series and comic books have story arcs: series of episodes linked by a continuing plot. Fantasy stories and games have a similar idea: the quest. This sends the PCs on a journey in a specific direction and with a specific goal (see *Perilous Journeys*, p. 175). Encounters along the way become important when they advance or delay the quest.

A quest is a journey from one place to another. The scope of a quest campaign falls between point and area campaigns. It requires a map of the whole world, but less detail than an area campaign. The detailed maps cover locations between the journey's start and end. They won't be as precise as the map for the site of a point campaign – after all, the PCs won't spend as much time in any one place – but they can be much more precise than an area campaign's world map.

Arc campaigns excel at giving players a sense of purpose. They have a goal, a route to get to it, and obstacles to overcome along the way. If the GM chooses, adventurers can have the same kind of progressively increasing challenges as a point campaign, as the route goes into wilder territory.

Like a point campaign, an arc campaign is naturally limited. Once the quest is complete, the campaign ends. Sending the PCs on more quests is possible, but each quest needs new territory. A series of arc campaigns looks increasingly more like a somewhat unplanned area campaign. GMs who want an open-ended campaign should think about mapping the whole area from the start, and using arcs to give the PCs direction in each series of adventures.

Base and Mission Campaigns

Base and mission campaigns appear more often in genres other than fantasy – for example, in spy thrillers and superhero adventures. In a base and mission campaign, the adventurers work from a central location, but their adventures take place elsewhere, often in exotic places. Each adventure's site is detailed, but the journey there and the larger world only have brief description.

The longer travel times in many historical settings make this kind of campaign harder to run. However, in a fantasy world, magic can speed up travel. Or the same format can work in a smaller area, such as a single kingdom. The Labors of Heracles in ancient Greece and the adventures of King Arthur's knights in medieval Britain offer models for a fantasy campaign.

Campaign Style: Aspects of Realism

Of course, fantasy isn't realistic; it's about magic! However, the effect of magic on the setting, and the way the setting works apart from magic, can be realistic. The GM's choices change the whole style of a campaign and the world it explores. Making the choice consciously can give a campaign a consistent style.

Realism of Action

Action can add realism. If the probabilities are like those in everyday life, the action is realistic. This doesn't mean that every number needs perfect accuracy, as long as probable things remain probable and improbable things remain improbable. Departures from this kind of realism produce a cinematic campaign that adjusts probabilities to produce a better story – where the hero can defeat a dozen men in a fight, or a hundred. Further departures produce heroes who are immune to mundane reality and can do the impossible when it advances the story.

Danger and injury are an important part of realism. For example, in the novel *The Lord of the Rings*, Aragorn finds Boromir pierced with many arrows, dying, but able to gasp out some crucial information. In the film *The Lord of the Rings*, three arrows are enough to kill him, and even the first seriously weakens him, a more realistic treatment suited to a medium that actually shows the action. Damage to equipment, dirt, and fatigue similarly add to realism.

Tactical, logistic, and administrative details also make action more realistic. A realistic campaign can require skill rolls to pick a campsite, set up a camp, forage for food, maintain equipment, set watches, and so on; a cinematic campaign should assume that all those problems are taken care of.

Realism of Characterization

After centuries of literary realism, characters are supposed to be human, complex, and flawed. ***GURPS*** makes this possible through mental disadvantages and quirks. But fantasy can work with other styles of characterization. *Stereotypes* have the typical or expected traits of their race, faith, or profession: the comfort-loving halfling or the grim, silent warrior. *Ethical characters* gain motivation through a Code of Honor, Discipline of Faith, Sense of Duty, or Vow, and set aside personal conflicts to pursue it. *Archetypes* embody some passion, and everything they do reflects it and serves it. Any of these styles can serve a purpose in fantasy – and suffer from too much realism.

Realism of Setting

How much does the presence of magic change the setting? If common magical spells can cure many diseases, heal many wounds, and supply food and water (see *Magic and Technology*, pp. 64-67, and *Agrarian Magic*, p. 95), then the death rate will be much lower than in real history. This means rapid population growth – unless there are also magical ways of reducing fertility, which will change societies in other ways. The actual consequences of widespread magic will transform any society. A realistic campaign will have to explore these consequences; a cinematic or mythic campaign need not.

What if the setting is closer to ancient or medieval patterns, either because magic is scarce or by deliberate disregard for the consequences of magic? The real past was often grim. Are there fields worked by half-starved serfs, cities that hold slave markets, and rulers who employ official torturers? Is marriage loveless and war brutal? Or is the setting a happier vision of the past, with more splendor and less horror?

Realistic Style

Realistic approaches to gaming usually contrast with cinematic approaches. However, it's possible to do almost anything in a cinematic style – even a kind of realism.

Classic film noir shows dark streets, urban grime, and corrupt police forces; cyberpunk and dystopian futures have pollution and corporate power politics; gritty fantasies have starving peasants, bloody battles, and corrupt noblemen or priests. GMs can exaggerate these. A fantasy campaign can be realistic in the same intensified way.

The base and mission format works best for action-oriented campaigns. By skipping over the journeys, it makes the landscape and the scale of the world less real. But it also lets the GM focus on the sites of scenarios and the challenges adventurers face. And the GM can deliberately send the PCs to locations where something exciting is going to happen, instead of waiting for them to stumble on adventure as they wander over the landscape. Like an arc campaign, a base and mission campaign gives players a good sense of purpose.

Unlike an arc campaign, a base and mission campaign has no natural endpoint. A team of adventurers can continue facing new challenges as long as the GM's imagination holds out.

Creating the base is the other side of this campaign format. The base is the environment where adventurers prepare for their dangerous tasks, recover from their injuries, and socialize with each other outside of combat. It needs detailed description, either by the GM or by the players themselves. For a change of pace, set an adventure at the base itself, either a lighthearted "day in the life" as the PCs visit a few taverns or see their families (see *Shore Leave*, pp. 184-185), or a grimly serious threat to their very survival as a team, based on corruption, infiltration, or open assault.

Chapter Two
The Supernatural

"It is not a supernatural creature."

"But it is all these other things?"

"Yes."

"Then I fail to see what difference it makes whether it be supernatural or not – so long as it is malefic, possesses great powers and life span and has the ability to change its shape at will."

"Ah, but it makes a great deal of difference, you see. It is the difference between the unknown and the unknowable, between science and fantasy . . ."

– *Roger Zelazny,* ***Lord of Light***

All the books said creatures of hell were stubborn and perverse. This one was certainly proving them right. It crouched in Albus' double circle, restrained by the Names inscribed around its circumference, and washed itself like a cat, with a long, forked tongue. Like a cat, it seemed not to realize that Albus was speaking to it.

This wasn't getting the information he needed. He reached for the wand he had made. "Hear me, imp!" he shouted, and thrust the wand into the circle. The creature yowled as he struck it, and its eyes glowed red like coals.

"Obey me, or be beaten!" Albus said.

The imp spoke in a harsh croak like a trained raven. "Silly wizard, do you think to frighten me? I come from Hell. We endure torments worse than your rod can inflict, every moment of eternity."

Albus caught the burning gaze with his own. He had gotten it to talk! Now the struggle could begin – and he didn't intend to play fair. He dipped the wand into a flask, and once again struck into the circle. Steam flashed out from the wand as the holy water touched the little demon's warty hide, and its cry this time was shrill. Desperately, it backed out of reach. Albus dipped the wand again, and moved around the circle, but the imp kept scuttling sideways, always facing him. Frustrated, Albus slashed at it, hoping to spatter it with a few drops.

His hand reached a little too far forward. In an instant, in the blink of an eye, the barbed tail had lashed out, around the wand, piercing the flesh of his hand. Shocked by the pain, he pulled back, dropping the wand inside the protective circle. But the imp's semblance of flesh couldn't pass the barrier he had created, and so neither could his hand.

Around the wound, a burning sensation spread through his flesh, up to his wrist. His skin started to blister.

Desperately, he groped for the vessel of holy water.

Explaining magic is as important to fantasy as explaining technology is to a science fiction setting. This chapter considers four main questions about magic: the nature of magic itself, and the nature of magical objects, beings, and realms. It also covers a topic that's particularly important to adventurers: death, and the relationship of magic to mortality. The answers affect nearly every other choice necessary to create a fantasy world.

Both magical traditions in the real world and the magic imagined by storytellers are incredibly varied. Instead of insisting that magic always works one specific way, ***GURPS Fantasy*** offers several different answers to each question. If you base your campaign on a book, a film, or a mythology, use the answers that best fit the source material. If you're working from a personal vision, this chapter's questions can help bring that vision into clearer focus.

Behind the Curtain: Point Costs

None of the choices in this chapter has a point cost, or directly changes the point costs of character traits. A character's options depend on the character's abilities and the environment. For example, a character with Magery 0 can cast most spells, in a normal-mana environment (see p. B235); but in a low-mana environment, he casts them at -5, and in a no-mana environment, he can't cast them at all. But refiguring a mage's character points every time he moves to a different environment would be inconvenient. So ***GURPS*** draws a sharp line between character traits, which have point costs, and environmental conditions, which don't. The way a specific world works depends on a set of environmental conditions.

The environmental conditions can limit the choice of character traits. In a no-mana world, for example, there's not much point in having Magery or knowing spells. The GM can even forbid characters to purchase them. But if a mage from a normal-mana world strays into a no-mana world, he still has Magery and knows spells, and they still cost the same number of points – and if he returns to his home world he can cast spells again.

Sometimes two different approaches to magic exist side by side in the same world. For example, one mage might only be able to cast spells in combat, and another might only be able to create enchanted objects. This kind of difference can have a point cost. However, some features of magic apply to an entire setting and everyone in it. They would never make a difference between one character and another, so they shouldn't have a point cost.

Magic

What is magic? Psychologists define magical thinking as based on wish fulfillment. (This can be a frightening idea; many children tell their parents, at least once, "I wish you were dead!") A fantasy world can really work this way: believing in something, or wishing for it, or commanding it, can make it happen, at least sometimes. Magic is the control of reality by consciousness. Different views of magic lead to different ideas about when this will work, and how, and for who.

There are two basic ways of looking at magic: subjective, in which consciousness itself controls reality; and intrinsic, in which consciousness controls some other power that controls reality. Each has several variations.

Intrinsic Magic

Many fantasies and most fantasy games believe magic is something apart from the mage's mind and will, but subject to his control. Sometimes all magic comes from a single source of power. Other settings divide magic into narrower capabilities that produce specific effects and can't be converted into each other.

Magical Energy

Standard ***GURPS*** magic envisions a single magical energy: mana. It can do a variety of things depending on what spell a mage uses, in the same way that physical energy can do many different kinds of work. The ability to perceive and control this force is Magery. Mages cast spells partly by directing the magical energy within their own bodies, and partly by controlling external mana flows. Both cause fatigue, just as travel causes fatigue whether it's on foot or on horseback.

The name *mana* comes from the beliefs of Polynesian cultures. Other cultures often have similar beliefs. For example, East Asian cultures spoke of *chi* (in Chinese) or *ki* (in Japanese). Traditional Chinese medicine (defined in ***GURPS*** as a form of Esoteric Medicine) attempts to influence the flow of *chi* in a patient's body, and martial arts traditions offer methods for controlling one's own *chi* during combat. The superhuman feats attributed to masters of *chi* appear in ***GURPS*** as various esoteric skills (those which have Trained By A Master as a prerequisite). Such skills could be part of a fantasy campaign, especially one set in East Asia or a fantasy world based on it. (See *Chi as Magic,* p. 157.)

The idea of magical energy provides a rationale for stories where magic is failing, such as Larry Niven's novel *The Magic Goes Away:* the energy that makes magic work is being depleted.

Magical Attributes

Perhaps magic is not a generalized force that anyone taps for any purpose, but a class of supernormal or extraordinary abilities. Certain human beings, animals, and even plants and stones may have special powers or virtues. This view of magic supports One-College Magery (p. 129); each college requires a separate magical talent. In a world with this kind of magic, geographic areas may usually have aspected mana levels (see pp. 43-45).

GMs may invent other sets of specialized magical attributes; see *Alternate Colleges* for some suggestions (p. 160).

Alchemy and Herb Lore are magical arts that rely on knowledge of magical attributes – the attributes of chemical substances and plants. An alchemist can produce magical effects by combining substances in a way that brings out their inherent magical

qualities. Each substance has its own specific virtues, so an alchemist needs a varied supply of ingredients (see ***GURPS Magic***).

In some settings, casting a spell requires drawing runes or other symbols, and a mage's ability to cast a spell or perform an enchantment can't exceed his Symbol Drawing skill. In these versions of Symbol Drawing, the symbols themselves are magically powerful. A mage's essential skill is knowing the attributes of the various symbols.

Magical Correspondences

Magical correspondences often form the basis for magical attributes. The mandrake root has a human voice because it is man-shaped; fire magic uses rubies because they are red. Such correspondences may organize all of nature: the planets and the metals, the elements and the bodily fluids, and so on.

But magical correspondences may be more specific. A person's close likeness, his blood or fingernails, his possessions, or even his name may have a connection to him, which a mage can use to cast spells on him (see *The Three Laws of Magic*, below).

Usually these correspondences form a basis for modifying mana-based magic, in which objects connected to the subject of a spell grant skill bonuses to its casting (see *Correspondences*, pp. 163-164). However, it's also possible to make correspondences the only basis for magic. In this approach (see *Correspondence Magic,* p. 160-161), mages can only cast spells with the aid of the Three Laws of Magic, by establishing suitable links to the target.

The Three Laws of Magic

Many different spells and magical traditions can be described in terms of three basic principles: the Law of Contagion, the Law of Similarity, and the Law of Names. How much part these should play in a campaign is a matter of campaign style and the GM's decision. In an action-oriented campaign, it's usually best just to roll the dice and see if the spell succeeded or failed. For players who find the details of magic interesting, the Three Laws can provide skill modifiers (see *Correspondences*, pp. 163-164).

All three laws of magic involve the same basic process: acting upon a symbol to affect the thing it represents. The differences between them come from the different kinds of symbols they use.

Evidence includes symbols based on cause and effect. A thing is evidence of something else if the other thing created it, changed it, or otherwise made it what it is. Symbols of this kind are the basis for the Law of Contagion, which says that anything that has been in contact with a thing remains connected to it and can be used to cast a spell on it. The closer the contact has been, the better the connection is. A newly bought suit of clothes would be no help in casting a spell on its owner; an often-worn suit would be, because contact with the wearer's body would change the cloth. A person's blood would be an even better connection, because it formed inside his body.

Likenesses are symbols of things that they look like or sound like. The Law of Similarity says that mages can use anything that resembles a thing to cast a spell on it. For example, a mage may use a good drawing to target a spell. The better the likeness, the more help in casting the spell.

Words are symbols of the things that they name. The Law of Names says that mages can use a thing's name to cast a spell on it.

Two people with this kind of correspondence may have Special Rapport or Mindlink. A mage might discover similar bonds between other living things, or even inanimate objects.

Subjective Magic

In some views of magic, the human mind doesn't need any separate power or potentiality to serve it. Every consciousness controls reality, simply by being conscious. Reality is subjective. Philosophers call this *idealism,* meaning that everything is an *idea* in someone's mind.

Taken straight, this doesn't make a very interesting game or story. If it's true for one person, that person is omnipotent; he wins every game and his story always has a happy ending. If it's true for everyone, then either they agree, and there's no conflict, or they disagree, and conflict leads to unsolvable paradoxes.

However, partial control can be interesting. Perhaps a consensus shapes reality, and no one has *total* control. A propaganda campaign might change reality by changing people's beliefs. There are still problems to solve and struggles to face. But everyone can work magic, at least in some degree.

Does "everyone" include animals, as well as sapient beings? Yes . . . if consciousness just means perception, worms and flies have sense organs. The exact type of magic may depend on the range of the animal's perceptions. Animals that can't locate a distant object may only be able to affect their own bodies. An animal's magic is probably instinctive and limited to specific spells (see *Fixed Magic*, p. 161).

Or perhaps the key is language. If a creature can name something, it can affect the thing by naming it (see *The Three Laws of Magic,* above). This would limit magic to sapient beings (IQ 6 and above).

Theistic and Animistic Magic

Another answer is that consciousness controls reality – but not human consciousness.

In the Bible, creation begins when God says, "Let there be light." Perhaps it's God's mind that shapes reality – one God, the multiple gods of a polytheistic religion, or the innumerable spirits of an animistic one. Human beings can't work magic, but can ask the gods or spirits for help. See *Magical Beings* for more on this option.

Powers of the Mind

Perhaps some human minds control reality, but others can't. Bending reality to one's will may take a special mental state, or special gifts of one sort or another. Depending on the historical setting, such gifts may be called mystical, psychic, or psionic (see *Psionics as Magic*, p. 158).

The setting determines how characters acquire these gifts. They may be inborn and available only by heredity or accident of birth. It may be possible to create them – for example, by casting a spell to grant magical gifts. They may be the gift of the gods to favored mortals. Or many may acquire them through long and dedicated study – of yoga, for example.

Gifts of this sort are a lot like Magery as usually defined in ***GURPS***. However, there's an important difference. Standard Magery requires mana, which exists within human beings and in the natural environment. The will of the mage determines the powers of the mind. This kind of magic cannot draw power from the environment, or create a self-powered magical object. And mages must actively maintain magic effects; if the mage loses consciousness, the magic goes away instantly.

Glamour

Some accounts view magic as illusion. A magician can make people perceive strange things . . . but the rising sun, or the touch of iron, or the name of God, banishes the magic, and everything is as it was. On the other hand, people who believe what magic shows them may really be affected. Magic that works this way is often called *glamour*.

The most important consequence of glamour, in terms of rules, is that no spell can have permanent effects. Spells that would ordinarily be permanent can have long-lasting effects, but

Nature and Supernature

If magic works, does that mean science is wrong? How do the natural and supernatural worlds fit together in a fantasy setting? There are several ways of answering these questions:

Science excludes magic. Natural law controls everything that happens. Magic is based on natural laws that aren't understood yet. One day the progress of knowledge will make those laws understandable and replace spells with reliable procedures, the same way that pharmacology replaced herb lore. Often this view goes with belief in psychic powers that magical rituals help to focus.

Science leaves room for magic. Natural laws are true, but there is some randomness or uncertainty in nature. Magic works within that area of uncertainty. Where the laws of nature allow two or more outcomes, the mage's will can decide between them. Jack Williamson's *Darker than You Think* relies on this premise.

Science is dependent on magic. The laws of nature are real, and science can discover them. But supernatural and magical forces created nature: the will of God, or a spontaneous outflow of mana, or even collective human belief. And that same creative force can change nature. (This is the basis of the "Cabal" setting on p. B543.)

Magic excludes science. The world doesn't work the way science says it does. This premise may be unconvincing in a fantasy set in the modern world. In a separate reality, the sun may really be a chariot driving through the sky, or the dead may rise from their graves to trouble the living.

Many magical beliefs reflect scientific ideas that are no longer accepted, such as the Greek theory of the four elements, or 19th-century ideas about the life force. In fantasy versions of historical settings, the scientific theories of the past may be true. See Richard Garfinkle's *Celestial Matters* for an example of this approach.

Magic conflicts with science. In many recent fantasies, magic and science aren't just different beliefs about the world, but different forces within the world. Technology may actually interfere with the operation of magic. A GM may approach this by setting the skill penalty to magical actions equal to the TL. A TL5 setting would have -5 to spellcasting, equivalent to the standard penalty for low mana. This penalty may be consistent throughout the entire world, based on its highest TL, or each region may have its own mana level, based on the people living there or passing through.

Mages in Black

Drawing on the last three of these five models, perhaps the magical agency that created natural law wasn't God, or the collective unconscious, but an organization of mages. At the beginning of history, everything happened magically. But a more predictable world was easier to control magically, so the greatest wizards banded together and worked mighty enchantments to bind the planets to their orbits and prevent lead from changing into gold. Over the centuries, further tinkering created the laws that scientists now rely on.

The laws of nature are a work in progress, and not everyone wants the work to be completed. There are occasional outbreaks of wild magic, or rival conspiracies that want to change the rules. Magical troubleshooters travel through the world, seeking out such enemies of nature and forcing them to obey natural law. Of course, they are entrusted with some of the secret reality-modifying "cheat codes" of nature, for use in emergencies . . .

they vanish if something dispels the magic that creates them. See *Impermanent Magery* (p. 129).

In folklore, this kind of magic is often associated with human mages, faerie trickery or the outright deceptions of devils. Practitioners of black magic, if they call on the services of devils, may be limited to glamour as well. In some views, all magic is black magic!

Taken one way, this is a subjective view of magic – but one that splits up the magical functions strangely. Magicians, faeries, or devils have the power to manipulate the mind and make people see things. But those people in turn have the power to make the things real, by believing in them. The magician's imaginary sword can't hurt anyone by itself, but if the victim believes in it, it can kill him. So the victim's consciousness changes reality, in ways suggested by the magician.

Using Magic in Campaigns

Does it make a difference if magic is subjective or intrinsic? Does it actually change the game mechanics, or the abilities of characters? Yes, in two major ways: whether mana exists, and how Magery works.

In a setting based on *magical energy*, the standard ***GURPS*** rules apply. Magical energy is mana. Magery 0 grants the ability to perceive mana and to manipulate it. Levels of Magery grant improved ability to manipulate mana.

In a setting based on *magical attributes*, each college of spells has its own specialized form of mana. Since they're distinct, Magery 0 grants the ability to identify them; a fire mage may have an aura of heat and flickering light, for example.

In a setting based on *magical correspondences*, mages may not control their own Fatigue or HP to power spells. Mana exists, but externally, in the relationships of objects to other objects. Magery 0 is then the intuitive ability to perceive those relationships and judge whether one object can magically affect another.

In a setting with mystical or psychic powers, things are reversed. The mage's body and mind provide the power source for spells. Mana does not flow externally. Magery 0 is the ability to sense powers of mind and to control one's own powers of mind.

In a setting with theistic or animistic magic, a variety of rules are possible; see *Using Gods and Spirits in Campaigns*, p. 33. Some involve forms of mana and Magery.

In a setting with subjective magic, the power for spells still comes from the mage's body and mind, with no external flow of mana. But this isn't a distinctive trait; every mind has the potential for casting spells. So it's not possible to sense anything distinctive about the minds of mages. Magery 0 isn't needed for either purpose and isn't available. Levels of Magery are still available, as talents for casting spells; anyone can have them, without Magery 0.

Knowing Good and Evil

Human perception is largely "knowing good and evil." Science often regards these qualities as relative to the needs of the organism perceiving them. But in a magical world, they may be basic elements of reality, and the whole world may have a framework of moral absolutes. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam believe in such a framework, with goodness being obedience to God's laws.

Zoroastrianism takes a different approach. It describes two nearly omnipotent gods, one good, one evil. Christian folklore sometimes suggests such a view, with Satan as an evil anti-God, though orthodox Christian theology rejects this. Some fantasy worlds have this kind of polarity, such as Roger Zelazny's opposition of Amber and Chaos in *The Chronicles of Amber.*

If evil is a cosmic force or a basic element of reality, it could provide a source of power or possibly include "black magic" in a campaign. In a dark fantasy, evil might be more powerful than good (see *Evil Gods*, p. 32).

In a less dark setting, good might have created the world, and evil might have distorted it. Nature may be good: good magic may attune to natural processes, and evil magic may act anti-natural. Evil magic and technology might ally in this scenario, with dark powers tempting scientists into dangerous tampering with "things man was not meant to know."

If good and evil are objectively real, then it's possible that magical spells can detect them. They could fall into the college of Communication and Empathy. Similarly, advantages could grant moral perceptiveness. Normally this would only apply to sapient beings. However, in some worlds, a murder weapon could acquire the taint of evil. A device specifically designed for unlawful acts, such as a knife with a poison reservoir, could become tainted upon creation. On the other hand, if good and evil are matters of human opinion, a Detect Good or Detect Evil spell is meaningless, because the same act may be good or evil depending on who judges it.

Magical Objects

If a world has magic, it may have magical objects. In some worlds, the creation of magical objects is the only, or the main, form of magic. In many worlds, it's a common application of magic.

An important distinction exists between *magical objects* and *magically created or transformed* objects. Runes inlaid on a sword's blade might magically enhance its ability to injure a foe, in effect casting a spell to wound the foe or sharpen the sword. The sword wouldn't work in an area where magic was blocked or suppressed, and counterspells might block its effectiveness. It would just be a normal sword. On the other hand, if spells cast during its forging made the blade physically sharper, or the material better able to hold an edge, or the armorer more skillful, the sword would simply be a better sword. The sharper edge wouldn't suddenly become blunt because of a counterspell, any more than a magically healed wound would suddenly reopen because of a counterspell.

Any kind of magical object will feel magical to anyone with Magery 0, even if Magery did not aid the product – for example, a potion. Magically transformed objects don't feel magical. At the GM's option, they may carry residual traces of magic which can be detected at a -5 penalty to the (IQ + Magery) roll.

Natural Magic

In a world of intrinsic magic (pp. 18-19), magical forces may spontaneously create magical objects. If magic is widespread, living things may evolve the ability to use it. Plants and animals with magical abilities may have *mana organs* that naturally accumulate the magical energy to power those abilities (see *Magical Species and Mana Organs*, pp. 48-49). Miners may discover deposits of naturally magical metals or minerals. High-mana areas may be sources of magical materials, objects, or creatures.

In some supernatural views of the world, everything has magical powers. The trick is to discover an object's specific virtues. For example, herbs may have healing powers apparent in the shape of their leaves or the color of their fruit. This approach fits well with magic based on correspondences (pp. 160-161).

Here are some examples of natural magic from legends and fantasy:

Adamant

Adamant is a crystalline stone that is harder than any natural substance. The name means simply "diamond," but legend gives it different properties. Used as a building material, adamant has three times the DR and hit points of a wall of normal stone of the same thickness. Its DR is semi-ablative (see pp. B46-47), but damage never reduces it below DR 9. However, it costs 30 times as much per pound, owing to its scarcity and the difficulty of working it.

All-Heal

The berries of the parasitic plant mistletoe can have magical healing powers. Each berry consumed will restore 1 point of HP lost through disease, including infected wounds. Users normally must consume the berries on the spot, but cutting them with a golden sickle at night will preserve them for up to a year. Traditionally only berries of mistletoe growing on an oak (not its usual host) are magical; roll vs. Naturalist or Herb-Lore at -5 to find such a plant. Preserved berries cost $150 each. *(Reality check: In real life, these berries are poisonous!)*

Dragon's Blood

Drinking the blood of a dragon grants the ability to understand the speech of animals, as described in the *Volsunga Saga*. This is equivalent to having the advantage Speak with Animals. The effects last for 2d

minutes. Ordinarily the blood must be fresh. It will still be hot, inflicting 1d-1 burn damage, and the drinker must make a Will roll to avoid being stunned by the pain (modified by High or Low Pain Threshold). An alchemist may preserve dragon's blood for future use. One dose of preserved dragon's blood costs $1,000.

Moly

Moly is a rare plant (see p. 48) whose flower protects against spells. The picked flower lasts from 6 hours in hot, dry weather to 48 hours in cool, moist weather. While it survives, the bearer has +5 Magic Resistance to all spells cast directly on him, but not to indirect attacks such as missile spells. A single fresh flower would cost $500, if available at all.

Orichalcum

Orichalcum is a metal with extraordinary properties, said by the ancient Greek philosopher Plato to have been mined in Atlantis. (Plato doesn't discuss specific physical properties; those defined here make orichalcum useful for weapons and armor.)

Orichalcum looks like bronze and has nearly the same density, but its DR, hit points, and structural strength are three times those of bronze. Orichalcum armor can be one-third as heavy for the same protection or equally heavy for three times the protection. Orichalcum weapons have damage bonuses for *fine* or *very fine* quality and are tough enough to withstand steel weapons. A steel weapon has *cheap* quality when hit by an orichalcum weapon (see p. B274). Orichalcum objects cost 30 times as much as standard metal objects of the same weight.

Because orichalcum is already inherently magical, it can't be further enchanted to increase its durability. Other enchantments work as usual.

Alchemy

Alchemy extends the idea of natural magic. An alchemist specializes in procedures that focus and enhance the hidden virtues of natural materials. Systematic chemical manipulation of the sort that gives rise to the idea of alchemy really only emerges at TL3. Similar effects may be achieved, if the GM chooses, through herbal preparations made using the skill of Herb Lore, available at any TL.

Each alchemical preparation requires raw materials, which have a cost, and has a preparation time in weeks. In a setting where magic is more or less common, the raw materials may be easier or harder to obtain. Divide their cost by 2 in a high-mana setting, or by 5 in a very-high-mana setting, but multiply it by 2 in a low-mana setting. See ***GURPS Magic*** for more information on the practice of alchemy and for costs of specific preparations.

Enchantment

Enchantment in ***GURPS*** is the process of creating magical objects. It involves much the same things as casting spells, but takes substantially longer. The standard version of enchantment requires Magery 2 and extensive knowledge of spells. The mage focuses his will and charges an object with mana. The mage need not have made the object himself and need not change it physically to enchant it; no physical sign identifies the enchanted object as magical.

Expanded List of Enchantments

For campaigns where PCs can be enchanters, or for GMs wanting to make a wider selection of enchanted items available, the following list will be useful.

Spell: The name of the spell.

Energy: The energy cost required to enchant an item with the spell. Note that this is *not* the same as the cost to cast that spell normally! See also *Enchantment Spells* (above).

Enchantment Spells

In addition to the enchantment spells on pp. B480-481, the following is available:

Temporary Enchantment

Enchantment

This spell creates magic items that only function a few times before losing their enchantment, at a substantial savings in energy cost (and therefore time). An item with a single use can be created for 15% of the normal energy, two uses cost 30%, three cost 60% (very cost ineffective under most circumstances) and the cost for an item limited to 4 or more uses exceeds the cost of a permanent item.

The temporarily enchanted item acts, in all respects, as a normal item of that type, until all of its spells have been cast. Once all the spell uses of the temporary item are gone, the item is no longer magical.

A mage can use the Temporary Enchantment spell in place of the Enchant spell. A single item cannot be enchanted with both temporary and permanent spells simultaneously.

Temporary Enchantment can only give items a one-time ability to cast a certain spell – not to cast the spell on an object. For example, a mage couldn't make a one-shot set of invisible armor – it would never wear off. He could give the armor the ability to cast Invisibility on itself at normal fatigue and duration costs.

Temporary Enchantment does not work in conjunction with any Enchantment college or Meta-Spell college spells except the following: Speed, Power, Hex, Limit, Name, and Link. Temporary Enchantment absolutely does not further reduce the cost of enchantments that already have limited uses.

Duration: Until all of the item's uses have been expended.
Cost and time: See Enchanting, pp. B481-482.
Prerequisites: Enchant.

Item: The class of item required:

Code	*Class of Item*
A	armor or clothing
J	jewelry; e.g., an amulet or ring
S	staff – any rod-shaped piece of organic material up to 6 feet long
Sh	shield
W	weapon
X	special object; see *Notes*

Spell	*Energy*	*Item*	*Notes*
Analyze Magic	1,200	J, S	[3]
Apportation	900	S	[3, 4]
Aura	100	J, S	[3, 4]
Awaken	300	S	[3]
Bless Plants	500	S	[3, 4]
Breathe Water	400	A, J	[2]
Clumsiness	800	S	[3, 4]
Cold	400	J, S	[3, 5 ($600)]
Command	500	J, S	[3]
Continual Light	200/400/600	J, S	[3, 6]
Create Air	200	J, S	[3]
Create Earth	500	S	[3]
Create Fire	300	J, S	[3, 5 ($200)], [6]
Create Water	200	J, S	[3]
Cure Disease	800/1,500	S	[3, 4, 7]
Daze	1,000	S	[3, 4]
Death Vision	600	S	[3, 4]
Deathtouch	2,500	S	[3, 4]
Destroy Water	300	J, S	[3]
Detect Magic	100	J, S	[3, 4]
Earth to Air	750	J, S	[3, 5 ($1,000)]
Earth to Stone	300	J, S	[3]
Entombment	1,200	S	[3, 4]
Extinguish Fire	400	J, S	[3, 5 ($1,300)]
Fear	300	S	[3, 4]
Flesh to Stone	1,000	S	[3, 4]
Flight	2,500	J, S	[2]
Fog	300	J, S	[3]
Foolishness	800	S	[34]
Great Haste	2,000	A, J	[2]
Heal Plant	400	S	[3]
Heat	400	J, S	[3, 5 ($300)]
Hide	1,000	J, S	[2]
Hide Thoughts	400	A	[3]
Hinder	600	S	[3, 4]
Identify Plant	200	S	[3]
Identify Spell	1,100	J, S	[3]
Ignite Fire	100	J, S	[3, 5 ($50)]
Illusion Disguise	150/300	A, J	[1, 8]
Invisibility	1,200	J, S	[2]
Itch	100	S	[3, 4]
Lend Energy	100	J, S	[3]
Lend Health	250	J, S	[3]

Spell	*Energy*	*Item*	*Notes*
Levitation	800	J, S	[2]
Light	100	J, S	[3]
Magelock	200	X	[3, 9]
Major Healing	1,500	S	[3, 4, 10]
Mind-Reading	1,000	A	[3, 4]
Mind-Sending	1,500	A	[3, 4]
Minor Healing	600	S	[3, 4, 10]
Night Vision	200	J, S	[2]
No-Smell	150	J	[2, 5 ($300)]
Pain	400	S	[3, 4]
Paralyze Limb	2,000	S	[3, 4]
Purify Air	50	J, S	[3]
Purify Earth	400	S	[3]
Purify Water	50	X	[3, 11]
Rain	600	S	[3, 4, 12]
Recover Energy	1,000	J	[1, 5 ($500)]
Resist Cold	800	J	[2, 5 ($700)]
Resist Fire	800	J	[2, 5 ($700)]
Scryguard	500/hex	Any	[1, 13]
Seek Earth	50	S	[3, 14]
Seek Plant	50	S	[3]
Seek Water	40	W	[3, 5 ($300)]
Seeker	500	S	[3, 14]
Sense Emotion	300	J, S	[3]
Sense Foes	200	J, S	[3]
Sense Spirit	100	J, S	[3]
Shape Air	200	J, S	[3]
Shape Earth	200	J, S	[3]
Shape Fire	400	J, S	[3, 5 ($300)]
Shape Stone	500	J, S	[3]
Shape Water	400	J, S	[3]
Sleep	1,200	S	[3, 4]
Spasm	300	S	[3, 4]
Stench	60	J, S	[3]
Stone to Earth	400	J, S	[3]
Stone to Flesh	1,000	S	[3, 4]
Stop Bleeding	500	A, J	[1]
Teleport	3,000	S	[2, 4]
Test Food	100	J, S	[3]
Truthsayer	500	A	[3]
Walk on Air	500	A, J, S	[2, 5 ($1,000)]
Walk Through Earth	1,200	A, J	[3]
Wither Limb	2,000	S	[3, 4]

Notes: Special rules for creation or use.

[1] Always on. Works at all times without the addition of a Power spell.

[2] Allows the user to cast the spell, but only on himself.

[3] Allows the user to cast the spell exactly as if he knew it himself.

[4] Mage only. If *any* spell on the item has this restriction, it extends to *all* spells on the item.

[5] Cost of magical materials required.

[6] The energy cost of Continual Light enchantments is 100 times the cost of the spell with the same effect.

[7] A staff of Cure Disease that cures one disease costs 800 points; one that cures any disease costs 1,500 points.

[8] An Illusion Disguise item must be set for a specific disguise when made. An item that creates a Simple Illusion costs 150 points; one that creates a Complex Illusion costs 300 points.

[9] The item for Magelock is a golden key.

[10] A staff of Minor Healing can be used by a non-mage with Esoteric Medicine-15+; a staff of Major Healing can be used by a non-mage with Esoteric Medicine-20+.

[11] The item for Purify Water is a bone or ivory hoop through which the water is poured.

[12] A Rain wand or staff must be kept in water; it loses its enchantment if left dry for over an hour.

[13] Scryguard enchantment hides the item it is cast on, not the wearer or bearer.

[14] A Seek Earth wand must have one ounce of a specific form of earth, stone, or metal set in the tip. Each wand will only seek the one material to which it is attuned. A Seeker wand must incorporate something related to the subject.

Enchanted Vehicles

Most enchanted objects are usually relatively small. But exceptional ones can be larger. An enchanter could create a flying carpet, or a full-rigged ship with a hull as hard as iron.

Regular spells can be cast on a larger than man-sized object; multiply the basic cost by SM+1. Area spells have a cost based on the radius of the area covered. For a vehicle, look up the SM, determine the corresponding largest dimension in yards, and multiply the base cost by half that dimension. Enchantment spells follow the same rules as regular spells, except for Power, whose cost is proportional to the energy it provides.

Automata

In magical terms, an automaton is not a mechanism, but an inanimate object, which a spirit occupies. See *Familiars and Fetishes*, p. 26.

Runic Enchantment

Runic enchantment is an alternative to the standard ***GURPS*** enchantment rules. It's based on the idea that certain letters or other symbols *in themselves* are a source of magical power (see *Symbol Drawing*, p. B224). This version of intrinsic magic (pp. 18-19) inscribes potent runes on an object, or even a person (by tattooing, for example), and can grant magical powers to the object or person.

Runic enchantment is a form of syntactic magic (p. 163). Each enchantment requires placing a minimum of two runes on the enchanted object: a verb for the magical action and a noun for the subject of the spell. The enchanter must personally mark the object with the runes; often this requires an artistic or craft skill, such as Armoury, Jeweler, or Smith.

Permanently enchanting an object with runes requires that they be part of its physical structure. For example, a sword may have runes cast or engraved into the blade, and possibly emphasized with enameling or inlaid precious metal. Two skill rolls are required for each rune: one for the rune skill itself and one for the craft skill used to inscribe it. If all the runes are successfully inscribed, anyone who has the skill of Symbol Drawing for the appropriate type of runes can roll against it to activate the enchantment. Enchanting an object permanently in this way is treated as slow and sure enchantment, but has half the energy cost and takes half as long.

Runes can be temporarily marked onto a surface such as a papyrus, parchment, sheet of paper, or wax tablet. Each rune requires a roll against Artist (Calligraphy) and against the mage's skill with the rune. A mage can also trace runes into earth or sand, with the tip of a blade, a pointed stick, or a container of powder such as flour, at -2 to Artist (Calligraphy). If all the skill rolls work, the PC may cast the enchantment when desired with a roll against Symbol Drawing. The first successful casting destroys the inscription. Inscribing an Easy rune takes 1 hour, inscribing an Average one takes 3 hours, and inscribing a Hard one takes 6 hours.

To activate a runic enchantment requires skill with all the runes involved. The user's effective Symbol Drawing skill cannot exceed his lowest rune skill. If the effect of the enchantment is to cast a spell, the user must supply the energy to power that spell. If the effect is a permanent enchantment such as Accuracy or Puissance, there is no energy to use the item, but it must still be activated for each use. A successful activation continues until the user stops holding, wearing, or occupying the object, after which another activation will be needed.

Runes can enchant some items described in other sections.

Golem: The parchment placed in the golem's mouth, bearing the name of God, requires rolls against Artist (Calligraphy) and Symbol Drawing (Gematria). Energy cost is 125 points. Placing the parchment in the golem's mouth activates it. This is a permanent enchantment, but removing the parchment can return the golem to lifeless clay (p. 27).

Familiars and Fetishes

A fetish is an object that is magical because it contains a spirit. In shamanistic traditions, where all magic is performed by spirits, all magical objects are fetishes. Mages in other traditions may also create fetishes by various methods, such as casting necromantic spells.

GMs must distinguish a fetish from a shamanistic focus (see *Foci*, p. 28). The focus has no magical power in itself but aids the shaman in concentrating on his transactions with the spirits. For example, the drums in Voudoun ceremonies help the participants go into trances where they can channel the *loa*, but they don't magically compel the *loa* to appear.

GURPS provides several ways to represent true fetishes and other spirit-inhabited objects.

In some worlds, the spirits are the unseen force behind magical spells, but they never actually become visible or take on any personality. Calling on the names of the spirits is simply part of the ritual of casting a spell. If magic works this way, then every enchanted item has spirits in it – but an object that holds a spirit is just an enchanted item, and needs no special rules.

It's also possible to represent magical items as physical carriers for spells, as chips are for programs. In this version of Modular Abilities (p. 130), a mage's capacity to control the spirits bound to fetishes limits the number of spells a mage can access.

Modular Abilities aren't limited to spells; they can also include skills (especially knowledge skills) and mental advantages.

In some settings, fetishes are less common. Shamans may know how to produce them, but it's not normally possible to hire a shaman to do so, or buy one from him. Instead, obtaining a fetish requires persuading or compelling a spirit to provide the appropriate services. Since the fetish doesn't require standard enchanting, its point cost isn't based on its energy cost. Instead, define the abilities the fetish grants as advantages, and buy them with gadget limitations.

Finally, the spirit may be an enslaved Ally, or Minion, or an unwilling Patron, and the fetish may be the material component that keeps it enslaved. To represent this, buy Ally or Patron with a suitable gadget limitation. The spirit still has its own personality, and getting it to produce magical aid will involve encountering that personality.

The term "familiar" can mean either a spirit or an animal that attends a magician. Or, in a variety of ways, it may be both: a spirit may take the form of an animal, possess a living animal, merge with it symbiotically, or be bound into it. Binding a spirit into the physical body of an animal is analogous to creating a fetish.

Here are some examples of magical objects that contain spirits:

Djinn Lamp

This magical lamp summons a djinni when rubbed (p. 107). The djinni must grant the wishes of the user to the best of its ability. Djinn have a racial cost of 247 points. In relation to any ordinary human being, a djinni is an ultra-powerful individual, worth a base 20 points. It can supply valuable equipment (+100%) and has extraordinary reach in space and time (+100%), but is unwilling (-50%), and the lamp can be snatched with an unopposed DX roll (-40%), is breakable with DR 6 and SM -6 (-20%), cannot be repaired (-15%), and is unique (-25%), for a final cost of 30 points.

Sorcerer's Wand

A magician's wand or rod is shaped like a hand-to-hand weapon. This isn't accidental: the wand's function is to discipline uncooperative spirits. The spirits bound into it have the power to inflict pain on other spirits. Each sorcerer makes his own. Each wand is unique, but a typical example would have Affliction 2 (HT-1; Affects Insubstantial, +20%; Breakable, DR 1, SM -4, Not Repairable, -50%; Can Be Stolen, Quick Contest of ST, Would not work for thief, -15%; Costs Fatigue, 1 FP, -5%; Melee Attack, Reach 1, -25%; Moderate Pain, +20%; Stunning, +10%; Only on spirits, -30%) at a cost of 15 points. A spirit struck with it would have to roll vs. HT-1 or be stunned for 1 second per point of failure and in moderate pain for 1 minute per point of failure (-2 to all DX, IQ, skill, and self-control rolls).

Named Objects

An optional alternative to enchantment is the simple naming of objects. The object must be of at least Fine quality. While making it, the maker inscribes a name on it. This requires a roll against Symbol Drawing, by the maker or someone else who tells him what to inscribe. Naming an object does not give it magical powers. Instead, the object accumulates character points from performing notable deeds, at the same rate as its user. Each character point is worth 25 points toward an appropriate enchantment, as decided by the GM. Enchantments thus gained will reflect the uses to which the object is put.

The amount of named objects one person can own is unlimited. However, experience divides among the objects, so it takes them longer to gain new powers. Multiply the user's experience by 25, divide by the number of named objects he was using in an adventure, and round down; the objects each gain that much energy.

In a setting where craft magic is available (p. 147), a Crafts skill aided by ritually enhanced Talent can make a named item. The maker must also be literate.

Holy Relics

In a world where gods exist, divine power may pervade some material objects or places. In some cases, the object is simply a channel for the god's active presence (see *Foci*). An object that comes into contact with a god may acquire holiness and retain it after the direct contact ends. The source of holiness may be the god's actual physical manifestation (see *Gods*, p. 31), or a worshipper to whom

the god has granted miraculous powers (see *Miracles*, p. 151), or the prayers of a worshipper, especially one who has True Faith.

It may be possible to create holy objects deliberately. Some gods grant Power Investiture, which works with spells from the College of Enchantment. Prayer can also dedicate an object to the service of a god. Normally this will be equivalent to slow and sure enchantment, and what specific capabilities the object acquires may be at the god's discretion. A GM may also use the *Meditative Magic* system (p. 151) to represent meditative spiritual traditions such as kabbalah.

A holy object automatically grants certain basic benefits. Supernatural creatures hostile to the god suffer 1d damage from its touch. Any that have a relevant Dread will find it unpleasant or terrifying even to approach. In addition, contact with the object makes it easier to communicate with the god. It grants +6 to Religious Ritual if the god's name is invoked, or +2 for prayers addressed to "whatever god or goddess," and anyone speaking to the god is treated as having a default Religious Ritual skill at IQ-6. In some religions, such benefits may descend on any physical object consecrated by the proper ritual; for example, the consecrated bread and wine of a Roman Catholic mass may have them.

GMs can treat more potent effects as enchantments, and the objects that generate them as enchanted items.

The commonest enchantment found in holy relics is a version of Power. Unlike the magical enchantment, the standard religious power source *does* reduce the energy cost of the user's spells. However, it works only for users who have Power Investiture from the same god, or a friendly god from the same pantheon. As a result, it has double the normal cost: 1,000 points for 1 point of Power, ×2 per additional point.

Relics may have other magical functions. In general, a relic will not have any spell enchanted into it unless it has enough Power to keep that spell "always on." If it does, it will perform its function constantly or when asked to. If its Power permanently supports one magical function, the base cost for 1 point of Power is only 500 (not doubled). If it has several functions, and its power can shift to a desired function, the base cost is 750. If the power refocuses freely on other spells provided by the god in question, the base cost remains 1,000.

Enchantments that are normally "always on" don't require Power.

Examples of holy relics include:

The Golem

Created by Rabbi Judah ben Loew (as described in *Monsters*, p. 53), the golem gains animation by a piece of parchment placed in its mouth, bearing the kabbalistically encoded name of God. Removing it deactivates the golem.

The golem of legend was made from clay transformed into somewhat unnaturally textured flesh, following the precedent of God's making Adam from clay. It was obedient to orders from its maker and from others whom its maker designated. Its energy cost was 250 points.

If the GM permits the creation of other golems, each golem will have certain specific skills designed into it, worth a total of 10 points. The traits of a particular golem may differ depending on its size and its material; its surface will always change into a semblance of human flesh, but its HP and DR may differ.

The base energy cost of a golem is 250 points. This buys a golem with ST 15. Golems may be stronger or tougher; add 20 points to the energy for +1 ST, 4 points for +1 HP, or 10 points for +1 DR (starting from DR 0 for the basic version). In some versions of the legend, the holy words are on the golem's forehead – this approach makes golems easier to deactivate.

The Head of Orpheus

When the ancient Greek demigod Orpheus returned from the underworld to the surface of the Earth, despairing because he had failed to bring his wife, Eurydice, with him, a band of maenads (p. 205) found him and tore him to pieces with their bare hands. But, whether because of his divine parentage or because of his recent supernatural journey, he was filled with divine power. His head remains a source of that power.

A worshipper of Dionysus or Orpheus can call upon the spirit of Orpheus to animate the head. A group of worshippers can do this ceremonially. Orpheus will resist an appeal from his own worshippers at -5. Because the head is holy, critical failures have no special effects beyond ordinary failures.

If Orpheus' spirit appears, make a reaction roll for him, at +3 if the summoner is one of his initiates. An invocation in newly composed song may gain a better reaction. The modifier is half the margin of success on a Poetry roll (round down). On a Good or better reaction, Orpheus will volunteer information beyond the exact wording of what he is asked. On an Excellent reaction, he may spend his own energy to remain until the crisis is resolved.

He may do more than answer questions; he can still sing, use the Enthrallment skills, and cast many spells, always by singing. Whether he chooses to do this is at the GM's discretion. If being summoned offends him, he may use his magical powers to chastise his summoner.

In ***GURPS*** terms, this is an aspected Summon Spirit enchantment, usable only with Orpheus's spirit, and worth 1,000 energy points. Energy must come from the worshippers. Its possession costs 40 character points and requires an Unusual Background with a point value that depends on the setting.

The Spear of Longinus

This spear was thrust into Christ's side as he hung on the cross. His blood left it supernaturally empowered. Legends give conflicting accounts of its history and abilities. Peter the Hermit found this version at Antioch during the First Crusade. It requires ceremonial activation – a brief prayer by at least 100 Christians. Once active, it causes Fear in a 100-yard radius, lasting 10 minutes, only affecting enemies of Christianity. Its effective value as an enchantment is 300 points, making it worth 12 character points.

Foci

Foci are physical objects that aid concentration on a spell, or guide the flow of magical energy in a way favorable to the spell. They are not magical in any way. Instead, they enable the performance of magical acts. In subjective magic, all magical items may be foci.

Thunderstones

Thunderbolts are the weapons of Zeus, the king of the Greek gods, made for him by the Cyclopes (see *Brontes* p. 55). The power of their attack consumes them as they strike. However, from time to time, people

find a remnant of a thunderbolt: a small piece of flint, worked into a distinctive shape like that of an arrowhead. Thunderstones retain a link to Jupiter, and have the benefits of all holy objects. Their characteristic use is in swearing oaths; two people making a serious commitment will in turn take the same thunderstone in hand while pledging. After doing so, each will have a Destiny to fulfill the oath (see *Oaths*, p. 147).

In ***GURPS*** terms, thunderstones grant Skill Bonus +6 (Religious Ritual) for administering oaths. The Capitoline Temple in Rome, where Zeus is worshipped by the Latin name Jupiter, keeps a supply of thunderstones on hand for this purpose.

Fear no more the lightning-flash,
Nor th'all-dreaded thunder-stone.
Fear not slander, censure rash;
Thou hast finished joy and moan.
– William Shakespeare, ***Cymbeline***

Using Magical Objects in Campaigns

In a fantasy campaign, magical objects can serve two different purposes for GMs, depending on whether they're common or rare.

Rare objects set their owners apart from ordinary people. If adventurers own them, it's because adventurers are special, and the objects highlight that specialness. Common magical objects show that the setting itself is magical. Anyone can buy a common magical object or barter for it. A rare object should be forged, won on a dangerous quest, or otherwise acquired in some dramatically interesting way.

Depending on the setting, any one kind of magical object may be common, rare, or nonexistent. Magical objects in general can be more or less common in a campaign. There are four main levels of availability:

No Enchantment: Objects with magical powers are nonexistent, because magic either doesn't work or requires a living spellcaster.

Rare Enchantment: Magical objects exist, but can't normally be bought or sold. Even minor magical objects have histories or legends. Those who carry them may have Destinies, favor from the gods, or owe their souls to demons.

Common Enchantment: Magical objects are common and have customary market prices. Magical objects with unusual powers are still rare; this often applies to holy relics, for example. At the GM's discretion, low-powered magical objects (see *Buying Magic Items*, p. B482) may sell for very low prices.

Very Common Enchantment: Magical objects are in everyday use, either because enchanter-level Magery is widespread, because mass production techniques work for magic (see *Technologically Enhanced Magic*, pp. 66-67), or because naturally magical objects and materials are widespread. People use Ignite Fire rings instead of matches. Nearly any generally known spell is available in a physical object; only "cutting edge" magical research is rare.

Mana Levels and Enchantment

Mana levels don't directly equate to levels of availability of magical objects. However, they do limit and influence them.

In a *no-mana* setting, there are no magical objects. Investigating reports of such objects will reveal a fraud (usually), advanced technology, or a poorly understood natural phenomenon such as psionics.

In a *low-mana* setting, a mage has to learn Enchantment-20 to be able to enchant anything. Magical objects are typically rare.

In a *normal-mana* setting, any availability level is possible, from no enchantment (magic can't be implanted in inanimate objects, or enchantment spells haven't been discovered) to very common enchantment (usually requires mass production techniques). Rare or common enchantment is typical.

In a *high-mana* setting, any availability level is possible, but common enchantment is typical.

In a *very-high-mana* setting, there will always be magical objects. They may even be common; they'll never be scarcer than "rare." If nothing else, they may be an exotic side effect of miscast spells, even if it's ordinarily impossible to enchant an object. If enchantment works, new enchantments and spells appear regularly, and are treated as rare; other enchantments are common or very common.

Magical Beings

If magic is real, there may be beings whose nature is primarily magical instead of material. Such beings don't just have magical powers (see *Plants and Animals, Monsters,* and *Races and Cultures* in Chapter 3); they actually consist of magic. Some of them can assume material bodies, or the appearance of having such bodies. Others are permanently invisible and insubstantial. A convenient general name for all such magical beings is "spirits."

Spirits can also exist within material objects. In particular, living things have spirits, which give them life. When the spirit leaves, the creature dies. What happens to the spirit then depends on the setting (see *The Dead*, pp. 37-38).

The standard assumption in ***GURPS*** is that spirits aren't composed of mana, and spirit-based magic is distinct from mana-based magic. A spirit is a consciousness without a material body. Some spirits may be able to use mana-based magic, just as some mortal mages can. Others have spiritual powers that advantages can define. These aren't mana-based, and spirits are no more dependent on mana to survive than mortals are. But in some settings, other approaches may fit better; see *Gods, Spirits, and Mana* (p. 30).

Spirits

A spirit is a consciousness separate from a physical body. It does not need food, water, or air, does not age, and is unaffected by the physical environment, though it can see, hear, and smell. Spirits can pass right through physical barriers as well as magical barriers that aren't specifically designed to stop them. Most spirits can't act on the material world, whether by speaking, manipulating objects, or using spells or powers. A spirit that has these restrictions has the *Unmanifested Spirit* meta-trait (p. 134). Gifted mortals can perceive an unmanifested spirit; see *Shamanism,* p. 149.

Spirits that manifest themselves in the material world in some way – becoming visible and audible, using spells or magical powers, or taking material form – cause adventurers more concern. A variety of meta-traits allow the creation of spirits with such abilities (p. 134).

Some spirits have always existed as spirits; others were once mortals and became spirits after their deaths. For the second type, see *The Dead* (pp. 37-38). The first type fall into several narrower groups.

Locations can have spirits, such as the nymphs of ancient Greece and Rome and the *kami* of Japan (p. 45). So can times: there can be a spirit of an hour, a season, or an age (p. 78).

Elemental spirits, associated with specific substances, often take on bodies made of those substances (p. 45). Usually these spirits use the four elements recognized by the ancient Greeks (earth, water, air, and fire), instead of the elements of modern chemistry.

Plants and animals can have spirits, which guard and protect either the individual living creatures or the entire species (p. 49).

Human families, peoples, or civilizations can have spirits (p. 70).

Human activities and concepts can have spirits, sometimes called *personifications*. There can be a spirit of law or of love.

Finally, there are greater spirits, such as gods, angels, and devils; separate sections discuss these in more detail.

Gods, Spirits, and Mana

What are the powers of gods and spirits based on? In a setting where magic works by influencing mystical energy, do supernatural beings use that same energy? If so, do they do it by casting spells? Or do they rely on something else entirely? (The same questions apply to magical realms such as spirit worlds, if they exist.)

In many fantasy worlds, spirits are pure consciousnesses, able to exist with no body at all. This is the default ***GURPS*** interpretation.

In some fantasy settings, spirits are literally made of mana. Their consciousness lives in a body of mana, as a human consciousness lives in a body of matter. If this is true, spirits will have Dependency on mana. In most fantasy worlds, mana is Very Common.

Spirits and gods may have special powers. If these work by influencing the flow of mana, buy the powers with the -10% limitation Mana-Sensitive: they work at -5 in low-mana environments and they don't work at all in no-mana environments. Otherwise, don't apply this limitation. Other limitations may apply; for example, if spirit powers are powers of pure consciousness, anti-psi effects such as Neutralize (also worth -10%) may negate them.

In some settings, spirits or gods can cast spells. Spells are obviously mana-dependent, but this doesn't count as a limitation; it's built into the definition of the spells and of Magery. A spirit must have Magery to cast a spell.

Finally, there's a subtler option: perhaps all magic works by summoning and directing spirits, or even creating them. Mana level is the quality of "being inhabited by spirits," and high-mana environments are environments that spirits favor. In a world of this kind, spirits aren't made of mana or dependent on mana; mana is made of spirits. Many cultures, especially those with animistic beliefs, think about magic in this way.

First to possess his books; for without them
He's but a sot, as I am, nor hath not
One spirit to command: They all do hate him
As rootedly as I. Burn but his books.
– William Shakespeare,
The Tempest

Spirits in the Material World

The idea of spirits as beings of pure consciousness, without matter or substance, is only one way to define them. Many cultures think spirits are a type of less tangible and more elusive matter.

The word "spirit" comes from the Latin *spiritus*, which originally meant "breath" or "air." To *expire*, or die, was literally to *out-breathe:* when a dying man breathed his last, his spirit departed. In many different languages, word meanings follow a similar path. A word for air becomes a word for breath – the principle of life, and then for sentience or sapience, the awareness of being alive. So a *spirit* might be made of air, or vapor, or another less tangible form of matter.

For example, Muhammad said Allah made the djinn of Arabic myth (see *Djinni*, p. 107) from smokeless fire, as he made men from earth. Djinn have physical substance, but in their natural form, they're invisible and intangible. European mystics during the Renaissance wrote about intangible *sprites*, formed from air; in Shakespeare's play *The Tempest*, the wizard Prospero has such a sprite, Ariel, as a servant.

Some visible but not tangible spirits form various images, such as shadows, reflections, and illusions. For example, the doppelgänger of German folklore is an image of a living person seen in another place. Doppelgängers are usually hostile to their originals,

trying to get them blamed for illegal or discreditable actions. Some accounts of faeries (see *Faerie*, p. 108) suggest that they are similar beings.

In ***GURPS***, neither of these sorts of entity has the Spirit meta-trait. Beings made of subtle matter usually have Body of Air; beings made of images have some version of Insubstantiality or Shadow Form (p. 126 and p. 131). Either type of being may also *have* a spirit, inhabiting its intangible form, just as human beings have spirits inhabiting their substantial forms. On the other hand, some legends claim that beings without substance are also soulless. The GM must decide which is true in his campaign.

Gods

Gods are typically spirits that receive human worship, or worship by other material races. Their actions are the subject of mythology (see *Mythology*, pp. 76-77).

Gods are usually gods *of* something, just as spirits are usually spirits *of* something. However, being the god of something means more – not just having an affinity or sympathy for it, but having power over it. The thing a god has power over is his *domain*.

Some religions have only one god. Such a god is normally extremely powerful, because his domain is everything that exists. Other religions have several or many gods. The major gods usually control important domains and have great power; minor gods control narrow or unimportant domains that give them little power. A minor god may have no more power than a powerful spirit. Fantasy worlds often have invented religions that worship pantheons of invented gods. Small pantheons usually give each god a distinct domain. For example, among the Greek gods, Zeus ruled the heavens, Poseidon governed the seas, and Hades oversaw the underworld. Major gods can have several domains. For example, Poseidon was the god of horses and earthquakes as well as the sea.

Large pantheons may have thousands of gods. Their domains may overlap or intricately subdivide. Often gods organize as a bureaucracy, such as the Chinese heaven – perhaps to limit quarrels over domains.

Not all gods are spirits. Some religions and mythologies envision gods as extremely powerful and long-lived material beings, inhabiting remote parts of the world or other planes of existence.

Gods who *are* spirits can choose to assume human form, or the form of another race. It's also possible for a human being to perform such great deeds that he becomes a god. GMs should determine what constitutes godhead in their campaign settings and whether mortals can attain it.

Burnt Offerings

Gods often expect their worshippers to give them sacrifices, but their reasons aren't always clear. Does a god who can drown the entire world really need one sacrificial ram? Different religions offer a variety of answers, any of which might be true in a fantasy setting.

The sacrifice keeps the god alive. Gods may have supernatural analogues of hunger, thirst, and weariness. They may need blood, life energy, or the smoke of sacrificial fires to regain fatigue points. Human worship may enable them to survive. Or maybe it's just more convenient if human servants do the herding, butchering, and cooking, and leave the gods free for divine responsibilities or divine amusements.

The sacrifice gives the god pleasure. Gods may not need sacrifices; they may simply enjoy them. This makes especially good sense in religions such as Voudoun, where the *loa* borrow their worshippers' bodies so they can eat, drink, and smoke.

The sacrifice compensates the god for its blessings. Gods may have enormous reserves of magical energy, but if they give it away to anyone who asks, they might run out. So the worshipper provides the magical energy, and the god converts it into a useful form.

The sacrifice proves seriousness of intent. By giving up something precious, the worshipper proves the importance of his prayers. This appeal becomes especially powerful when the worshipper offers his own life.

The seriousness of intent theory fits with religions where the central offering is not material, but spiritual. By being willing to pray, or fast, or meditate, the worshipper shows his devotion to a god or an ideal, and the devotion is what the god rewards.

Angels

Many gods, especially powerful gods, have servitor spirits, such as the angels of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, or the Valkyries of Norse myth. Divine servitors are commonly warriors. They are not usually worshipped or honored in their own right; worship goes to the god they serve. But in a monotheistic religion, divine servitors may have special roles, in the same fashion as gods in the pantheons of polytheistic religions. Medieval Catholic thought, for example, recognized nine choirs of angels, from the guardian angels who watched over individual human beings up to the seraphim who communed directly with God.

Mortals can see and hear angelic beings, so the heavenly often serve their gods as messengers. They often take on human form, but not at their own whim; their gods grant their physical bodies. Their appearance is often extraordinarily beautiful.

A god may also have servants who are not noble warriors or emissaries, but humble workers. Portray such servants as various kinds of more ordinary spirits.

Demons

Just as gods have spirits helping them, they also have spirits opposing them: demons or devils. These may serve an evil antigod, rebel against a good god, or simply enjoy human suffering and corruption. Many demons have a Dread of holy things.

Demons often have some of the less attractive mental disadvantages and may even personify those disadvantages. A malevolent human may try to bribe demons to harm an enemy. Demons will affect the physical world, often through an Affliction. A desire to possess human beings seems widespread among demons, and they often engage in trickery to gain consent to such possession; this might even be an Addiction.

Some demons actually serve the gods, willingly or not. For example, images of the rakshasa of Indian myth appear in many Hindu temples, much like gargoyles on medieval European churches. Their intimidating appearances and overall ferocity drive away enemies of the gods.

Demons and Sickness

In many mythologies, demons have the power to make people sick. Some cultures believe demons cause all sickness. Such demons use a Toxic Attack, but only while in contact with or inside of the victim. Usually it has one or several Symptoms chosen from the effects of Affliction.

If a demon causes the disease, a successful exorcism can cure it. Physicians in such a world could have the skill of Exorcism. The GM may treat the sickness demon as an unseen presence and simply check whether the exorcism succeeds.

Half-Mortals

Many magical beings have children by humans – typically, the supernatural beings court mortal women (more or less formally). In the Old Testament, the "sons of God" (usually understood as meaning angels) did so. The ancient Greek gods had many such children; stories of King Arthur often make Merlin the son of a demon. The GM should decide whether this is possible and how often it happens, charging an appropriate cost for Unusual Background.

Half-mortals usually have superhuman powers, skills, and attributes. They should have high point values – "larger than life" (200-300 points), or more typically "legendary" (300-500 points). They may have exotic or supernatural advantages or disadvantages, Transcendent Appearance, or increased lifespans (Longevity or Extended Lifespan). These traits may be mana-sensitive (p. 133). In some worlds, Magery or other supernatural

Evil Gods

Some religions believe in not only evil spirits but evil gods. These gods' power depends on how negatively the religion perceives the world.

Pantheons sometimes include a god of evil, such as the Egyptian Set or the Norse Loki. Practitioners of "black magic" (p. 21) may worship such a god. He may be a necessary adversary figure in the grand mythology, or a dangerous trickster who provides amusement and problems in more prosaic tales of the gods' lives. A "god of good" is less likely; usually all the gods define and enforce moral rules for humans, though gods in polytheistic myths often fail to meet such standards themselves. They may tolerate the "god of evil" because he governs an important and dangerous principle, such as fire or storms, because he is too strong to destroy without precipitating an apocalypse, or simply because he's a relative of the rest of the pantheon, and even gods don't slaughter their own relatives lightly. They may keep him locked up somewhere, or exile him to the fringes of reality.

Dualistic faiths, such as Zoroastrianism, believe in two equal gods, one good and one evil, eternally at war with each other. The Christian name for this belief is "the Manichaean heresy." Orthodox Christian theology rejects the idea that Satan is as powerful as God, though the Christian belief in a final war between Heaven and Hell sometimes suggests otherwise.

Finally, *maltheism* is the belief in an all-powerful evil god, or a pantheon of evil gods. Not surprisingly, this isn't a popular religious doctrine, but it makes a good belief for an evil or mad villain or a sinister cult (such as worshippers of Cthulhu in H.P. Lovecraft's fiction). Maltheism offers its believers a grim choice: submit to their evil deities, do their work, and suffer torment and destruction; or rebel, and suffer torment and destruction sooner. In a dark fantasy setting, maltheism could be true.

If there is an evil god, and a mortal comes to its attention, treat it as an Enemy. Normally it will be utterly powerful (base value 40 points), even if it's acting alone. If its goal is to destroy a specific mortal, it can only appear on a 9 or less, and if having it totally dominate the plot isn't going to work well, limit it to a 6 or less. An Enemy god who wants to torment but not destroy a mortal (typical behavior for trickster gods such as Coyote, or Loki early in his career) could appear on a 15 or less. A god might simply watch a mortal who is a potential foe – perhaps indicated by a Destiny. This would affect a campaign in a minor way, regardless of frequency.

advantages may not be available to human beings, but only to half-mortals. However, half-mortals don't normally have any of the Spirit meta-traits.

With all these qualities, half-mortals are prime candidates for apotheosis.

Using Spirits in Campaigns

Spirits play two basic roles in fantasy campaigns. In some campaigns, they're kept behind the scenes; the PCs use their help, but never actually meet them. In others, they're actual characters in the story.

Invisible Spirits

In some settings, all magic comes from relationships with spirits. Mages cast spells by summoning spirits to aid them (or, in some versions, every spell actually creates a spirit to carry it out). However, the actual motives and personalities of the spirits may not matter. The only difference in game mechanics is that Ritual Magic takes the place of Thaumatology.

Spirits can also operate behind the scenes as the source of advantages gained through a Pact. The rituals that mages must perform or the rules they must follow to keep the advantage are visible; the spirits that impose the requirement remain offstage. The same is true of advantages such as Blessed and Power Investiture.

Visible Spirits

In some campaigns, gifted mortals may perceive and communicate with spirits. Such spirits react the same way as other NPCs do, and the seer or shaman can attempt influence rolls to gain their cooperation. As far as everyone else is concerned, they remain invisible. A specific spirit may become a mortal's Contact or Patron. An unfriendly spirit may be an Enemy, but only as a watcher.

Some spirits may influence the material world through magic or other abilities. The spirit itself remains invisible, but its actions are visible. Such spirits are suitable as Allies or as active Enemies. A GM may even allow spirit PCs, though they won't be able to interact with most ordinary mortals.

A spirit that can become visible, materialize, or possess a living being *can* interact with mortals. It's effectively a character like any other.

For either of these last two options, the spirit's character point value is important. The GM (or the player, if the GM allows spirit PCs) needs to fill out a character sheet for it. This sheet will include suitable Spirit meta-traits. Since these are costly by themselves, spirit characters are most viable in high-powered campaigns.

Finally, some spirits are seen *only* in materialized form. They appear when summoned by spells or sent as divine messengers, or they choose to take mortal form as avatars. The fact that they are spirits is usually just background. Their character sheets should simply describe their physical forms and attributes, including any special advantages or disadvantages due to their supernatural origins. For example, a divine avatar who can resume his godhood when his mortal body dies has Unkillable 3 for 150 points (or less, if his ability to resume mortal form is restricted).

Being a God

It's usually best not to give a god a character sheet in ***GURPS***, but it's not impossible. Here are some things that would need to go on a typical god's character sheet.

First, most gods are spirits, existing primarily in an immaterial form. But they aren't as limited as other spirits. A typical god can assume a material body as often as it likes, so it doesn't get the Usually On limitation. When it does assume mortal form, killing its mortal body doesn't harm it permanently, but merely sends it back to the spiritual plane, so it has Unkillable 3.

Gods have large numbers of mortal worshippers; it appears that many gods gain strength from those worshippers in one way or another. One way to represent worshippers is as Allies, built on 25% or less of the god's point value (base value 1 point). A minor god might have 100 allies (raising their value as a group to 12 points). They have the special ability of supplying power to the god through worship (a 50% enhancement, raising their value to 18 points; add 9 points to multiply their number by 10). The god can then buy huge amounts of additional Fatigue with the -40% limitation Granted by Worshippers. One Fatigue point per worshipper would be plausible.

Most gods can pay attention to more than one prayer at a time; buy this as Compartmentalized Mind. A reasonable guideline might be one compartment for each site that is sacred to the god (minimum 1 level).

A very minor god could have +100 FP (Granted by Worshippers, -40%) [180]; Allies (Built on 0-25% of point value; 100 allies; Special Abilities, +50%) [18]; Charisma 1 [5]; Compartmentalized Mind 1 [50]; Doesn't Breathe [20]; Doesn't Eat or Drink [10]; Doesn't Sleep [20]; Immunity to Metabolic Hazards [30]; Insubstantiality (Affects Substantial, +100%) [160]; Invisibility (Switchable, 10%; Substantial Only, -10%) [40]; Unaging [15]; Unkillable 3 [150]; Maintenance (100 worshippers; Monthly) [-14]; and Mute (Substantial only, -10%; Only when insubstantial, -10%) [-20]. That's a total of 662 points (so its worshippers could be built on up to 165 points). Then consider higher attributes, divine powers, talents, skills, magical spells, and whatever else the god is capable of . . .

In a high-powered campaign, this could be a starting point for defining a character who has undergone apotheosis, if the GM is willing to provide adventures for lesser gods.

Magical Realms

If magic exists, and especially if magical beings exist, there may be separate realms whose substance is purely or primarily magical. These may be the homes of magical beings. On the other hand, magical beings may simply exist invisibly in the physical world instead of a separate realm.

In ***GURPS***, magical realms are other planes, reachable through mana-based spells such as Plane Shift (p. B248) or advantages such as World Jumper (see *Jumper,* p. 129). There may also be natural gateways to these realms, typically at very-high-mana or very-high-sanctity locations or along ley lines (see *Sanctity*, p. 101, and *Magical Networks*, p. 45). The distances between gateways in the magical realm may correspond to those in the physical realm, or they may be utterly unrelated – or there may be only one gateway to a particular realm.

Whether magical realms are mana-based is variable; see *Gods, Spirits, and Mana* (p. 30).

As a rule, the inhabitants of a magical realm are visible and substantial in that realm, even if they would be invisible or insubstantial in the material world. If they remain in their native realm, their ability to survive and act has no point cost. For example, the Unmanifested Spirit metatrait (p. 134) costs 149 points. However, that's the cost for a spirit to move about the material world. In the spirit world, other spirits can perceive, touch, and attack a spirit, so it doesn't have Insubstantiality, Invisibility, or Mute. It may need to sustain its own existence; if so, Doesn't Breathe and Doesn't Eat or Drink have no point cost, just as Doesn't Breathe is a 0-point feature for a fish that can breathe only water. If it has such needs, then it may also be vulnerable to diseases and poisons in the spirit world and not have Immunity to Metabolic Hazards there. The 114 points a spirit saves are the cost of the ability to perceive and move about the material world in spirit form, while remaining immune to its hazards.

Dreamlands

The realm of dreams, in fantasy, is often an actual place or plane of existence, which the minds of sleepers can visit. The beings that occupy it seem to have form, if not substance, and the capability of perception, action, and speech. These may be spirits, or an entirely different order of beings, or a mixture of both – if your dead grandmother whispers a secret to you in a dream, it may be important to know if she was a real ancestral spirit or a phantasm of your mind. Oneiromancers practice the art of discerning which dream beings and events are true and which false.

In some settings, every individual dreamer has a separate dreamworld, with its own inhabitants. In others, a single land of dreams exist, which all sleepers visit, and where they occasionally meet. A compromise version could have individual theaters of dreams with a common backstage.

A dreamer with the skill of Dreaming can use it to search through the depths of his own mind. When attempting to visit deeper levels beneath individual dreams, such as a collective unconscious or archetypal realm, roll vs. Dreaming-5 to find them. If all dreamers share the same dreamland, or find their way into the underlying archetypal realm, dreamers may meet each other and even have adventures together. If they have Dreaming skill, roll vs. Dreaming for one dreamer to find another. Two people with Special Rapport or Mindlink are at +2 for this roll. People acquainted through a long series of shared dreams may meet in the waking world, as in Kipling's story "The Brushwood Boy."

There are other ways of entering another person's dreams. The spells Mind-Reading and Mind-Sending from the college of Communication and Empathy work on a sleeper. Psionic abilities are another option (see *Psionics as Magic,* p. 158). Mind Reading permits passive viewing of what a sleeping person dreams; Telesend permits implanting one's own words or image in a sleeper's dreams; Mind Probe can uncover

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things a waking person has recently dreamed. A mentalist who has entered another person's dreams can use the skill of Dreaming there, but at -2 because of unfamiliarity. If a single shared land of dreams exists, these abilities may let a waking person visit it.

In a common dreamland, the advantages Insubstantiality and World Jumper may allow a waking person to enter (pp. 128-129), becoming a being of dream substance or projecting his consciousness into a form of dream substance. If each dreamer has a separate world, these abilities grant entry into any dreamer's individual dreamland. Access to a single dreamer's dreamland is an -80% limitation. In a stage/backstage setup, universal access grants backstage privileges. The skill of Dreaming can help when finding one's way around dreamlands.

"If that there King was to wake," added Tweedledum, "you'd go out – bang! – just like a candle!"

– Lewis Carroll,
Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There

Faerie Realms

Another class of magical worlds relatively accessible to human beings is the lands of the faerie folk. Human can reach these in physical locations where the physical and magical worlds overlap. Such locations may be hard to reach or dangerous, explaining why few people explore them. Traditional areas of overlap include faerie mounds, magical forests, and caves. Some of the *loa* of Voudoun live under the sea. In a planetary romance campaign, other planets might have their own faerie realms, or the entire planet might be the gateway to a faerie realm.

Like their inhabitants, faerie realms often rely on appearance instead of substance (see *Spirits in the Material World*, pp. 30-31). Just as faeries can change form, color, and even size, the objects in faerie realms may be changeable. Faerie treasure may fade into crumpled leaves under the light of day. Being made of the stuff of illusions, faeries can touch illusionary objects as if they were solid.

The illusionary nature of faeries explains some of their land's perils. A mortal may think he has spent only a single night in a faerie realm, but come out many years later. As long as he remains under the faerie spell, his own life may be sustained by the illusion that he has not aged. But if the illusion is dispelled, perhaps as simply as by his setting foot on the ground, he suddenly finds himself an old man.

Afterworlds

The realm of the dead (see *The Dead*, pp. 37-38) is another highly accessible magical world. The heroes of mythology and literary classics go there almost routinely; Homer's *Odyssey*, Virgil's *Aeneid*, and Dante's *Divine Comedy* all describe such visits. In genre fantasy, Ursula Le Guin's *The Farthest Shore* and Garth Nix's *Abhorsen* both describe long quests in the afterworld.

In myths and epics, the usual way to reach the afterworld is to go underground. The realm of the dead may actually be inside the Earth, or may be another plane whose portals lie underground. Coming out may be less easy. A mortal may sneak past supernatural guardians, or gain the permission of the ruler of the dead. In Greek myth, even the goddess Persephone, after the ruler of the dead carried her off to be his wife, could only return to the Earth with his permission.

If a mortal does visit the dead, he often finds them insubstantial, even in their own land. They can become visible and audible without effort, but have no actual bodies. See *Spirits in the Material World* (pp. 30-31) for ways of portraying the souls of the dead in their own realm.

"Relax," said the night man.
"We are programmed to receive.
You can check out any time you like,
But you can never leave."
– The Eagles, "Hotel California"

Spirit Worlds

A spirit world is a magical realm that isn't accessible by such simple methods. Normal human beings will never enter a spirit world. Shamans and mages may be able to, through spells or rituals (see *The Magical Arts*, pp. 146-172), and some especially magical locations may provide gateways.

In a spirit world, spirits can harm mortals who occupy their realms, or take harm from them. Usually this involves unarmed hand-to-hand combat or natural weapons. Inanimate objects don't exist in the spirit realm – though some spirits may look and act like rocks, swords, or full-rigged ships of the line. A spirit that envisions itself clothed, armed, or armored will appear as such, but will only inflict added damage if it has appropriate natural weapons. For example, it might have a club bought as Striker (Crushing Damage; Long, +1 SM, +100%) [10] or a knife as Talons [8].

In some spirit worlds, such attacks can kill a spirit in its immaterial form. A spirit "killed" in this way is either destroyed or permanently sent to some realm beyond the spirit world. In other spirit worlds, spirits cannot be destroyed; the spiritual form recovers from damage like a physical body with Unkillable 2, at no point cost. This doesn't mean it doesn't *hurt*! The GM may also rule that a victor can enslave a defeated spirit, perhaps by forcing it to reveal its true name (see *True Names*, p. 164).

Heavens

If a world has one or more gods, they may inhabit their own magical realm – a heaven. Such realms may actually overlap the physical world, just as faerielands do. Some versions of Christianity envisioned God and the angels dwelling above the atmosphere, or in an outer sphere beyond the sphere of the fixed stars, and literally descending to Earth. Greek mythology placed the gods even closer, on top of Mount Olympus. However, other religions and mythologies place the gods in a purely spiritual realm, as purely spiritual beings.

The GM determines whether the gods or their servitor spirits use magic. If they do, heaven will make the task easier. Treat heaven as a very-high-mana environment. However, critical failures have only mild consequences, and never result in attacks by hostile demons.

Spirits in most heavens are Unaging and Unkillable.

Hells

If there are heavens, there may also be hells, occupied by enemies of the gods (see *Demons*, p. 32). These may be realms of exile, but they are often devoted to punishment. If their occupants are spirits, then injuries to them may only stun without inflicting actual harm – but this doesn't work in the victims' favor, as it means death can't release them and the punishment still hurts. In a material hell, the material bodies of the condemned may miraculously regenerate, making them Unkillable.

Demons often cast spells, so magic may work in most hells. However, if it were easy to use, the damned would use it to escape. Typical hells are low-mana planes, where casting any spell takes a lot of work. However, any failure becomes a critical failure, and an actual rolled critical failure always draws the attention of a powerful demon. To limit this risk, and to make up for the difficulty of casting spells, demons often have very high magical skills, which make them very dangerous if they visit normal-mana worlds.

Archetypal Realms

A more abstract spirit world is a realm of pure ideas, or Platonic essences, the perfect prototypes of which material things are imperfect copies. Such prototypes may have very little personality in the human sense, but a philosopher or a sorcerer contemplating them may be illuminated. One could encounter anthropomorphic personifications of ideas, which may or may not be gods.

It's also possible for the prototype of the material world, or of all possible material worlds, to be an archetypal realm where other archetypes are contained. For example, in Roger Zelazny's Amber series, the realm of Amber is the prototype for all other worlds.

A variant on this idea, more prevalent in roleplaying games than in traditional fantasy, is the existence of realms that embody the pure essences of the elements. Such a plane might have aspected mana, high for the appropriate element and low for everything else.

Pocket Universes

Whether a human wizard or a minor god, a single being's will may create a magical realm. This implies a very high level of magical ability. Such realms are normally smaller than the true world. They have a certain lack of reality, and anyone who enters one may break out or even destroy it. E.R. Eddison's *A Fish Dinner in Memison* and Terry Pratchett's Discworld novels offer a variant on this idea: our world is actually a pocket universe created by beings in a world where magic is possible.

In a sense, the dreams of individual dreamers are pocket universes. A dreamer with Dreaming skill can consciously shape his pocket universe. A fantasy world could be the dream universe of a god with Dreaming skill at an incredibly high level.

Cyberpunk stories sometimes treat virtual reality environments as technologically based pocket universes. In a fantasy setting, a virtual reality could magically come to life, transcending its creators' control.

The Dead

Death has a special and complicated place in fantasy. Mythic and legendary beings are often deathless, and escape from death is the goal of many heroic quests and magical feats, and the happy ending of many fairy tales. But it's a goal that may be unattainable, even for the greatest heroes. Fantasy exists between history and myth, and time and mortality are the very substance of history. Heroes of fantasy aspire to mythic stature, but they emerge out of history, and remain ultimately mortal.

There's another aspect of death in fantasy: by dying, the hero or mage leaves the world of mortality and enters the world of myth. In a fantasy setting, death is seldom mere nonexistence. It's a dark side of existence, unseen by the living, but powerful (see *Afterworlds*, p. 35). Mortals may call on the dead for knowledge or for power – or receive threats from the dead. Necromancers, mages who deal with the dead, are often the most powerful of wizards.

In a world with more than one intelligent race, different races may have different afterlives. Or no one may know what happens to the dead; it may be a mystery beyond the power of magic to unravel.

In mythology, the gods may regard death differently from mortals. Death is often a realm that they're privileged to enter and leave. Or, if they lose that freedom, it's like a rest, a journey, or a prison sentence; they don't actually cease to exist. Heroes of legend or high fantasy may receive similar privileges, sleeping in a remote place until needed again, or even ascending to the realm of the gods. Less legendary heroes may enter the usual realm of the dead, but live on there as spirits. In low fantasy, death may be extinction or total departure from contact with the living, but the dead may leave psychic or magical residues, as ghosts or fragments of memory.

The possibility of death also plays an important dramatic role. The most dramatic choices involve things gained at the highest prices – and life is the highest price. Characters willing to pay that price are the most dramatic. The most effective stories, and the most effective scenarios, create the sense that their heroes are willing to face death, and may have to – whether any of them actually do die or not. Slaughtering legions of helpless foes, or facing a death that's temporary and reversible, can't produce the same tension. Because of this, much of the best fantasy has an element of darkness.

Ghosts

In many fantasy worlds, people's spirits may remain in the material world as ghosts, especially if they have a strong reason to do so. They may even affect the living, though only extraordinarily powerful ghosts assume material form. Ordinary ghosts can communicate only with a shaman or medium.

In most fantasy worlds, the dead usually don't become ghosts. But it's possible, especially in a dark fantasy setting, to have all the dead become at least weak ghosts, while the strong-willed may have full or enhanced abilities. Angry ghosts could harass or inconvenience the living, as in Harry Turtledove's *Between the Rivers*. Magic may have the purpose of protecting the living from the dead, as in Garth Nix's *Sabriel*, whose heroine studies necromancy not to call up the dead but to send them away.

Ancestor Worship

A number of cultures, including ancient Rome and modern China, have rituals honoring dead family members. In some cases, the ancestors become angry if not honored, and inflict harm on the living. A darker view could define ancestor worship as a ritual binding the malevolent dead – with the occasional improperly bound dead person returning as a ghost, vampire, or other undead being.

In ***GURPS*** terms, ancestor worship is Maintenance, and ancestral spirits have a Maintenance requirement (p. B143). The spirits of ancestors are usually Unaging, but being ignored by the living may cause them to age. In other versions, they may fade as the living forget them, and finally vanish when no one living still remembers them, as in *Between the Rivers*.

Afterworlds

Many cultures believe the dead go on to an afterlife. The quality of the afterlife depends on the person's life and death. The good go to join the gods, or to a paradise; the bad descend to hell, or to a dark realm under the earth. See *Afterworlds* (p. 35), *Heavens* (p. 35), and *Hells* (p. 36).

The definition of "good" varies from culture to culture. In Norse legend, for example, the Valkyries – nine goddesses who serve Odin, the king of the gods – choose warriors who die fighting bravely to join the armies of the gods. Other people end up in Hel, a dreary, uncomfortable place, where they are condemned to remember their lack of courage forever.

Reincarnation

Different cultures believe the spirits of the dead come back in new bodies. The new bodies may not be human, or even sapient. The Hindu and Buddhist religions, the Greek philosopher Pythagoras, and the ancient Celtic druids all taught that a man could return as an animal, and the first two favored vegetarian diets to avoid the chance of killing a being with a human soul.

In a fantasy world where reincarnation exists, characters may have memories of past lives. The advantage Reawakened grants the ability to remember skills learned in a past life. Racial Memory can apply to previous lives instead of genetic ancestors. Two people with a close relationship in a past life may have a Special Rapport, activated when they meet in their new life. Racial Memory of past lives may draw them to seek each other out, or they may even have a Destiny to meet in their new life, or to go on meeting in many new lives.

The classic novels of China and Japan, reflecting Buddhist teachings, sometimes have characters who knew each other in previous lives. Kim

Stanley Robinson's novel *The Years of Rice and Salt* adopts this idea to portray an alternative history from the viewpoint of many incarnations of the same characters. Characters in Japanese anime may also have ties formed in previous lives. Steven Brust's sword and sorcery novel *Jhereg* portrays several important characters linked together by previous lives. An epic campaign could have a storyline spanning many incarnations.

Finding the new incarnations of specific people can be the motive for a quest. Such a person might have known something important, if he retains his memory of his life. He might have been a friend of the PCs, whose memories of their own past lives send them looking for him. Or he might have been a great hero, wizard, or teacher, whose help is needed. A religion may seek out new incarnations of its head to lead it, as in Tibetan traditions in the real world.

Resurrection

Other religions teach that the dead will one day rise in restored and improved versions of their original bodies. This is the basic Muslim doctrine, for example. Christianity includes both this idea and a belief in an immediate afterlife, where the souls of the dead wait for the Last Judgment. If the dead are simply awaiting resurrection, they won't interact with the living in the meantime. In some legends, gods grant heroes new life, not in the distant future, but immediately.

Ascension and Deification

Some especially worthy people may not just go to live with the gods, but gain supernatural powers in their own right. In polytheistic settings, they may actually become gods. In monotheistic settings, they become saints. In some versions of Christianity, the saints almost form a pantheon, each interceding with God for specific purposes. Even Buddhism, which regards gods as largely irrelevant to gaining enlightenment, honors spiritually advanced beings such as bodhisattvas and arhats.

Any such ascended mortal will have extreme power. Among other things, he can probably manifest in the physical world, in an apparently mortal body, much more freely than other spirits. But ordinarily, he won't use his powers for unimportant reasons. A typical role for an ascended spirit is as a Patron with the Minimal Intervention limitation.

Revenants

If death is not final, then the dead may not always stay dead. The enslaved dead often serve their creators as mindless automata, such as zombies, or dominated servants, such as lesser vampires. The restless deads' own compulsions drive their return, often because of the manner of their death or unfinished business in their lives. Battlefields may have many restless dead. The willful dead rise through their own determination, often helped by powerful spells.

Some come back in the form of spirits, or ghosts, and have Spirit meta-traits (p. 134). Others return to their bodies and reanimate them, either temporarily or lastingly.

If the reanimation is temporary, the spirit has the advantages Possession (Puppet Only, -30%; Spiritual, -20%) [50] and Puppet [5], raising its cost by 55 points. Consider the dead body an Ally with IQ 0 and the advantages Minion (+0%) and Summonable (+100%). Summonable has the special effect that the spirit is summoning *itself* to the location of its own body, and not the reverse.

If the spirit permanently implants itself in the body, treat it as some sort of undead creature, such as a vampire (pp. 111-112). Give it one of the Corporeal Undead meta-traits (pp. 133-134), based on the condition of the body. Since the spirit is not going to leave the body, being a spirit is merely a special effect.

This type has more exotic possibilities. Dead bodies may host spirits other than their original spirits, such as demons. A spirit may even possess a living person (see the wendigo on pp. 52-53).

Exorcism will not drive out a spirit that permanently occupies the corpse of its own body. Any other combination is subject to exorcism, as described on p. B193.

Chapter Three
Worlds

"Do we walk in legends or on the green earth in the daylight?"

"A man may do both," said Aragorn . . . "The green earth, say you? That is a mighty matter of legend, though you tread it under the light of day!"

– J.R.R. Tolkien,
The Lord of the Rings

The Jewish quarter was dark, but darkness was no barrier to the woman who flew over the streets. She glided to a landing in a square and folded her wings about herself, making it easier to walk down the narrower alleys. The house she sought was in one of the narrowest of them.

She passed through the door, and turned into one of the smallest bedrooms.

Shmuel lay in his bed: a handsome young man, and a clever student. She felt the piety he had given to the past month's prayers, like a stormcloud with holy lightning hidden in its depths, waiting to be released. The sense of divine power drew her to him. She bent over the bed to kiss him, and awaken him to the embrace of her wings.

What difference do supernatural forces make to a fantasy world? How do they affect its landscape, its plants and animals, its intelligent races, its cultures and civilizations? This chapter considers how to map out a magical world as a campaign setting.

Frames

To start with, what's the overall shape of the world? Is it round, like Earth, or some exotic shape such as a disc or hollow sphere?

Planets

In low fantasy, the laws of nature are mostly the same as in the real world. A world with human inhabitants will be an Earthlike planet, with water and breathable air – even if it's in another solar system, a distant galaxy, or another timeline.

In a science fiction campaign, designing a planet usually starts out with numbers: the planet's diameter, surface gravity, atmospheric pressure, average surface temperature, and water surface, for example. Then the GM works out the kind of planet caused by these numbers. But in fantasy, the planet itself is the natural starting place.

Some numerical descriptions of a planet turn into pictures easily. A planet might be hotter or colder than Earth, or have more or less water. Climate differences will affect the terrain and weather that adventurers encounter. A hot, wet planet will have jungles and swamps, a cold planet will have glaciers, and a dry planet will have vast deserts and small seas. Because they affect a planet's landscape, temperature and water surface are important in fantasy campaigns.

GMs should ignore other numerical descriptions, such as gravity and atmospheric pressure. A fantasy planet is really just "another Earth" with a different map. Its inhabitants won't have any problem coping with the gravity and pressure. So it's simplest just to assume that they're the same as on Earth and forget about them.

Space fantasy campaigns, where adventurers travel to other planets and encounter magic, are an exception. The struggle to survive in a difficult environment creates part of the drama in this story. In a campaign where fantasy is the focus, GMs may decide that a planet's gravity or air pressure is low or high, the same way they may decide that its climate is hot or wet. Then they can apply the rules for atmospheric pressure, different gravity, and uncomfortable temperature to the adventurers (see pp. B429-430 and B434.

Hard science fiction writers make jokes about stories with "jungle planets" or "ice planets," pointing out that any Earthlike planet should have as many different environments as Earth. But in a space fantasy, planets like this could exist!

Places

In a high fantasy setting, the world doesn't have to be round. In mythology, the Earth is often flat. A fantasy world based on mythology may also be flat – for example, Terry Pratchett's Discworld. Other fantasy worlds may have even stranger shapes.

It was once seriously proposed that the Earth is hollow, with habitable lands on its inner surface, and perhaps a central sun. This idea inspired stories by Edgar Allan Poe, Jules Verne, and Edgar Rice Burroughs. The interior of a hollow Earth could be a fantasy setting.

A world in one of these shapes would have really bizarre terrain and weather if it had the same natural laws as Earth. However, high fantasy isn't about scientific speculation. No matter what shape the world is, its inhabited regions will be Earthlike.

On the other hand, there will be one visible difference, which astronomers and navigators will be likely to notice: the absence of a horizon. On a flat world, the line of sight extends infinitely – or at least until it's interrupted by something opaque, such as a mountain or a cloud. Distant objects may waver or twinkle like stars. Inside a hollow Earth, the ground actually curves up to form a roof, probably with color patterns reflecting the terrain and vegetation; there is no sky at all. Describing how things look, especially from a high place, will help convey the weirdness of such settings.

Above and Below

A fantasy setting may have a different cosmos, not just a different Earth. Within the solar system, for example, the planets may be the more Earthlike ones astronomers envisioned in the 19th century. C.S. Lewis' space fantasy novels *Out of the Silent Planet* and *Perelandra* take place on Earthlike versions of Mars and Venus, for example.

In a more radically different world, the Earth may be the center of the universe, with the planets (which include the sun and moon) orbiting it. The very stars may not be inconceivably remote suns, but tiny points of radiance in a sphere not far beyond Saturn.

A flat Earth suggests even stranger astronomies. The sun and moon, and perhaps the other planets, may be vehicles piloted by gods. The constellations may be heroes and monsters transformed into celestial beings, or the stars may be lamps hung from the dome of heaven to light the world.

If the Earth is flat, the space below the ground may be as vast as the space above it. It may have its own dark gods, just as the heavens have theirs. Gods of the dead are especially likely to dwell beneath the Earth, ruling vast kingdoms of imprisoned ghosts (see *Afterworlds*, p. 35). Other mythologies have races that live within the Earth. In genre fantasy, dwarves, orcs, and trolls all prefer to live underground. Underground settings work particularly well for dark fantasy.

Philosophers in the Middle Ages believed in the idea of *natural place* – light materials naturally want to move upward and dark materials downward. In a flat Earth setting, the Earth's materials might get denser and harder at greater depths. Stone from hundreds of miles down might make nearly indestructible fortifications, worth the cost of cutting it and hauling it up. Perhaps, for example, the depths of the earth are made of solid adamant (p. 22).

Many Worlds

Nothing says a fantasy campaign must limit itself to a single world. Fantasies set in the modern world, where scientific theories are mostly true, may place magical realms in alternate dimensions. Older mythologies and mythic fantasies may assign them physical locations. For example, Norse mythology says that the Nine Worlds, of which Midgard (Earth) is one, hang in the branches of a huge ash tree called Yggdrasil.

Playing With Maps

To create a fantasy world, draw a map.

This isn't the only possible approach. A point campaign (p. 15) can work perfectly well without a map of the world, though it needs a detailed map of its dungeon, cave complex, or city. But an area, arc, or base and missions campaign (pp. 15-16) depends on the GM's knowledge of the world's layout. At least a sketch of the main countries, cities, and geographical features is indispensable.

There are several ways to create a world map, depending on how radically the setting differs from the real world.

Earth

The simplest method sets the campaign on Earth, either in the present or in the historic past. Use any world atlas or historical atlas for geographical information. Fit the magical and fantastic elements; perhaps in locations such as Stonehenge, Jerusalem, or Tibet that already have a reputation for magic.

Altering the Map

If magic makes more of a difference, think about changing the map. One approach keeps the terrain and landscape unchanged, but redraws the political boundaries and possibly moves the major settlements. This creates the map for an alternate history, where the history-changing event is the development of effective magic. The main question asks how drastically the political power relations were changed, and how long ago.

For a minor change, take an idea from literature: keep the usual map, but fit in one or two extra small countries, such as Ruritania (from *The Prisoner of Zenda*), Grand Fenwick (from *The Mouse That Roared*), or Scythia-Pannonia-Transbalkania (from Avram Davidson's Doctor Esterhazy stories). Magic may still happen to work in these places.

Small physical changes can have a similar impact. Imaginary islands make particularly good sites for small, peculiar nations.

To produce bigger changes, take a current map of Earth and alter one aspect. Raising or lowering the sea level is particularly easy; any good atlas has maps with the contour lines. Or instead of using Earth as it is now, look at maps of earlier geological ages, when the continents were in different places. A fantasy campaign could take place on a prehistoric continent such as Pangaea.

More places than Earth have maps. Starting with a map of Mars or Venus, and putting in oceans, could produce an unfamiliar but geologically realistic world.

Creating the Map

Finally, there's full world creation: drawing a map from scratch. A good physical geography textbook will help produce a more realistic landscape, with the deserts and jungles in the right places. A look at Karen Wynn Fonstad's *Atlas of Middle-Earth*, in addition to being interesting, will show how an imaginary world can embody a keen sense of landscape and demonstrate some geographical concepts.

Magical Landscapes

The most basic aspect of a fictional setting, magical or not, is the physical environment: the topography and climate. Even in fantasy worlds, this mostly resembles physical environments on Earth, because it will be shaped by similar natural forces. Rock and water will still have weight; winds, rivers, and ocean currents will still erode the land. But the players will take all this for granted. The things that will stand out, and that need special attention, are the things that are different because of magic.

The people living in a fantasy world will probably be aware of their natural environment. Most fantasy settings are pre-industrial, with few large cities. People live at the mercy of night and weather. Or if they don't, because magic gives them control of the environment, this itself is an important difference.

The Living Earth

Medieval and earlier philosophers often regarded the Earth as having a metabolism, like a living creature. For example, many believed veins of metal, ore, or precious stones actively formed within the Earth. On a long enough time scale, this is true . . . but in an intensely magical world, the time scale may be much shorter. Worked-out mines might become productive again after a few millennia – and long-lived races such as dwarves might have records to prove it. A world with such powers of self-renewal might also have very high tectonic activity, manifested as earthquakes, tsunami, and volcanic eruptions.

Fossils were evidence for such magical forces. Minerals within the Earth seemed to spontaneously grow into the shape of plants or animals. Such fossils could be potent magical objects. It might be possible to animate a fossil, producing either a living creature of wood or flesh or a mobile entity of rock. Enchanters might pay high prices for suitable fossils.

Enhanced Environments

The simplest way to create a magical environment is to exaggerate a real natural environment. If a location is bright or dark, hot or cold, wet or dry, make it more so, or more unchangingly so. Each of the natural environments in ***GURPS*** can have its own archetypal form.

Arctic environments freeze uncovered flesh at a touch, or dazzle travelers with reflected glare. Simply walking over their icy surfaces requires a DX roll to avoid falling.

Caves plunge miles below the ground. Most caves are utterly dark, but some are lit by mysterious phosphorescence. Any light that does enter them reveals elaborate multicolored rock formations.

Desert environments are utterly dry. Even breathing the air leaves travelers parched. Touching their sands can be lethal, as in the Deadly Desert that surrounds Baum's Oz. Sunlight in the desert is as dazzling as in the arctic. Winds may carry blinding sand or choking dust; windstorms can literally flay travelers or their pack animals.

Forests are eternally shadowed, with twisting paths that never go the right way. The nearby air is stiflingly still, but distant trees creak eerily in passing breezes. Jungles are much the same, but hot and humid and smelling of decay.

Mountains are incredibly steep and high, perhaps even rising out of the atmosphere. Above the snowline, they present the same hazards arctic environments. Volcanic mountains may erupt, or menace travelers with lava flows or poisonous fumes.

Oceans have mountainous waves and treacherous currents. In narrow seas, whirlpools threaten ships, as in Poe's story "A Descent into the Maelstrom" or the encounter with Charybdis in the *Odyssey*. Elsewhere the seas are completely still, leaving mariners becalmed or even trapped in tangled seaweed. Coleridge's poem "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" offers many hazards for seamen to face.

Plains covered with high grass extend to the horizon. Their main hazards are weather-related: thunder and lightning, tornadoes, and flash floods (see *Natural Disasters*, p. 86).

Rivers may be broad and tranquil . . . or narrow and swift, with treacherous currents, hidden rocks, rapids, and waterfalls. Over time, rivers erode uneven ground. In fantasy settings, this can be less complete, because the world is too new for much erosion to have happened, or because magical ground is more resistant.

Swamps are miserably wet, and offer little safe footing. A careless step may land an explorer in a bog that can suck him under in a minute or two. The air may unnaturally brighten with glowing vapors, or stink of decay.

Any enhanced environments may be especially difficult to live and travel in; the GM may assign a penalty of -1 to -5 to Survival rolls.

Environments can have enhanced good qualities. A region that supports vegetation may be extraordinarily fertile, rich in edible plants. The climate may be exceptionally pleasant, especially in coastal or tropical areas. Either circumstance may grant a bonus of +1 to +5 to Survival rolls; the very best enhanced environments may be natural gardens where an untrained person can find food and shelter with an IQ roll. Or the landscape may have an unearthly beauty.

Such seeming paradises can become a subtler trap. The beauty of the scenery, or the ease and comfort of living in a garden environment, may seduce travelers into forgetting the goal of the quest. They may have to roll against Will, at a penalty equal to the Survival bonus, to make themselves leave. They may even develop an Addiction to the environment.

Impossible Environments

Magic can create environments that would not exist in nature. A simple form is the climatically impossible environment. A garden may grow among the glaciers of a high mountain, or in the middle of a desert. A stretch of barren sand or rock may cross an otherwise fertile country. In a space fantasy campaign, a planet may have small habitable areas with high mana, while the rest of the planet is a desert or an airless ball of rock or ice.

Drastic physical impossibilities may exist in a high fantasy setting. It may have islands in the sky – great masses of rock floating in the air, holding wilderness, fields, or cities. The clouds themselves may be solid and

habitable. Huge caves may be magically lighted and have vegetation and people, or bubbles of air may hold cities beneath the sea.

If the setting is not a realistic planet, but a place of another kind, it may have many impossible environments. Flat earths may have heaven physically above them, in the sky, and hell physically below, beneath the ground (see *Above and Below*, p. 40). In Norse mythology, the climate grew hot in the south, culminating in the fires of Muspelheim, and cold in the north, culminating in the ice and fog of Niflheim.

It was a miracle of rare device,
A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!
– Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Kubla Khan"

Mana Basins

Occasionally, a high-mana or very-high-mana zone contains an object that radiates mana in its most concentrated form. These so-called "mana basins" actually contain mana available to be tapped by any mage. Most basins have a capacity of one or two energy points for casting spells. But some extremely rare "mana geysers" have been discovered with a capacity of hundreds of points.

An exhausted mana basin will recharge fully in 24 hours; the exact hourly rate depends on the capacity of the basin. Any mage can tap a mana basin by touching it. The capacity of the basin is the only limit to the amount of mana a mage can tap in a single turn.

Most mana basins are natural objects – stones, trees, springs, small caves, etc. Being expressions of the underlying mana of a place, they cannot be moved; a mana basin tree that is transplanted to another location will retain its current charge, but will never recharge. Mana basins can appear or vanish overnight, but most mana basins are ancient (and appear inexhaustible).

Known mana basins will be claimed by someone. Local lords, mages' guilds, churches, archmages – mana basins are too valuable to be left unclaimed. The discovery of a new mana basin is a major event in the wizardly profession; wars are fought to decide control of an important basin.

Unevenly Distributed Magic

In a fantasy setting, magic itself is a feature of the landscape. Is it the same everywhere? Does it fluctuate randomly? Are there distant realms of high or low mana, or scattered islands of magic? Any especially magical area can be a source of danger or the goal of a quest. Magical sites may also be the homes of spirits or other supernatural beings.

Each world has an overall mana level, though some areas may be higher or lower. If mana levels do vary, the variation may be on a large or small scale. Some worlds may have an overall magical polarity: Roger Zelazny's *Jack of Shadows* takes place in a world split into scientific and magical hemispheres, and Terry Pratchett's Discworld has a central mountain range with extraordinarily intense magic. Some worlds have areas of high or low mana the size of a continent, so that reaching a place with different mana requires a long journey. People may go on pilgrimages to high-mana lands, or mages may found schools there. On a smaller scale, some worlds have areas of higher mana within a day or two's walk from every settlement.

Mana variation may link to features of the landscape or its inhabitants. Zones of different mana may also have different climates, weather, terrain, or vegetation. High mana is often in remote places far from human settlements, so that serious mages have to isolate themselves – but Walter Jon Williams' *Metropolitan* and *City on Fire* portray a world where people and buildings generate magical energy.

It's natural in a fantasy setting to assume that high-mana places are good and low-mana places are bad. However, a different take is possible. The folklore of Christian countries says that magic doesn't work on hallowed ground. What if the holy places are magic-free, and the magic lurks in unhallowed wild places? This would fit especially well if magic is glamour (p. 20). The statement of the Good Witch of the North – that Kansas, being a civilized country, would not have witches or wizards – hints at this view of magic . . . though the magic of Oz itself is not necessarily evil or illusory.

Aspected Mana

Mana is not always equally applicable to all purposes. A region may be especially favorable, or *aspected*, to one specific kind of magic. A spring might have high mana for healing spells, or a forest glade might have very high mana for plant magic. In these regions, the favored type of magic is made easier and stronger, while disfavored types are discouraged by the very energy a mage works with. This kind of variation is especially likely to be reflected in the region's climate and plant and animal life. In some worlds, all areas may have aspected mana (see *Magical Attributes*, p. 18).

Aspected areas may be of any mana level, but are usually the same level as the surrounding area. The strength of the aspect varies from 1 to 5; this strength adds a bonus to favored magics and a penalty to unfavored ones. Aspect strength may also vary within an area; some aspected areas have a uniform aspect strength while others grow more strongly aspected toward their center. Still others fluctuate almost randomly.

Life-aspected regions add their aspect strength to effective skill for all Healing spells and subtract from all Necromantic spells and all spells which do direct harm (this includes most Melee spells and most harmful Body Control spells, but not most Missile spells – they can be used more readily for nonviolent purposes).

Death-aspected regions are precisely the reverse of life-aspected regions; they subtract from Healing spells and add to Necromantic and harmful spells.

Elemental-aspected regions add their aspect strength to effective skill for all spells of the appropriate element except that element's Destroy and Control Elemental spells. They subtract from effective skill for the element's Destroy and Control Elemental spells, and from all spells of the opposed element (Earth vs. Air, Fire vs. Water). A One-College mage (p. 129) of the appropriate element gets a 50% increase to the aspect bonus, but a One-College mage of the opposite element gets double the normal penalty!

Many other types of aspects are possible. Almost any of the colleges can reasonably have a corresponding style of aspects. Most aspects will be designed to aid one type of magic while hindering another, but you can certainly have aspected regions that only aid or only hinder.

Detecting Aspected Areas

A mage gets an IQ + Magery roll to notice that he has crossed the boundary of an aspected area. On a critical success, he will know the nature of the new area; otherwise he can cast Analyze Magic. Elementally aspected mages will always know when they enter an area to which they are aspected or opposed, though they won't know its level.

Changes in Aspect

Aspect is not necessarily a fundamental property of mana. An area's aspect may change according to the Law of Similarity: like begets like. Thus, an area of volcanoes might become fire-aspected. A particularly gruesome battlefield might become death-aspected. Even less dramatic events may change the aspect of an area; the main hearth of a large castle might, after many years, become slightly fire-aspected (or food-aspected, for that matter).

PCs may try to use this principle to manipulate the aspect of their surroundings. It should never be trivial to change the aspect of an area, but the presence of lots of magically significant events and materials will have a small effect over time. The extensive use of the desired type of magic will help as well. It is easiest to amplify an existing aspect; aspecting a neutral area is hard, and suppressing an aspect almost impossible. Entire priestly orders have been dedicated to the task of eliminating the death aspects that linger around former strongholds of evil.

Mana and Life

In a world where spirits and mana are related (see *Gods, Spirits, and Mana*, p. 30), and where life depends on having a spirit, no-mana areas will be destructive to life. Effectively, every living creature will have some level of Dependency on mana and will wither away if taken to a no-mana area. (Anyone who is a Mana Damper with the Area Effect enhancement will have Lifebane as a nuisance effect.) This relationship could explain such places as the Deadly Desert that surrounds Oz.

Magically Aspected Items

It is possible for certain *items* to be (or to become) magically aspected. An altar, a chalice, a robe – anything might become aspected by contagion (taking on a magical bond to things it comes into contact with; see *The Three*

Ley lines connecting very-high-mana sites (white circles) divide the land area into differently aspected manasheds: (A) Air aspected, normal mana; (B) Unaspected, high mana; (C) Earth aspected, normal mana; (D) Unaspected, normal mana; (E) Light aspected, normal mana; (F) Plant aspected, normal mana; (G) Water aspected, normal mana. Red circles indicate centers of low-mana sites.

Laws of Magic, p. 19). Details are up to the GM; it is possible that mages know how an item becomes aspected, and can take advantage of it. The aspect of an item can be determined by Analyze Magic.

The user or wearer of such an item casts spells as though he were in an aspected area.

Enchanting in Aspected Areas

Enchantment-aspected areas are extremely rare (and highly prized). However, enchantment can also be assisted by working in an area aspected toward the spell to be placed in the item. When enchanting in an aspected area, the enchanter's skill with the spell to be placed is enhanced or reduced normally, while his effective Enchant skill is increased or reduced by half the level of the aspect, rounding down. The enchantment roll is still made against the lower of the two effective skills.

Magical Networks

In some versions of magical geography, magical areas form patterns in the landscape. GMs creating such patterns can use the following approach.

Decide how many areas have unusually high mana and place them in suitable sites. Assume that mana naturally flows outward from these high-mana sites into the landscape. Draw lines connecting high-mana points or magical "hot spots," like the ridgelines that join the highest peaks in a mountain range. These lines are secondary areas of higher mana, called *ley lines*. Mana flows from them into the areas in between, just as water flows from mountain ridgelines down into watersheds. Place points with low or no mana in the middle of these "manasheds." Each manashed has its own separate flow of magical energy, which may be aspected to one sort of magic. Ley lines are natural places to divide areas with different magical qualities.

Ley lines run straight between adjacent magical sites, unaffected by the physical landscape. If a third magical site exists near the middle of a ley line, the flow of energy will shift toward it, forming a pair of shorter ley lines with an angle at the middle site.

Because ley lines have higher mana levels than the surrounding environment, casting spells along them is easier. Special spells might tap their power. In an "industrial magic" campaign (see *Magic and Technology*, pp. 64-67), they may supply power for magical production lines or for vehicles that travel along the ley line. Spirits and magical creatures will be more common on ley lines. It may also be easier to cross into other planes there. GMs may grant bonuses to Gate spells at a ley line and to Movement spells directed along a ley line.

Most ley lines are about the width of a path or road. The smallest ley lines are effectively paths 18" wide; the largest are broad roads over 12' wide.

Spirits of Place

In an animistic world, some spirits inhabit specific places. Ancient Greek legends described several classes of nymphs (p. 213): the oreads of the mountains, the dryads of the woods, the naiads of lakes and rivers, and the nereids of the oceans – one kind for each natural environment familiar to the Greeks. There could be another kind of spirit for every other part of the Earth's surface, from glaciers to geothermal hot springs. Spirits of place mostly want to preserve their habitats. So long as these are unthreatened, they're calm, and may even be playful or amorous.

Other sorts of spirits actually live within masses of material: beneath the ground, or submerged in the sea, or floating in the air. These are free-willed elemental spirits. They can come in any size, but the larger ones seldom notice human beings and may live on a much slower time scale, perhaps waking and sleeping once a year. Human-scale spirits are mainly concerned with disturbances of their elements. Earth spirits resent miners and may try to sabotage their tunnels, and air spirits dislike having the air filled with smoke or bad smells.

Spirits of the Earth's surface typically remain stationary. Often they have a Dependency, with a base cost depending on the extent of their place (see *Disadvantages*, p. 132). Free elementals typically have a Dependency on their element, so classify elements as Very Common. If spirits are mana-based, the Dependency may be on the aspected mana of a place or element, or even on high mana as such. This doesn't change the point cost. On the other hand, the attachment may be an Addiction, a Sense of Duty (p. 133), or a Vow never to leave.

Planetary Spirits

In mythology, the planets are often vehicles piloted by gods (see *Above and Below*, p. 40). The rise of natural philosophy at TL2 recognized them as natural celestial bodies, but some aspects of the older view remained. Ancient Greek philosophers speculated that each planet had individually guiding intelligence. Medieval Christian theology transferred the function to angels. C.S. Lewis' space travelers (in *Out of the Silent Planet* and *Perelandra*) meet the angels of Mars and Venus when they visit those planets. In a space fantasy campaign based on modern astronomy, every planet might have its spirit.

Planetary spirits are normally extremely powerful. In a polytheistic setting, they may be actual gods. Earth's spirit is a goddess in many religions. A planetary spirit could be a Patron (in a postmodern magic campaign, Gaea could be the Patron of a group of magical defenders of the environment) but not an Ally.

As a spirit of place, a planetary spirit may have a Dependency on its planet or sphere – worth points only in a setting with interplanetary travel or the summoning of planetary spirits. Treat it as Very Common in such a setting (base value -5 points).

Plants and Animals

An important part of most landscapes is the plants and animals that inhabit them. A mountain isn't just a mass of rock; it's a set of habitats at different altitudes – a level of cold-tolerant trees, a level of alpine herbs, grass, moss, and lichen, and a barren level of snow, ice, and rock. Each has its own distinctive animal species as well. Setting the scene for a fantasy adventure involves populating the world with living creatures, both real and imaginary.

GMs can use a variety of sources for imaginary creatures. The study of fossils has revealed numerous extinct species that might have survived in a different world (or, in a "living Earth" setting, might be unborn future lifeforms within the womb of the Earth). Cryptozoologists investigate popular legends of mysterious beasts, hoping to prove that bigfoot, sasquatch, or yeti exists or to find plesiosaurs in Loch Ness. Myths and legends describe other fantastic beasts, some of which, such as unicorns and manticores, may have originated in misunderstood stories from distant countries. Charlatans sometimes create fraudulent specimens of legendary creatures. On the other hand, skeptics may think that real creatures are frauds of this kind. Some zoologists dismissed the platypus, with its furry body and ducklike bill, as an obvious fake! And, of course, writers, artists, or filmmakers can just make up entirely new creatures, and so can GMs.

Plant and Animal Legends

Even real plants and animals in a fantasy world may have fantastic traits. Folklore and legends about natural history may be true in a fantasy setting.

Physical Attributes

Folk beliefs often exaggerate the physical and mental traits of real lifeforms. In a fantasy setting, a bloodhound's keen nose could provide a supernatural tracking ability, or a porcupine could fire its quills like darts.

Folk beliefs about the medicinal properties of herbs and other substances may be consistently true. A plant with heart-shaped leaves may be good for a weak heart, for example. A GM may exaggerate these medicinal effects, as in the field of poppies that sends Dorothy, Toto, and the Cowardly Lion to sleep in *The Wizard of Oz*.

Fantasy may also enhance the effect of living creatures on the natural environment. Forests are often creepy places, with angry trees waiting to avenge a traveler's campfire. Branches may drop on an adventurer's head, or ensnare him, or paths may mysteriously close off behind him. Spider webs may be yards across and impossible to cut with any nonmagical blade. On the other hand, the colors of flowers and the songs and plumage of birds may be supernaturally lovely.

Moral Attributes

In folklore, legend, and mythology, animals often embody specific virtues (or faults), which mental advantages and disadvantages can represent. For example, an elephant's never forgetting could be Eidetic Memory; a cat's inquisitiveness could be Curiosity; even an ant could be a Workaholic with Slave Mentality. Having animals embody moral traits is very much in the idiom of high fantasy and works well in light fantasy. An animal's magical gifts may also have moral significance. In dark fantasy, some animals may embody anti-moral traits or even malevolent magic.

One of the commonest emblematic traits is Trickster. Most human cultures credit an animal with human or superhuman cunning, and a joy in playing pranks. Well-known examples in North America include coyotes, foxes, rabbits, and ravens. The *kitsune* (magical foxes or fox spirits) of Japanese legends take human form, usually that of beautiful women, and cast spells, especially illusion spells.

All the imaginary species in this book have emblematic traits, as well as their other attributes. GMs can determine whether these species actually have these traits.

Ellum she hateth mankind, and waiteth
Till every gust be laid
To drop a limb on head of him
That anyway trusts her shade.
– Rudyard Kipling,
"Oak and Ash and Thorn"

Animal Languages

Folklore often envisions animals as secretly living human-like lives, and even having languages (p. 64). In some versions, animals actually speak human languages, but only on special occasions or to favored humans. In others, there are animal languages. A human with the advantage Speak with Animals can speak all these languages. Other humans can learn them at the same cost as spoken human languages. However, since animal voices are different from human voices, Mimicry-12 (specialized in animal sounds or bird calls) is a prerequisite for learning the accented form of such languages, and Mimicry-16 for learning the native form. Animals with Mimicry-12 or Mimicry-16 (specialized in speech) can similarly learn human languages in such settings.

In a setting where this is true, animals are not Mute. Whether their IQ is higher, or whether nonsapient beings can use language, depends on the setting, but even sapient animals won't have much technology. GMs could split sapience between tool-using sapience, still based on IQ, and linguistic sapience, based on Perception, giving any reasonably alert animal the ability to speak.

The King of Beasts and the Parliament of Fowls

If animals can speak with each other, they can also tell stories and have laws (such as the Jungle Law of Kipling's *The Jungle Books*). They can have organized societies and rulers. European traditions make the lion the king of beasts, while some Native American cultures give a similar role to Grandfather Bear. Medieval literature describes the Parliament of Fowls, which Alan Moore imitated with the Parliament of Trees in the comic *Swamp Thing*.

Some fantastical animal societies live under natural conditions. *Watership Down* offers a well-realized modern example. But other fantasies, such as the Chronicles of Narnia, have talking beasts, such as the swashbuckling mouse Reepicheep, who lead much more humanlike lives, with furnishings and tools and weapons. This version usually works best in light fantasy; it also appears in many animated cartoons.

Fantasy can envision entire worlds of civilized animals. Many Native American legends are set in a world where all animals spoke and built houses – which the trickster Coyote disrupted, in some versions, when he made humans. Anthropomorphic or "furry" stories, particularly in comics, also present animal worlds. A noteworthy example is *Usagi Yojimbo*, portraying the occasionally supernatural adventures of a rabbit samurai.

Companion Animals

Faithful and unusually gifted animals accompany many human heroes in fantasy. Sometimes these are actually vessels for spirits. They may have psychic or emotional bonds with their human companions. Even "normal" companion animals are often extraordinarily clever and trainable – represented by raising their IQ one or two points above what the species template provides (see the Superior Horse on p. 106).

Very intelligent animals may speak human languages, at least to their human companions. The animal may even be the more intelligent of the two, as in the fairy tale "Puss in Boots" or C.S. Lewis' *The Horse and His Boy*. Puss in Boots is also an example of an animal that uses human equipment.

Imaginary Species

Fantasy novels often contain invented plant and animal species. Some are minor variants on real living things. Others have exotic body plans, such as the six-limbed vertebrate configuration of gryphons (p. B460). Animals can appear as threats, menagerie specimens, valuable game, or potential companions. Fantasy plants may be active, or even carnivorous, like Audrey II in the film *Little Shop of Horrors*.

The following examples of plants and animals, largely drawn from folklore and mythology, might appear in a fantasy setting. Animal statistics appear in the abbreviated "creature statistics" form (see p. B456). Relatively active plants use the same form. Other plants use a briefer form, listing only HT, HP, SM, weight, and qualities that may be important to adventurers.

Bird of Paradise

The legendary bird of paradise, found on remote tropical islands, is an extraordinary creature: not only extremely beautiful, with brilliantly colored feathers, but so pure that it never touches the ground, spending its whole life in flight. Indeed, it has no feet to walk on.

ST 2; **DX** 14; **IQ** 4; **HT** 14.
Will 14; **Per** 11; **Speed** 7; **Dodge** 10; **Move** 0 (Ground).
SM -4; 5 lbs.

Traits: Acute Vision 1; Appearance (Very Beautiful; Universal); Doesn't Sleep; Flight (Winged; Move 12); Longevity; No Fine Manipulators; Not Bestial; Voice; Wild Animal.
Emblematic Trait: Aerial.
Skills: Aerobatics-14; Singing-16.

Herecine

In European legend, the herecine is a carnivorous plant large enough to feed on humans. It's a large, attractive bush, averaging 6' high and 9' in diameter, with dark red berries on its outer branches and many more on its inner branches. The berries smell delicious and are hard to resist. But any small animal that climbs into the inner branches, any large animal that browses on them, or any human who picks the berries will be grappled and pulled toward the central trunk, where a set of jaws inflict crushing damage (1d+2 per second). Anyone grappled can break free by winning a Quick Contest of ST.

ST 20; **DX** 12; **IQ** 0; **HT** 12.
Will 0; **Per** 12; **Speed** 6; **Move** 0.
SM +1; Weight 300 lbs.

Traits: Affliction (Gluttony; Area Effect, 4 yards; Sense-Based, Smell; Emanation); Appearance (Attractive; Universal); Binding 12 (Melee Attack, Reach 1, 2, Cannot Parry); Blindness; Deafness; Dependency (Animal Flesh, Weekly); Doesn't Breathe; Doesn't Eat or Drink (Requires Water, -50%); DR 3; Fragile (Combustible); Hard to Subdue 4; Injury Tolerance (Homogenous, No Eyes, No Head, No Neck); Mute; Regrowth; Sessile; Temperature Tolerance 5.
Emblematic Trait: Odious Racial Habit (Eating Humans).

Manticore

A ferocious predator native to India, the manticore has the face of a man, with blue eyes; the body of a lion, bright red in color; and a scorpion's tail, from which it fires spines at its prey (1/2D 10, Max 100, Acc 3, RoF 1, Shots N/A, Recoil 1).

ST 19; **DX** 13; **IQ** 5; **HT** 12.
Will 11; **Per** 12; **Speed** 6.25; **Dodge** 10; **Move** 9.
SM +1 (2 hexes); 500 lbs.

Traits: Combat Reflexes; DR 1; Impaling Attack 1d+1 (Tail Darts); Night Vision 2; Odious Racial Habit (Eating Humans); Penetrating Voice; Quadruped; Restricted Diet (Fresh Meat); Sharp Claws; Sharp Teeth; Temperature Tolerance 1; Wild Animal.
Emblematic Trait: Fearlessness +3.
Skills: Brawling-13; Innate Attack (Projectile)-14; Stealth-13.

The Indian wild beast called the manticore has a triple row of teeth in both upper and lower jaw . . . it is as big as a lion and equally hairy, and . . . its feet resemble those of the lion . . . it resembles man in its face and ears . . . its eyes are blue, and its color vermilion . . . its tail is like that of the land-scorpion . . . it has a sting in the tail, and has the faculty of shooting off arrow-wise the spines that are attached to the tail . . . the sound of its voice is something between the sound of a pan-pipe and that of a trumpet . . . it can run swiftly as a deer, and . . . is a savage man-eater.

– *Aristotle,* ***Historia Animalium***

Mountain Ant

The Greek historian Herodotus wrote of giant ants found in the mountains of the Persian Empire. They were bigger than foxes but smaller than dogs.

Mountain ants burrow in the gold-rich soil of their native land and carry nuggets up to the surface. They resent being disturbed and swarm to attack anyone attempting to take their gold. Typically, two will attack in each hex, one per leg of a standing target, but four can easily strike at a fallen intruder. Their bite inflicts 1d-4 cutting damage.

ST 3; **DX** 10; **IQ** 1; **HT** 10.
Will 10; **Per** 12; **Speed** 5; **Dodge** 8; **Move** 4.
SM -2; 10 lbs.

Traits: 360° Vision (Vulnerable); Combat Reflexes; DR 3; Extra Legs (Six Legs); High Pain Threshold; Horizontal; Lifting ST +2; Nictitating Membrane 1; No Fine Manipulators; Slave Mentality; Striking ST +4; Teeth (Sharp); Terrain Adaptation (Sand); Tunneling 1 (Only Through Earth); Wild Animal.
Emblematic Trait: Miserliness.
Skills: Prospecting-12.

Magical Species and Mana Organs

Animals and plants in a fantasy setting can have magical powers. Normally these don't involve learning or casting spells; instead, the animal has an instinctive ability to produce certain magical effects.

In a setting with intrinsic magic, this ability comes from the presence of a *mana organ*, as defined in *Natural Magic* (pp. 22-23). A species that has this ability can only use it in an area where mana is available. Mana organs operate while the creature is alive; once it dies, they remain effective for a few uses, but once their store of mana is used it doesn't replace itself.

Magivores use mana to support basic metabolic functions. These creatures have a Dependency on mana. If taken to a no-mana area, they die of magic starvation. A magivore may need mana *as well as* food (for animals) or soil, water, and sunlight (for plants), or it may sustain itself entirely on mana. The second type may have very strange shapes, neither animal nor vegetable, without mouths, roots, or leaves, but with special mana organs that sustain life.

The bodies of living things naturally generate mana. Some magivores may acquire their mana from plants or animals, either by magically draining it, or by eating, drinking, or absorbing mana-rich tissues. Blood is traditionally a mana source, but specialized mana organs are even better, and creatures with such organs may be targets for magical parasites or predators.

Moly

This plant confers protection from hostile magic. According to Homer, Odysseus used it to ward off Circe's spells (p. 23). The plant grows as an inconspicuous herb, with a round black root and a white flower. HT 12; 1 HP; SM -6; 0.5 lb.

Panther

The panther of medieval myth is not a leopard with black fur, but a separate species. Panthers are large cats, as big as a lion, and their fur is pure white. The panther has one special gift: its perfumed breath (1/2D 10, Max 100, Acc 3, RoF 1, Shots N/A, Recoil 1). Anyone exposed to it must roll vs. HT-2 (vs. HT at 1/2D range) or become obsessed with the sweet scent. Anyone so obsessed must immediately make a self-control roll (6 or less) or begin walking toward the panther at Move 1. When the first victim comes within 3 yards, the panther springs and attacks (biting and raking with the hind legs). If it kills the victim, the panther drags him off the trail to devour him.

ST 16; **DX** 11; **IQ** 4; **HT** 13.
Will 10; **Per** 12; **Speed** 6; **Dodge** 10; **Move** 10.
SM +1 (2 hexes); 400 lbs.

Traits: Affliction 3 (Disadvantage: Obsession, +5%; Cone, 1-yard width, +60%; Smell-Based, +50%; Mana-Sensitive, -10%); Combat Reflexes; DR 1; Extra Attack 1; Night Vision 5; Quadruped; Sharp Claws; Sharp Teeth; Temperature Tolerance 1; Wild Animal.
Emblematic Trait: Charisma.
Skills: Brawling-12; Climbing-12; Innate Attack (Breath)-14; Stealth-15.

Unicorn

The unicorn of medieval legend is a fierce beast native to India. It looks somewhat like a small horse, with a slender body and uncloven hoofs. A single spiral horn a yard long grows out of its forehead. It has white hair and a beard like a goat. Its voice is a hideous bray. In combat situations it can bite (1d+1 crushing damage), kick (1d+2 crushing damage), or thrust with its horn (1d+3 impaling damage), but usually prefers a running charge with its horn. The horn is also highly magical; powdered horn is a natural universal antidote.

The unicorn's charge uses Lance skill. The basic damage from a charge is (ST 18 × Move 18)/100 = 3.24, rounded to 3d. Used as an impaling striker, the horn raises this to 3d+3. A unicorn can specifically target the vitals, reducing its effective skill to 10 but multiplying damage by 3.

ST 18; **DX** 13; **IQ** 4; **HT** 11.
Will 12; **Per** 12; **Speed** 6; **Dodge** 10; **Move** 6.
SM +1 (3 hexes); 800 lbs.

Traits: Combat Reflexes; Enhanced Move 1.5 (Ground Speed 18); Hooves; Striker (Impaling; Reach 1; Cannot Attack in Close Combat; Cannot Parry; Limited Arc, Only Straight Ahead); Penetrating Voice; Peripheral Vision; Quadruped; Wild Animal.
Feature: Uses its horn as a lance.
Emblematic Traits: Berserk (6) (Battlelust); Loner (12).
Quirk: Tame when approaching virgin women.
Skills: Brawling-13; Lance-13; Stealth-13.

Plant and Animal Spirits

Each sapient being has its own spirit, but life forms with racial IQ 5 or less do not. Instead, the entire species has one or more spirits. Such spirits behave somewhat like the species of which they are archetypes. In particular, if a species has an emblematic trait, its spirits have that trait also. Plant spirits often stay in one place and thus resemble spirits of place – is a dryad (p. 213) the spirit of oak trees, or of a specific oak, or of the place where an oak tree grows? The ambiguity is less for animal spirits, because, like animals, they move around.

Plant and animal spirits usually take the form of their plant or animal if they materialize. However, a spirit may also take a humanoid form with a few features that resemble the plant or animal. Such beings may even have half-human children. Some tribal peoples believe that all human beings are descended from such animal spirits, or totems, and human clans may cultivate relationships with their totems as allies or advisors. If human beings learn lycanthropy (p. 60), a clan might take on the shape of its totem animal. "Belongs to (animal species) totem" would be a 0-point feature of such a clan.

Animal spirits commonly have a Sense of Duty to the animal species of which they are archetypes. Mobile plant spirits may have this as well. Localized plant spirits often have a Sense of Duty to their local habitats. They may also have a Dependency on a specific plant.

Monsters

Why have a separate section on monsters, instead of simply listing them with other plants and animals?

In folklore and mythology, monsters aren't just unusually intimidating plant or animal species. They aren't species at all. A species is a group of living organisms that can breed with each other, producing more of their own kind. However, monsters don't come from earlier monsters of their own kind, and don't produce offspring like themselves. Each monster comes into being through some disturbance of nature. In Latin, a *monstrum* was an omen, a sign from the gods that something (usually bad) was about to happen, in the form of an unnatural birth.

GURPS Fantasy reserves the name "monster" for extraordinary creatures – creatures outside the order of nature, and often unique. Like superheroes, they have origins and powers. Truly unique creatures have a special role to play in fantasy gaming. It's not just that they're big, or dangerous, or magical, or all three. It's that they're unpredictable. No one knows how to fight them. Finding out doesn't mean just looking them up in a convenient reference book – it requires study of disintegrating ancient manuscripts, or magical divination, or observation and risky experiments. Fighting them is a task for heroes.

There are several broadly defined types of true monsters. Most of the following stats are for characters instead of creatures, since they're distinctive individuals that require memorable encounters.

Giants

The simplest monsters are unnaturally large forms of familiar animals. Such creatures are not confined to fantasy or mythology; an entire genre of monster movies is devoted to giant animals. Humanlike giants also appear in many myths. Monsters of other sorts may also be unnaturally huge.

"Giant" creatures come in a variety of sizes. Some giants are simply large members of their species. For example, if an average wolf weighs 120 lbs., a giant wolf might weigh 240 lbs. People would call it "the biggest wolf I've ever seen" and find it intimidating. It wouldn't be unnatural or supernatural – but its appearance might be an omen (see *Soothsaying*, p. 150). Such creatures have Gigantism (as defined on p. B20) and typically have ST increased by 25%. See *Lupus Magnus* on p. 231 for an example of this type of giant.

Other giant creatures are clearly unnatural, often many times larger than normal. If the starting point is a mammal, reptile, bird, or fish, the giant form is typically no more than 10 times as big (SM increased by no more than 6). For insects or other small creatures, the multiple may be 100 or more (SM increased by 12 or more). These typical giant monsters of fantasy are big enough to present a serious threat to a human being. Realistically, such creatures could not support their own weight, but in a fantasy setting, they may compare to real animals of similar size; an elephant-sized rat would have the ST and HP of an elephant, for example. (See *Behind the Curtain: How Strong Is a Giant?* on p. 51.)

Some legends describe creatures as large as geographical features, from mountain-sized to continent-sized. The Biblical Leviathan and the world-encircling Midgard Serpent of Norse myth are examples. Human adventurers can't fight such entities with any normal weapons or spells. Their main protection should be that a creature on this scale isn't likely to notice a single human being, though it might see – and attack or pursue – a large ship or a walled city, requiring desperate measures to escape it or drive it off.

Rukh

520 points

A gigantic bird of prey, large enough to carry an elephant in its talons. Some stories call it "roc." Muslim legend says that Allah created it to rule the air as the behemoth and leviathan rule the land and sea. Men fear the rukh's ferocity, but it actually is not very dangerous to men, who are smaller than its preferred prey.

The rukh's long talons inflict 11d+11 cutting or impaling damage on its prey. Its beak inflicts 11d-1 large piercing damage. Either of its two wings can inflict 11d crushing damage.

ST 100 [400*]; **DX** 14 [80]; **IQ** 4 [-120]; **HT** 14 [40].

Damage 11d/13d; BL 2,000 lbs.; HP 100 [0]; Will 12 [40]; Per 12 [40]; FP 14 [0].

Basic Speed 7.00 [0]; Basic Move 4 [-15]; Dodge 11†.

50' wingspan; 185,000 lbs. (SM +6).

Advantages

Acute Vision 4 [8]; Claws (Long Talons) [11]; Combat Reflexes [15]; DR 2 (Can't Wear Armor, -40%) [6]; DR 4 (Can't Wear Armor, -40%; Legs Only, -20%) [8]; Enhanced Move 1 (Air Speed 28) [20]; Flight (Winged, -25%) [30]; Protected Sense (Vision) [5]; Strikers (Two Wings; Crushing; Weak, -50%) [5]; Teeth (Sharp Beak) [1]; Unaging [15].

Perks: Penetrating Voice. [1]

Disadvantages

Bad Grip 3 [-15]; Berserk (12) [-10]; Foot Manipulators (Two Arms) [-6]; Gluttony (12) [-5]; Restricted Diet (Fresh Meat) [-10]; Wild Animal [-30].

Skills

Brawling-16 (DX+2) [4]; Survival-12 (Per+0) [2].

* -60% for Size.

† +1 from Combat Reflexes.

Behind the Curtain: How Strong Is a Giant?

The size, weight, and physical capabilities of real animals have very complex interrelationships. Bigger animals aren't just larger duplicates of smaller ones; their bodies and limbs are differently proportioned. In a fantasy setting, giants are often the same shape as human beings, but twice or 10 times the scale, and the same for huge beasts. This makes it possible to offer rules of thumb for size, weight, and strength.

To start with, choose a suitable normal-sized creature and a weight multiple. For example, a 15-foot python weighs 225 lbs. A gargantuan sea serpent might weigh 1,000 times as much, 225,000 lbs. or 112.5 tons, heavier than a whale. (In fact, it might swallow small whales whole.)

The HP multiple is the cube root of the weight multiple. The same multiple applies to ST, whether ST and HP are equal or not. The cube root of 1,000 is 10, so the sea serpent has 10 times a python's HP and ST, increasing both from 15 to 150. (For man-shaped and quadrupedal creatures, typical HP and ST equal twice the cube root of weight, rounded down; but more exotic body shapes such as a snake's don't fit this formula.)

Figure damage and BL from ST in the usual way. The sea serpent inflicts damage of 16d/18d and has a BL of 4,500 lbs.

Finally, determine the SM for the creature. A tenfold length increase adds 6 to the SM. If the proportions are unchanged (the usual assumption for giant creatures in fantasy), the multiplier for any linear dimension – height, length, wingspan, or diameter – is the cube root of the weight multiple (that is, it increases in proportion to ST and HP). The sea serpent has a length multiple of 10; based on a 15' python, it's 150' long, longer than most ships in a historical fantasy setting. This is +6 to SM. Since the python has SM 0, the sea serpent has SM +6.

For convenience, use the following table to choose a suitable increase in SM. For weight multipliers that fall between two SMs, use the next higher SM. For weight multipliers greater than 1,000, divide by 1,000, multiply the resulting height multiple times 10, and add 6 to the resulting SM.

Example: An extraordinarily large giant weighs 240 tons or 480,000 lbs., 3,200 times average human weight. Dividing by 1,000 gives 3.2. His height multiple is 1.5 × 10 or 15, making him roughly 88 feet tall; his SM increase is 1 + 6 for a total of 7 over the normal human SM of 0, equaling +7.

Weight multiple	*Height/length multiple*	*SM increase*
×3.2	×1.5	+1
×10	×2	+2
×32	×3	+3
×100	×5	+4
×320	×7	+5
×1,000	×10	+6

These relationships mean that small creatures can carry heavier loads than large creatures *in proportion to their own size and weight*. A ST 1 pixy, standing about 7" tall, weighs 0.15 lbs. (2 1/2 ounces) and has BL 0.2 lbs.; one pixy can carry another long distances and not feel the burden. A ST 10 man weighs 150 lbs. and has BL 20 lbs.; he can carry another man, for a limited distance and at a reduced speed. A ST 100 giant, standing 55-60' tall, weighs 150,000 lbs. (75 tons) and has BL 2,000 lbs. (1 ton); carrying or lifting another giant is beyond his strength. This is actually biologically realistic, though the actual mathematical relationships are more complicated.

Hybrids

A common way to invent a bizarre or unique monster is to combine body parts from two or more species. In some cases, this may produce an abnormal number of heads or limbs.

Hybrids may originate through the crossbreeding of different species, perhaps with a magical or alchemical boost to fertility (see *Magical Elixirs* in ***GURPS Magic***). More exotic origins are possible, as in the hatching of the basilisk from an egg laid by a rooster and brooded by a snake. Or magic may directly create hybrids by fusing constituent animals.

The Chimera

85 points

The chimera appears in ancient Greek myth, described as "a lion in front, a goat in the middle, and a serpent behind." The body overall is that of a lioness, though the hindquarters are scaly. A second head, shaped like a goat's, rises just behind the shoulders, and the tail is shaped like a snake, with a third head at the end. All three heads breathe fire. Her lion head's bite and her claws each inflict 2d+1 cutting damage in close combat, but her main attack is her fiery breath (1/2D 2, Max 20, Acc 3, RoF 1, Shots N/A, Recoil 1), which each head can use twice per day.

ST 25 [60*†]; **DX** 12 [24*]; **IQ** 4 [-120]; **HT** 12 [20].

Damage 2d+2/5d-1; BL 125 lbs.; HP 25 [0]; Will 10 [30]; Per 12 [40]; FP 12 [0].

Basic Speed 6.00 [0]; Basic Move 6 [0]; Dodge 9.
10' long; 1,950 lbs. (SM +2).

Advantages

360º Vision [25]; Burning Attack 2d (Cone, 5 yards, +100%; Limited Use, 6/day, -10%; Reduced Range, ×1/5, -20%) [17]; Claws (Sharp) [5]; DR 2 [10]; Extra Attack 2 [50]; Extra Head 2 [30]; Reduced Consumption 3 (Cast Iron Stomach, -50%) [3]; Teeth (Sharp) [1]; Temperature Tolerance 1 (Cold) [1].

Perks: Fur. [1]

Disadvantages

Appearance (Horrific; Universal, +25%) [-30]; Bad Temper (6) [-20]; Quadruped [-35]; Restricted Diet (Fresh Meat) [-10]; Social Stigma (Monster) [-15]; Wild Animal [-30].

Skills

Brawling-16 (DX+4) [12]; Innate Attack (Breath)-15 (DX+3) [8]; Survival (Mountains)-14 (Per+2) [8].

* -40% for No Fine Manipulators.
† -20% for Size.

Possessed Creatures

A different sort of hybridization is the magical implantation of a spirit into a physical form. This may be a living creature, a dead body, or an inanimate object. Shamans and sorcerers use such implantations to create familiars, which don't generally count as monsters, except in a dark fantasy campaign. But more potent or inimical spirits may turn their vehicles into something truly unnatural. For a contemporary horror treatment of this theme, see Stephen King's *Pet Sematary*.

The Wendigo

330 points

The wendigo is a malevolent spirit that haunts the evergreen forests of Canada and Minnesota. It was originally described in Native American tribal lore, but taken seriously by many white settlers. Its appearances are associated with winds and snowy weather. It appears in the material world by possessing the body of a mortal in an isolated place – but not a solitary mortal! It inspires its victim with the urge to kill and eat his companion(s). If he gives in to the impulse, his body further changes into the physical form of the wendigo and he goes looking for other victims. When killed, the wendigo returns to spirit form.

Possession by the wendigo begins with hearing its voice in the howling of the arctic winds. After eight hours, it engages in a Quick Contest of its IQ+3 vs. the victim's Will. If the victim wins, he is immune, but if he loses, the wendigo begins to take over his mind. This requires a Quick Contest of its IQ vs. the victim's Will (at +2 if the wendigo concentrates for a full minute, or +4 for a full hour). If this attempt succeeds, the wendigo then attempts to condition the victim to kill and eat his human companions. Conditioning requires a Quick Contest of the wendigo's IQ-3 vs. the victim's Will. While the conditioning goes on the victim becomes inhumanly strong and acquires several repulsive unnatural features. Successful conditioning lasts 1 day per point of success. If the victim eats human flesh in that time, he transforms into the wendigo's fully manifested physical form.

In its fully manifested form, the wendigo attacks either by clawing (3d crushing damage) or by biting (3d-1 cutting damage).

ST 30 [140*]; **DX** 10 [0]; **IQ** 6 [-80]; **HT** 12 [20].
Damage 3d/5d+2; BL 180 lbs.; HP 30 [0]; Will 8 [10]; Per 12 [30]; FP 12 [0].
Basic Speed 5.50 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0]; Dodge 9†.
15'; 2,700 lbs. (SM +3).

The Chimera's Pedigree

Greek myths say the chimera was the daughter of Typhon, a giant with a hundred dragonlike heads, and Echidna, half woman and half snake. Their other children were Cerberus, the three-headed watchdog of the underworld; the Hydra, a nine-headed giant snake; and the two-headed dog Orthos. Orthos mated with his mother and she engendered the Nemean Lion, a giant lion with armored skin, and the Sphinx, a winged lioness with a woman's head and a passion for riddles.

Obviously, legendary monsters don't have to breed true. Each new birth can be a different form and species.

Social Background

TL: 0

CF: American Indian cultures of Canada and the United States [0]; European cultures of Canada and the United States [1].

Languages: Cree (Native/None) [-3].

Advantages

Claws (Blunt) [3]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Discriminatory Smell [15]; Enhanced Move 1 (Ground Move 10) [20]; Fearlessness 4 [8]; Hard to Kill 2 [4]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Mind Control (Symptoms: +10 ST, Unnatural Features: Gaunt, Glowing eyes, Long tongue, Matted hair, Sallow skin, +105%; Conditioning Only, -50%; Only victims of possession, -30%) [63]; Penetrating Voice [1]; Possession (Only in Unkillable Spirit Form, -10%; Sense-Based, Hearing, -20%; Spiritual, -20%; Preparation Required, 8 hours, -30%) [20]; Single-Minded [5]; Teeth (Sharp) [1]; Temperature Tolerance 6 (Cold) [6]; Terrain Adaptation (Snow) [5]; Unaging [15]; Unkillable 3 (Reincarnation, -20%; Trigger: Only manifests physically after new host kills another human and eats his flesh, -12%) [102].

Disadvantages

Appearance (Horrific) [-24]; Bestial [-10]; Cannot Speak [-15]; Gluttony [-5]; Loner (6) [-10]; Odious Personal Habit (Kills and eats human beings) [-15]; Skinny [-5]; Wealth (Dead Broke) [-25].

Skills

Brawling-12 (DX+2) [4]; Stealth-14 (DX+4) [16]; Survival (Woodlands)-14 (Per+2) [8].

* -30% for Size.

† +1 from Combat Reflexes.

Unnatural Swarms

Plants or animals may appear in swarms of unnatural size, defined as *hordes*. A horde takes up multiple hexes. It can attack one person for each hex occupied; effectively it has Extra Attacks. Vision rolls to spot it have a positive SM. To determine this, compute the SM based on its diameter and add 2; a one-hex horde, or swarm, with a diameter of 1 yard, has SM 0 instead of -2. The SM does not affect combat rolls, as a horde hits automatically.

A horde is harder to disperse than a standard one-hex swarm. Multiply the HP for the swarm by the horde's diameter in yards to find the hits needed to disperse the horde.

A magical spell or baneful spirit can summon swarms or hordes of normally solitary animals. Adventurers might encounter a horde of weasels or ravens, or even of mythical creatures such as basilisks. Fantasy swarms and hordes may also consist of multiple species all acting together, effectively a kind of hybrid. Alfred Hitchcock's film *The Birds* depicts this kind of horde behavior in a modern setting.

The Rats of Hamelin

In the story of the Pied Piper of Hamelin, huge swarms of rats infest a town, until it becomes nearly uninhabitable. The horde of rats has the following traits:

Diameter 550 yards (SM +17). Move 4. Does 1d cutting damage per turn. Armor protects with its normal DR. HP 3,300 to disperse the swarm.

Magical Creations

As noted in the above, powerful spells create many sorts of monsters. Giants, hybrids, and possessed creatures are sometimes the work of wizards. Various other forms of mana-based magic can bring unique, unnatural creatures into being.

Alternatively, the wizard can himself turn into such a creature. In Norse legend, for example, the dragon Fafnir was originally one of three magically talented brothers. He transformed himself into a dragon to guard a treasure the gods gave in compensation for the death of his brother Ottar, also a shapeshifter.

The Golem

-25 points

The golem was an artificial man brought to life by Jewish ritual magic. There are many Jewish legends about golems, but Rabbi Judah ben Loew made the best-known golem in Prague in 1580. Aided by his two best students, he shaped the clay of the Vltava River's banks into the form of a man and placed God's secret name, written on a piece of parchment, in his creation's mouth.

The golem was effectively a superhero, from the viewpoint of the Jews of Prague. It spent the days assisting the rabbi in the synagogue, under the name of Joseph, and six nights a week it went out to patrol the ghetto, stopping plots against the Jews. Eventually a band of Christians invaded the ghetto, planning to attack the golem – but it waited inside the gates. It took away their battering ram, and attacked them with it, killing several. This alarmed the rabbi, and when offered a promise of legal protection for the Jews, he removed its activating parchment for the last time.

The golem looks like a slightly large, awkward man, with grayish skin and no hair or beard. It's much stronger than a man of its height and weight.

ST 15 [50]; **DX** 11 [20]; **IQ** 8 [-40]; **HT** 13 [30].

Damage 1d+1/2d+1; BL 45 lbs.; HP 15 [0]; Will 8 [0]; Per 8 [0].

Basic Speed 6.00 [0]; Basic Move 6 [0]; Dodge 9; Parry 9 (Brawling).

5'10"; 160 lbs. (SM 0).

Social Background

TL: 4.

CF: Eastern Europe (0).

Languages: Hebrew (Native) [0].

Advantages

Doesn't Breathe [20]; Doesn't Eat or Drink [10]; Doesn't Sleep [20]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Immunity to Metabolic Hazards [30]; Injury Tolerance (Homogenous) [40]; Patron (Rabbi Judah ben Loew; 12 or less; Minimal Intervention, -50%) [10]; Single-Minded [5]; Status 1 [5]; Unaging [15]; Unfazeable [15].

Disadvantages

Appearance (Unattractive) [-4]; Automaton [-85]; Cannot Learn [-30]; Disturbing Voice [-10]; Enemies (Christian mobs and fanatics; Hunters; 6 or less) [-15]; Fragile (Unnatural) [-50]; No Sense of Smell/Taste [-5]; Reprogrammable [-10]; Social Stigma (Minority Group: Jewish) [-10]; Unhealing (Total) [-30]; Wealth (Dead Broke) [-25].

Quirks: Observant of Jewish ritual law. [-1]

Features

Neither has nor spends Fatigue Points; Sterile.

Skills

Brawling-12 (DX+1) [2]; Religious Ritual (Jewish)-8 (IQ+0) [4]; Stealth-12 (DX+1) [4].

Victims of Curses

Some monsters start out as human beings (or other intelligent beings) but fall under a curse. In many legends, lycanthropy (turning into a wolf or other dangerous animal) originates in this way. The curse strips the accursed person of his humanity. Curses can also create ghosts, corporeal undead, and various other unnatural entities. There may be a way to dispel the curse, but many victims are defiant and unwilling to learn what the curse was meant to teach them.

Lilith

714 points

According to medieval Jewish legend, Lilith was the original cursed monster. She was Adam's first wife, made like him from earth; but she refused to lie beneath him during sexual intercourse, saying that she was his equal. She called on God's true name and flew out of Eden to the Red Sea. God sent three angels to bring her back, but she refused and was changed into a night demon. Now she flies over the Earth, seducing men who sleep alone and inflicting fatal illnesses on newborn children.

Lilith has feathered wings instead of arms. In flight, she has a 10' wingspan, but on the ground, she keeps her wings folded. She has bright red hair and strongly marked features.

Lilith's two usual attacks both require her to touch her victims. She can use them without becoming visible or tangible. The men she embraces experience physical pleasure. If they fail a roll vs. HT-1, they can only moan with pleasure for 1 minute per point of failure. Offering to renew the pleasure gives her +3 on any Influence roll. She can steal the breath from babies in their first days of life. If they fail a roll against HT-1, they stop breathing for 1 minute per point of failure (see *Suffocation* on p. B436).

ST 10 [0]; **DX** 12 [24*]; **IQ** 12 [40]; **HT** 12 [20].

Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 20 [40]; Per 12 [0]; FP 12 [0].

Basic Speed 6.00 [0]; Basic Move 6 [0]; Dodge 9; Block 9 (Wings).

5'8"; 145 lbs. (SM 0; SM 2 in flight).

Social Background

TL: 3.

CF: Near Eastern [0].

Languages: Hebrew (Native) [0].

Advantages

Affliction 2 (HT-1; Affects Substantial, +40%; Based on Will, +20%; Incapacitation: Ecstasy, +100%; Melee Attack, Reach C, No Parry, -35%; Only on sexually mature men, -30%; Preparation Required, 1 Minute, -20%) [35]; Affliction 2 (HT-1; Affects Substantial, +40%; Incapacitation: Choking, +100%; Melee Attack, Reach C, Cannot Parry, -35%; Only on very young Infants, -50%) [31]; Allies (100 demons; built on 25% of her point value; 12 or less; Summonable, +100%) [48]; Appearance (Very Beautiful) [16]; Charisma 4 [20]; Dark Vision [25]; Detect (Sexual Desire) [10]; Doesn't Sleep [20]; Flight (Winged, -25%) [30]; Immunity to Metabolic Hazards [30]; Indomitable [15]; Insubstantiality (Affects Substantial, +100%) [160]; Invisibility (Switchable, +10%; Only When Insubstantial, -10%; Substantial Only, -10%) [36]; Medium [10]; Patron (Yahweh; 6 or less; Highly Accessible, +50%; Special Abilities, +100%; Unwilling, -50%) [30]; See Invisible (Spirits) [15]; Unaging [15].

Perks: Penetrating Voice. [1]

Disadvantages

Cannot Speak (Mute; Only When Insubstantial, -10%) [-23]; Enemy (Angels of Yahweh; Rivals – seek to drive her away but not harm her; 6 or less) [-7]; Fanaticism (Rebel against Yahweh and Adam) [-15]; Lecherousness (6) [-30]; No Fine Manipulators [-30]; Odious Personal Habit (Steals the spirits of newborn infants) [-15]; Reputation -4 (Seductress and Murderess; among Jews; 10 or less) [-5]; Selfish (6) [-10].

Quirks: Incompetence (Law); Wants to be on top. [-2]

Features

Can use her wings for a Block maneuver using Cloak skill.

Skills

Acrobatics (Aerobatics)-12 (DX+0) [4]; Acting-16 (IQ+4) [16]; Cloak-12 (DX+0) [2]; Dancing-18 (DX+6) [24]; Erotic Art-18 (DX+6) [24]; Fast-Talk-12 (IQ+0) [2]; Hidden Lore (Demon Lore)-12 (IQ+0) [2]; History (Jewish)-12 (IQ+0) [4]; Occultism-12 (IQ+0) [2]; Ritual Magic (Jewish Spirit Magic)-21 (IQ+9) [44]; Sex Appeal-16 (HT+4) [16]; Theology (Jewish)-21 (IQ+9) [40].

* -40% for No Fine Manipulators.

Offspring of Gods

In many mythologies, the gods occasionally beget monsters. In Norse myth, Loki had three children – the wolf Fenris, the world-encircling snake Jormungandr, and the half-woman/half-corpse Hela. In Greek legend, a variety of monsters were fathered by one or another god. Such beings should be physically formidable and either magically gifted or magic-resistant.

Brontes

670 points

Brontes was one of the original Cyclopes of Greek and Roman myth. He and his brothers were born of Gaea, the goddess of the Earth, at about the time when she was giving birth to the Titans. When Zeus led the younger Greek gods in rebellion against the Titans, the Cyclopes sided with him and made his thunderbolts, using their great skill in crafts (see *Thunderstones*, p. 28). Brontes looks generally human, but has a single eye in the middle of his forehead, repulsive features, and a squat, bowlegged build.

Brontes attacks with a thunderous roar (1/2D 10, Max 100, Acc 3, RoF 1, Shots N/A, Recoil 1) that sounds in a cone 5 yards wide at its maximum range. Anyone who hears it must roll vs. HT-5, if within 10 yards, or HT-2, if farther away. A victim who fails this roll is unable to hear for 1 minute per point of failure and is stunned until he succeeds on a HT roll with the same modifier (one attempt per second). This attack costs Brontes 10 Fatigue. Usually he follows it up by kicking for 5d crushing damage.

ST 45 [210**]; **DX** 10 [0]; **IQ** 9 [-20]; **HT** 10 [0].

Damage 5d/7d+1; BL 405 lbs.; HP 45 [0]; Will 10 [5]; Per 9 [0]; FP 20 [30].

Basic Speed 5.00 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0]; Dodge 8.

30'; 15,000 lbs. (SM +4).

Social Background

TL: 1.

CF: Eastern Mediterranean [0].

Languages: Homeric Greek (Native/None) [-3].

Advantages

Affliction 6 (HT-5; Affects Insubstantial, +20%; Cone, 5 yard width, +100%; Costs 10 Fatigue, -50%; Disadvantage: Deafness, +20%; Sense-Based: Hearing, +150%; Stunning, +10%) [210]; Allies (Two brothers; built on 100% of his point value; 15 or less) [30]; Artificer 4 [40]; DR 2 [10]; Enhanced Move 1 (Ground Move 10) [20]; Gadgeteer [25]; Hard to Kill 5 [10]; Night Vision 5 [5]; Patron (Zeus; 6 or less; Special Abilities, +100%) [30]; Power Investiture 6 (Gaea) [60]; Reputation (Artificer, Maker of Zeus's Thunderbolts; All Classically Educated People) +4 [10]; Single-Minded [5]; Subsonic Hearing [5].

Perks: Penetrating Voice. [1]

Disadvantages

Appearance (Monstrous; Universal, +25%) [-25]; Bad Temper (6) [-20]; Clueless [-10]; Odious Racial Habit (Coarse and Brutal) [-10]; One Eye [-15]; Social Stigma (Minority Group) [-10].

Quirks: Bowlegged. [-1]

Skills

Armoury/TL1 (Missile Weapons)-13*† (IQ+4) [4]; Brawling-11† (DX+1) [4]; Innate Attack (Breath)-9‡ (DX-1) [4]; Masonry-14* (IQ+5) [2]; Metallurgy/TL1-12 (IQ+3) [16]; Natural Philosophy-8 (IQ-1) [2]; Prospecting/TL1-12 (IQ+3) [12]; Smith/TL1 (Copper)-13*† (IQ+4) [4]; Theology-8 (IQ-1) [2].

Spells

Enchant-15 [8]; Lightning-15 [4]; Power-15 [4]; Puissance-15 [4]; Shape Air-15 [4]; Shape Earth-15 [4]. All include +6 for Power Investiture.

* +4 from Artificer.
† -1 from One Eye.
‡ -3 from One Eye.
** -40% for Size.

Brontes has two brothers, Steropes and Arges; the three are often together. Represent them as Allies who appear on a 15 or less. They look very much alike and have identical character sheets, except that each of the brothers has a different attack and attack skill.

Steropes attacks by hurling lightning bolts (1/2D 200, Max 2,000, Acc 3, RoF 1, Shots N/A, Recoil 1) that inflict 8d burning damage, stun victims on a failed roll vs. HT-7, and stop their hearts for (20 - HT) minutes on another failed roll vs. HT-7.

Arges' gaze is a blinding flash of light (1/2D 10, Max 100, Acc 3, RoF 1, Shots N/A, Recoil 1). Its effects are the same as Brontes' roar, except that it afflicts those who see it instead of those who hear it, and blinds instead of deafening. Each attack costs 10 Fatigue.

Steropes: Burning Attack 8d (Costs 10 Fatigue, -50%; Increased Range, ×20, +40%; Side Effect: Heart Attack, +350%; Side Effect: Stunning, +50%; Surge, +20%) [204]; Innate Attack (Beam)-10 (DX+0) [8].

Arges: Affliction 6 (HT-5; Affects Insubstantial, +20%; Cone, 3 yard width, Disadvantage: Blindness, +50%; +80%; Sense-Based: Vision, +150%; Costs 10 Fatigue, -50%) [210]; Innate Attack (Gaze)-9 (DX-1) [4].

Primordial Entities

Some monsters may have survived from an earlier stage in the history of the cosmos. Greek myth had hundred-handed giants fighting on the side of the Titans; Norse myth had frost giants and fire giants arrayed against gods and men. Primordial entities may simply be huge manlike or beast-like creatures, possibly with odd numbers of heads or limbs. In a world with realistic biological evolution, they may resemble invertebrates of some kind. In a more mythic world, they may be made of raw elemental matter not fully shaped into solid form. Primordial entities are overwhelmingly powerful; only the greatest heroes could survive a battle with one.

Primordial entities may be impossible to destroy permanently; the most the hero can do may be to drive away their local manifestations. The creature the hero battles may be the monster's physical materialization instead of its true self. The true entity may exist on another plane, perhaps as a spirit.

Tiamat

1,200 points

Tiamat isn't just *a* primordial being from before the dawn of time; she's the first primordial mentioned in any human records. The ancient Babylonian *Enuma Elish* described how the world began as two great deities – Tiamat, the ruler of salt water, and Apsu, the ruler of fresh water. Apsu impregnated Tiamat and she gave birth to younger gods. Eventually their battles and celebrations made so much noise that their parents were angry, and Apsu resolved to kill them. Tiamat protested, but when the younger gods struck first, she resolved to avenge her husband. Marduk, one of the youngest gods, promised to defeat Tiamat if the other gods would make him their king. They accepted the bargain, and after his victory, Marduk cut Tiamat's body in half, making half into the sky and the other half into the Earth. But every year Tiamat starts to revive, flooding the land, and Marduk must kill her again.

The following description is for a lesser material form of Tiamat, such as adventurers might encounter. It doesn't attempt to portray her full size, as half of the universe, or her indestructible spirit. In this form, Tiamat has a horizontal body with four clawed legs and two wings; her head has four widely spaced eyes and a fanged mouth with a forked tongue.

Tiamat's greatest attack is her ability to summon flood waters from the Earth. The waters fill a 60-yard radius centered upon Tiamat's physical body. Anyone in this area must roll vs. HT-5. A failed roll results in inability to breathe for 1 minute per point of failure (see *Suffocation* on p. B436). She can also bite for 36d-1 cutting damage. Simply seeing her requires a Fright Check at Will-2.

ST 350 [880*†]; **DX** 8 [-24*]; **IQ** 9 [-20]; **HT** 12 [20].

Damage 36d/38d; BL 24,500 lbs.; HP 350 [0]; Will 16 [35]; Per 12 [15]; FP 12 [0].

Basic Speed 5.00 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0]; Dodge 8.

200' long; 6,000,000 lbs. (SM +9).

Social Background

TL: 1.

CF: Ancient Near East [0].

Languages: Akkadian (Native) [0].

Advantages

Affliction 6 (HT-5; Area Effect: 60 yards radius, +300%; Incapacitation: Choking, +100%; Emanation, -20%) [288]; Amphibious [10]; DR 6 (Can't Wear Armor, -40%; Flexible, -20%) [12]; Doesn't Breathe (Gills, -50%) [10]; Enhanced Move (Water Speed 10) [20]; Flight (Cannot Hover, -15%; Winged, -25%) [24]; Nictitating Membrane 3 [3]; Peripheral Vision [15]; Slippery 5 [10]; Teeth (Sharp) [1]; Terror 2 (Always On, -20%) [40]; Unaging [15]; Unkillable 3 (Trigger: Spring rains, -15%) [128]; Very Fit (Only in water, -30%) [11].

Disadvantages

Cold-Blooded [-5]; Enemy (Marduk; Hunter; 12 or less) [-40]; Quadruped [-35]; Social Stigma (Monster) [-15]; Vow (Avenge her Husband's Death) [-10].

Skills

Intimidation-19 (Will+3) [12].

* -40% for No Fine Manipulators.

† -40% for Size.

The Thing cannot be described – there is no language for such abysms of shrieking and immemorial lunacy . . . A mountain walked or shambled.

– H.P. Lovecraft, "The Call of Cthulhu"

Races and Cultures

Many fantasy worlds have multiple sapient races. They often look like human beings, aside from being larger or smaller, or having unusual features or coloration. Their main difference is often the location of their homes. But fantasy races may also be much more exotic.

Fantasy races usually have strange cultures as well as strange shapes. While a traditional adventurer might encounter unfamiliar customs in Africa or the Arctic, a fantasy hero often finds such customs among the elves or dwarves. A fantasy world's human cultures may vary less than in the real world. Nonhuman races may have only one culture per race. In genre fantasy, the cultures of commonly portrayed races often follow familiar patterns: elves are noble and love the natural environment, dwarves are clannish miners and metalworkers, orcs are warlike savages, and so on.

Fantasy races can have more varied cultures. Two bands of elves might be as different as Bedouin Arabs and Australian Aborigines, or English knights and Japanese samurai. (The fantasy comic book *Elfquest* explored this theme, with several different elvish cultures.) Alternative racial cultures will surprise players who think they already know about fantasy races.

The legends of human cultures outside of Europe and the United States provide one source for GMs looking for variety. Perhaps the beings they describe, which sound like strange variants on dragons or fairies or vampires, really are dragons or fairies or vampires, but with different cultures of their own.

Exotic Customs

Exotic human customs often provide the best sources for exotic nonhuman customs. Humans are so inventive that many real cultures described by anthropologists will seem utterly fantastic if the GM calls them goblins or halflings. Here are a few examples of such customs:

Berdaches

This system treats cultural gender as separate from biological sex. When a boy reaches puberty, he may choose to become either a man or a woman and do either man's work or women's work. A boy with no talent for hunting or war often chooses women's work. Some anthropologists reported that influential men sought out berdaches as second wives. Some cultures have the corresponding option for girls, and a fantasy culture certainly could. In cultures that practice shamanism (see below), berdaches often become shamans.

Cannibalism and Anthropophagy

Anthropophagy is the act of eating humans; *cannibalism* is eating one's own species. In a world with more than one sapient race, the distinction is important. Eating humans makes a race into a threat. Eating their own kind makes them disturbing or horrifying. A race in which anyone could eat anyone would be anarchic; most races surround cannibalism with legal or ceremonial restrictions.

Ceremonial cannibalism can express either love or hate of the person eaten. Some societies' funeral rites include sharing the corpse's flesh with friends and family. An extension is theophagy, ritually eating the flesh or drinking the blood of a god. Other societies kill and eat their enemies as a celebration of victory. Headhunting, a related custom, produces lasting trophies. It has echoes in legend and fantasy, which contain many stories of magically preserved heads.

An evil empire with a general custom of anthropophagy could occur in high fantasy, as an embodiment of mythic evil. In economically realistic low fantasy, it's hard to make plausible. Humans mature too slowly to make good herd animals and are too intelligent to be safe game for hunters. A military empire may harvest poorly armed neighbors, at least until it uses them up. In a dark fantasy setting, such an empire might provide the main threat, with heroes coming from tribes whose members had been eaten by imperial warriors.

Counting Coup

Small-scale society with organized armed forces often approach warfare with "counting coup." Used by some Plains Indian cultures, the warrior gains more honor by approaching an enemy, striking him with a ceremonial weapon, and getting away alive, than by killing him.

Matrilineality

Matrilineality is the best-known alternative kinship system. Children trace their descent through their mother, not through their father, whose identity may not be very important. Marriage is informal; men may live with their sisters and only visit their female friends. In real-world matrilineal cultures, a man still exercises authority and passes it onto his mother's daughter's son. In a fantasy matriarchy (see *Matriarchy*, p. 70), women may exercise authority directly and marriage may not exist at all.

Potlatch

Potlatch is a system for distributing goods without a market. Chieftains or other influential leaders stockpile food, crafts items, and other goods, largely made by their followers, and then hold large feasts where they give them away, both to members of their own community and to leaders of other communities. This maintains the Reputation of the chieftain so he can collect more goods and do it all over again. Potlatch is typical of moderately complex economies that derive food from several sources and have a means of storing food and other goods.

Reciprocity

Reciprocity is another system for distributing goods without a market. Anyone who acquires a major asset, such as a large kill or catch, passes out shares to everyone in the community. People who fail to do so are mocked, and may be driven out. Small societies without specialized food production often practice reciprocity, especially hunting societies, where it ensures that unsuccessful hunters don't go hungry.

Players will often have difficulty roleplaying a character from an unfamiliar culture, especially a culture that the GM has made up. A campaign should include some cultures that players already know about or can easily figure out. Races that can become PCs should have at least one familiar culture. Players can learn about the less familiar cultures as they explore the world.

Interfertility

In many fantasy novels, different races can crossbreed, though they may do so only rarely. This contradicts the normal biological concept of a species. On the other hand, this is fantasy! Spells, enchantments, or potions may allow fertility between different species, or it may simply be possible for any two humanoid beings to breed – just as in science-fictional settings from Barsoom to Vulcan.

Depending on the genre, children of interbreeding have different natural roles. In low fantasy, they may face prejudice and have to overcome it, making them a vehicle for stories about racism. In light fantasy, nonhuman ancestry is mainly a justification for personal eccentricity. In high fantasy, the greatest kings, heroes, and wizards come from such backgrounds, which help raise them above common humanity. In dark fantasy, half-breeds are often tainted and likely to meet evil fates. For a more optimistic variant, let the half-breed struggle heroically to overcome his own tainted nature and preserve humanity from the forces of his dark ancestors. The devil-begotten Merlin, using his powers to establish the Round Table, fits this pattern.

Races

Sapient beings in fantasy fall into several broad types. The main difference between the types is their similarity to humans, in appearance and in behavior. Each type has its own typical uses in a campaign. Templates for several races of each type are in Chapter 6 (pp. 104-145).

People

Many fantasy races are slightly exotic humans. This partly reflects human prejudices and human imaginative limits. But the human body does have advantages. Reasonable mobility in several forms, good manipulation, a useful combination of ranged senses, and the ability to communicate at a distance all suit the needs of a sapient being. In a world with important supernatural forces, the human form may be an archetype that many races approach in some degree.

GMs commonly set humanoid fantasy races apart from humans by is placing their homes in different locations. Humans do best on plains, as herdsmen, or on smaller areas of cleared ground, as farmers. Forests often have other peoples such as elves living in them. Cutting down a tree may be risky if the forest people object. Underground races are even more common: orc or trolls in natural caves, dwarves or gnomes in mines, and halflings (and their prototype, J.R.R. Tolkien's hobbits) in burrows.

Short and tall races are very common in fantasy: halflings and dwarves on one hand, trolls and giants on the other. Fantasy races often have a comparatively slender or stocky build. Minor exotic features are an easy way to make a race look nonhuman – pointed ears were a common choice long before *Star Trek*. Some races have bigger differences, such as third eyes, extra arms, or hermaphroditic bodies.

Differences in behavior can also set a people apart. Some races, such as elves and dwarves, are relatively long-lived (or even immortal) and reproduce slowly. Most scenarios portray them as "good." They can be ferocious in defending their territory, but don't usually set out to take anyone else's lands. Other races, such as orcs, breed much faster and lead short, violent lives. Most scenarios portray these as "evil," seeking to raid, conquer, enslave, or even eat their neighbors. Some races prey on humanity through stealth instead of open violence. Ghouls, who hide among humans and eat their dead, are an example.

These races play a role in fantasy similar to the role of exotic tribes and foreign civilizations in historical and adventure fiction. Human characters can visit them or even live among them. In some settings, they may live among humans. In others, they serve as threats to travelers and adventurers. Humanoid races, especially the long-lived ones, may preserve ancient lore or have their own forms of magic. Members of these races can easily join a party of adventurers. Chapter 6 provides racial templates for dwarves, elves, ghouls, halflings, orcs, and trolls (pp. 104-145).

Beasts

Many fantasy races are based on animals – as a rule, mammals, birds, or reptiles, the sorts of animals to which humans find it easiest to relate. Beast races have animal bodies, or bodies with animal traits. These come in several different styles.

Some beasts have human-shaped bodies, but are covered with fur or have animal-like cosmetic features. This style, popular with artists, has inspired anthropomorphic comics such as *Usagi Yojimbo* and *Xanadu* (and the anthropomorphic fantasy game ***Lace and Steel***). Some fantasy worlds have hairy, man-shaped "wild men" such as the yeti (or abominable snowman) of Tibetan legend.

Some beasts have bodies shaped like actual animals, but behave like humans. This may include walking on their hind legs and using their paws as hands, like the talking mice of C.S. Lewis' Narnia series. Other beasts move and act like animals, but talk and cooperate (see *The King of Beasts and the Parliament of Fowls* on p. 47). A classic example is the horselike Houyhnhms of Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*.

In many legends, animals of certain species can shapeshift into human or nearly human form. Japanese mythology has many such creatures, called *hengeyokai*; the best known is the *kitsune* or magical fox.

British legend tells of the selkies, a faerie race naturally shaped like seals but who can become human by removing their skins.

Other beasts are human/animal hybrids. Some hybrids simply replace a human body part with an animal body part, as a mermaid replaces human legs with a fish's tail. Others have extra body sections. Often they end up with six limbs, instead of the standard four for vertebrates. One common configuration is a human being with a pair of wings. Another is a quadruped body with a human torso replacing the quadruped's head and neck, like the centaur. Animal/animal hybrids also sometimes appear in fantasy as intelligent races.

Beast races often act like the animals they're based on. Those based on domesticated animals may live with humans and appear as loyal friends or servants. Those based on wild animals may live in the wilderness, with no more than a few simple tools. Depending on the setting, they may be dangerous predators, riotous barbarians, or embodiments of natural beauty and wonder.

Chapter 6 provides racial templates for centaurs and selkies (pp. 104-145).

Wugs

Other fantasy races develop from unfamiliar and disturbing animal species. Anthropologists coined the word "wug" for such creatures (from "worm" and "bug"). This book uses the word for intelligent races with strangely built bodies and equally strange behavior. Including such races in a fantasy world usually makes it seem weird or creepy.

Most wugs are invertebrates of various kinds. Some are more intelligent (and often larger) versions of real species. Others combine body parts of two or more invertebrate species. Races that add invertebrate features to a human body, such as many of the races in China Miéville's *Perdido Street Station* and *The Scar*, also usually count as wugs, though tiny pixies with insect wings come across as beautiful instead of creepy and might just as well be classified as people.

Even though snakes are vertebrates closely related to lizards, many people find them disturbing or alien. Serpentine races are very common in fantasy and mythology; nearly every human culture has legends about creatures resembling dragons. A traditional name for dragons is "worms" (or "wyrms," in recent fantasy literature), classifying them together with many invertebrate species.

Wugs aren't usually portrayed as close to nature (perhaps because their invertebrate models look unnatural to many people) or as barbarians. They're often highly civilized, but with exotic and incomprehensible customs. Races based on social insects such as ants, bees, and termites might be communistic, militaristic, or both. Other races may be solitary, as dragons often are, or live hidden away in deep forests, under the ground, or beneath the sea.

Chapter 6 provides racial templates for three kinds of wugs: devilfish, dragons, and myrmidons (pp. 104-145).

Beast races often act like the animals they're based on. Those based on domesticated animals may live with humans and appear as loyal friends or servants. Those based on wild animals may live in the wilderness, with no more than a few simple tools.

The Accursed

In some fantasy settings, humans (or members of other races) can fall victim to a curse that they transmit to others. ***GURPS*** represents this as either Dominance or Infectious Attack. Part of the change is an urge to transmit the contagion – often by biting.

People with such afflictions aren't quite a race in the usual sense. But passing their curse to others is analogous to reproduction, and may be surrounded by similar passions, as in many versions of the vampire mythos. The transformed state can be represented as a lens or meta-trait that's added to each new victim's character sheet. In some accounts, the afflicted have a society of their own, living outside of or hidden within human society, so that they're a culture or subculture as well as a race.

Both vampires and werewolves often come into being through this sort of infection. In genre fantasy and horror, it's rare for anyone to become a vampire any other way. Werewolves have more varied origins (see *Alternative Lycanthropies*).

From the viewpoint of human characters, such transmissible curses are a particularly grim threat. Anyone fighting the accursed risks becoming one or seeing his friends become infected and having to destroy them. If the condition is concealable, everyone may be under suspicion. The suspicion can become dangerous, as overzealous monster slayers torture and kill anyone untrustworthy. For even worse paranoia, the victim of a curse (usually lycanthropy instead of vampirism) may not even realize what's happened to him, or remember what he did the night before.

From the viewpoint of the accursed, the story can be completely different. They may have a separate culture, constantly threatened by the humans around it. However superhuman its members are, greater numbers can always overcome them. Their curse makes them extraordinary, but it also separates them from humanity and even from their own past lives. This theme is usually horror, but could just as well be dark fantasy.

Chapter 6 provides racial templates for vampires and werewolves (pp. 104-145).

Alternative Lycanthropies

To paraphrase Shakespeare, some are born lycanthropes, some achieve lycanthropy, and some have lycanthropy thrust upon them. Lycanthropy can work in ways other than the familiar infectious bite.

Hereditary Lycanthropy

In some legends, children inherit lycanthropy from their parents. This idea, common in recent books, films, and games, may reflect the influence of genetic theories. But older folk beliefs include shapeshifting kindreds, such as the medieval European Benandanti.

The hereditary trait need not be full-fledged lycanthropy. It may be simply a talent for changing shape. The actual change would then be acquired (usually deliberately). Variants could include an attunement to one animal species, which would predispose a lineage to assume that form if they became shapeshifters, or a tendency to shapeshift *without* a predestined form, the form being determined at the first shapeshift. Discussion of the first trait is found under *Plant and Animal Spirits* (p. 49); the second can be represented by Alternate Form with Unconscious Only, Uncontrollable, and perhaps Trigger.

Some lycanthropes are a distinct species, capable of breeding only with each other. One of their forms may mimic humanity, but isn't truly human, any more than their other form is truly animal. Other lycanthropes are cross-fertile with the species of their base form; they may be a subspecies or have a hereditary talent. They may even be cross-fertile with both species, though explaining this scientifically will take some ingenuity! On the other hand, in fantasy, inheritance doesn't have to be genetic. A supernatural curse, gift, or calling could pass to future generations.

Cross-fertility may be only partially restricted. In *Cat People,* for example, sexual relations with ordinary human beings trigger the change to the cat form, but sexual relations with other cat people do not. In the game ***Werewolf: The Apocalypse***, children of two shapeshifters always suffer birth defects, avoidable by mating with normal humans or normal animals.

Either complete sterility or liability to birth defects is a physical Feature of the form to which it applies. Lycanthropes who are cross-fertile with only one of their two forms have that form as their base form. Lycanthropes who can breed with both species, or neither, can have either form as the base form.

Deliberately Acquired Lycanthropy

Changing into a different shape isn't something that people can just learn! However, some fantasy settings provide the opportunity to voluntarily acquire the ability to turn into a creature of a different species.

One option is learning a spell. This isn't usually considered lycanthropy, but suspicious villagers may not draw such careful distinctions.

A magical object may also cause shapeshifting. A mage or enchanter may create such an object through standard methods of enchantment; to start out with such an object, buy it as Signature Gear (p. 131). Alternatively, a mortal may come into possession of an object such as an enchanted wolfskin, or learn how to make one. Buy the Alternate Form with suitable gadget limitations (see *Skin-Turners* on p. 209).

An alchemist may develop a shape change potion. Access to such a potion requires the skill of Alchemy and Signature Gear, or an Unusual Background such as "has an alchemist friend."

A shaman capable of out-of-body travel (see *Insubstantiality*, p. 128) may be able to assume an animal form in his astral body. Buy Shapeshifting with Only When Insubstantial (p. 131). Ordinarily this will only be the image of an animal. But if the shaman also has Affects Substantial, his projected lycanthropic form can inflict injury on material beings while remaining unaffected by their attacks – much like the werewolves of many legends. This is an expensive set of abilities, and it ought to be!

Accidentally Acquired Lycanthropy

Lycanthropy and other forms of shapeshifting are often curses. The common bitten-by-a-werewolf version is a curse, with the special quality of being communicable. Inherited lycanthropy can also be a curse, condemning an entire family for one member's transgression. Curses afflicting only one person are also possible. A sorcerer may turn his enemies into beasts, or a god may do this to those who profane his altars. Acting like a beast – for example, by cannibalism – is a way to become accursed; eating the flesh of one's totem animal is another.

The undead may also take the form of animals. Some vampires turn into bats or wolves, for example.

Spirits

Some spirits can reproduce and thus are literally members of races. Other spirits don't reproduce, but divide naturally into "races" based on similarity to each other and difference from other spirits. Racial templates can describe both groups. For a discussion of types of spirits and their campaign roles, see *Magical Beings* (pp. 29-33). Chapter 6 provides racial templates for djinn, fairies, and imps. Chapter 9 adds templates for larvae and nymphs.

Cultures

Here are some examples for the GM creating variant racial cultures. These are useful in any appropriate fantasy campaign, or taken as inspiration for creating other cultures.

Davy Jones' Lads

Selkies are native to the British Isles; but when the British took to the high seas, selkies went along. Many came from the poorest regions in Britain, from which young men often went away to seek their fortunes. A "man" born of the sea could find shipboard life appealing, especially if he took along his skin as insurance against drowning. Selkies evolved an unofficial fraternity of mutual aid. If their mortal shipmates treated them well, they might help them in return, even if it put their secret at risk. Tales circulated of drowning sailors saved by a seal holding them up – though it was rare for a selkie to come out and admit his true nature. For concealment, they developed code phrases, including their name for themselves: Davy Jones' Lads.

The first selkies sailed on Elizabeth's ships. By Victoria's reign, the custom was dying out, as ships of wood gave way to ships of iron.

The Good Shepherds

Dragons and humans generally have a hostile relationship. In the dragon's eyes, the human is a game animal, one with a useful habit of collecting precious stones and metals. But dragons that live near grazing land usually find it more convenient to eat the flocks or herds than the herdsmen. Each shepherd has many sheep, and the sheep don't fight back.

Centuries ago, one dragon found an alternative to stealing sheep: making a treaty with a band of human shepherds. The humans gave a share of their stock to the dragon, agreeing to "keep the scent of roasting meat and incense in his nostrils." The dragon used his flight and keen vision to scout out the land ahead of them and his fiery breath to destroy their enemies (and as a beacon when they traveled at night). In effect, the humans acted as the dragon's sheep dogs. Both sides prospered under the arrangement, and the dragon produced many offspring who made similar arrangements with other tribes. Each dragon jealously guards its particular humans, as dragons elsewhere guard their hunting grounds.

Dragons from this particular culture are not Bestial.

The Lampbreakers

Legends tell of the City of Brass built by the djinn in the remotest desert. But the legends say little of why they chose that location. Built as a refuge and stronghold, the City of Brass keeps its inhabitants safe and free. Solomon the Wise learned to invoke the Holy Name and bind the djinn to his service; after his time, his bindings remained in force, and lesser sorcerers followed his example. For all their power and pride, many djinn became slaves of mud-formed humans.

One imprisoned djinn tricked her human master into giving her a moment of freedom – and then destroyed the magic sigil that bound her, and fled. Living in hiding among humans, she discovered other djinn and contrived to free them as well. Eventually they separated themselves, building a city in the hot, dry lands that suited their fiery natures and using potent magic to supply their needs. Now only a chosen few agents walk among men, looking for more of their kind, carrying the image of a broken lamp.

The Marshfolk

Halflings are usually strict land dwellers, but some live in hollowed-out riverbanks, or even build boats. The Marshfolk are an entire culture that lives close to water, in the meandering streams and pools of a tropical country. The climate and soil don't suit wheat or barley; instead, they grow several varieties of rice. Most of their cuisine and brewing includes rice. Their favored beverage is very much like sake.

Marshfolk live in large villages. They build above ground, atop wooden platforms that act as clumsy rafts, because it's almost impossible to keep a hole dry; only the wealthy can afford holes in the few low hills. Abundant labor enables them to construct complex drainage systems to remove excess water. These systems also provide them with one of their best defenses. When desperate, they can open the watergates and drown their foes. Marshfolk also build flat-bottomed boats that they pole across the water. Some Marshfolk make surprisingly long journeys, for trade or simple curiosity.

Unique Beings

Some fantasy characters are not members of any races, but unique beings. Many such beings appear in the Oz novels – for example, the Scarecrow and Tin Woodman. (The Cowardly Lion is an animal, in a world where animals can speak, as discussed on p. 47.)

To create a unique character, get a description of the character concept from the player. Draw up a racial template that reflects the being's size, shape, and nature. Compute a point cost for this template, and decide whether it's suitable for play. If it is, let the player build the character, with the point cost treated as an advantage or disadvantage, just as for a character belonging to an actual race.

Currently the mercenaries of a human empire are invading their lands. The attackers have found out that Marshfolk are natural resistance fighters. Harsh reprisals have wiped out several entire Marshfolk villages, but this has also convinced the Marshfolk that the situation is desperate enough for flood warfare, and two human companies were drowned on their way to raze villages. Whether the empire will tire of the high cost of swampland is still uncertain.

Obsidian Mountain

Obsidian Mountain stands on the borders of an expanding human military empire. Lacking metallurgy, the empire equips its soldiers with obsidian-edged wooden swords and obsidian-tipped arrows. A colony of dwarves provides the obsidian, tunneling deep within the mountain – about 500 of them, including 200 adult males. Two out of three dwarves are male; they commonly practice polyandrous marriage, with two or three brothers sharing a wife. Each family has its own shaft complex and guards it jealously against other families, but families also provide soldiers for the community militia. This cuts into the work time of single sons and hurts their chances of getting married. They haven't needed the militia lately, but all the dwarves know the story of a human invasion three centuries past. The same memory causes them to dig cisterns and cultivate small terraced gardens, even though they don't really need to grow their own food.

Recently a new custom has spread among poorer dwarves: two single sons ritually adopt each other as brothers. This makes it easier for them to afford marriage and children, threatening to destabilize the system of ranks within the community. In addition, while senior brothers traditionally have first claim on wives, adopted brothers normally work out equal arrangements – and have more family disputes over them. Despite these problems, two of the seven dwarvish lawgivers support the new custom.

Paradise

A classic elven trait is sensitivity to the beauty of natural environments and living beings. Many elves have natural sympathy for plants or animals or superior skill in working with them. The elves of Paradise have built an extraordinarily high civilization on this.

Elves naturally prefer living in forested areas. Paradise is a tropical archipelago covered with rain forest. Its elven inhabitants initially used their extraordinary skills to shape the growth, reproduction, and behavior of other species, making the uncleared land productive without the toil of farming. With centuries of experience in breeding, they discovered the laws of heredity and used them to improve plants and animals. Elves with empathic gifts learned to understand other species and to awaken them to a degree of sapience. Paradise now has many species with IQ 6 or higher, ranging from parrots and monkeys to trees. The elves have also turned their knowledge toward improving their own race, preserving and enhancing specific gifts in certain houses and bloodlines, though this is a slow project, given the low fertility and late maturation of their kind.

To other sapient races, they're usually sympathetic as well, provided those races don't harm the natural environment or deplete its resources. Such behavior angers them, and if it affects forests that are in their care, it invites quick retribution. They often treat better-behaved races much like the species they have uplifted, wanting to guide and train them and even breed them for superior qualities. Individual elves may form extraordinarily close bonds with members of other races who accept this guidance.

Paradise is an example of an alternative technological path (see *Magically Enhanced Technology*, p. 65, and *Divergent Tech Levels* on p. B513). Its effective technological level is TL(1+7).

The Patricians

Roman legend says that Rome's founder, Romulus, and his twin brother Remus suckled from a she-wolf as infants after their mother abandoned them. This isn't what really happened. Instead, as young men, the brothers entered political exile in the wilderness and were attacked by a werewolf, which they killed. When the curse affected them, they restrained each other's impulsiveness and used their lycanthropic abilities in banditry and war. When Romulus' ambition to found a city led him to propose recruiting more werewolves, Remus objected and Romulus killed him. Romulus and his band agreed to keep their lycanthropy a secret, and so it remained for centuries, under the control of an obscure priesthood that infected selected patrician youths with lycanthropy and trained them in its powers. (GMs may want to make this part of the background of the Roma Arcana setting in Chapter 9.)

The Red Orcs

Most orcs lives in tribal bands with limited technology; they would rather fight than work and have short time horizons, reflecting their limited life expectancy. However, the Red Orcs are an exception to this rule. A large, slave-holding empire, their raiding bands regularly strike at their neighbors. Slaves dig tunnels, mine ores and coal, or, lately, work in foundries and factories. Some orcs have proven unexpectedly inventive, especially in military technologies, and the Red Orcs are well into TL4 and experimenting with TL5, which enhances their military effectiveness. Virtually every Red Orc owns metal weapons and armor, and increasing numbers carry muskets.

Red Orc society is extremely stratified. Military Rank translates directly to Status, but promotions are usually informal; killing a superior in a duel is common. Rank also affects breeding opportunities. High-ranked Red Orcs have harems, middle-ranked orcs have exclusive possession of single mates, and common soldiers visit "breeding pens" operated by the elite – or take advantage of slaves, though many orcs consider this an inferior pleasure, making fun of those who can't afford a female orc and must make do with a grotesque human or elf.

The Sanguinarians

Unlike the vampires of more barbaric lands, the lords sanguinary do not move with stealth or hide in abandoned ruins. As rulers of great domains, they openly celebrate their blood drinking as a communion with their subjects. Elaborate rituals make this a sacrifice, conducted under the

ancient rule that the victim must go willingly. These ceremonies take place at night, so night is a time of festival. Peasants and tradesmen have to be awake in the day, but the wealthy and powerful are mostly nocturnal. Naturally, vampires have no Social Stigma or Secret.

An elaborate Code of Honor governs these vampires. For example, a vampire cannot be denied the right to feed at the nightly festival of any domain he visits . . . but unless invited to stay, he must move on the next night to avoid draining its resources. Vampires may challenge other vampires for their domains, but if the loser survives the duel, he may depart unharmed. And vampires are expected to lead their troops in battle. A grievously wounded vampire may select a volunteer blood donor to heal his wounds. Such donors often become new vampires, augmenting the vampiric forces when most needed.

Parasites become better adapted to their hosts over time, and these vampires have done so. Careful procedures of decanting blood into a vessel avoid direct contact with the donor, and thus slow the spread of vampirism. Where an unrestrained vampire could produce several offspring a year, the sanguinary lords feed directly only four times a year and produce roughly one offspring every decade. Even so, the vampire population is increasing, and the Sanguine Empire is expanding as young vampires seek lands of their own.

The Place of Humanity

In a world with other intelligent races, where do humans fit in?

It's perfectly possible to have a fantasy world where humans are the only intelligent race. Many fantasy novels and most fantasy games assume multiple races, following the precedents of *The Lord of the Rings* and ***Dungeons & Dragons***. However, earlier fantasy settings often didn't make this assumption, and some contemporary ones still don't.

A slight variation on this treatment is a world populated by humans and unseen spirits. In a fantasy campaign with this premise, priests or wizards might invoke powerful beings in their prayers or spells, and the invocation might get results, but the beings themselves would not appear.

If humanity shares the world with other races, many stories assume that humans dominate – either they have always been dominant or, often, they have become increasingly dominant through the course of history. This may be part of a "the magic goes away" setting, if the other races depend on magic and humanity doesn't. But other causes may be important. Humans may be more fertile than other races, or more adaptable to varied environments, or more combative, or better organized, or some combination of these. The other races may be driven into refuge zones of various sorts: arctic lands, deserts, high mountains, remote islands, jungles, or even underground or underwater. If nonhuman races are mana-dependent, they may end up concentrated in the high-mana regions.

An interesting campaign assumption, though one not much used, could reverse this logic. Human beings run into another race that is more fertile, more adaptable, more aggressive, or better organized – more sophisticated orcs, for example (see *The Red Orcs*, p. 62). A dark fantasy setting might have such a race conquering and enslaving humans, or driving them into refuge areas.

Alternatively, humans could be a minority. Another variant world could maintain the original diversity of nonhuman races. Humans might live in environments that best fit them, such as plains, but elves might rule the forests, dwarves or trolls the mountains, goblins the deserts, and so on. In designing such a world, decide what environment can support each race in the greatest numbers, and which environment each race can best defend against other races; then create a patchwork of races based on these conclusions.

A world could have no humans at all. Most fantasy doesn't follow this path; it's hard to tell a story growing out of human myths, legends, and folklore if there aren't any humans. However, an experimental GM could create such a world. One version might be a world of animals, where all the animal peoples can talk and have some kind of civilization as in some Native American myths.

Languages

Different races in a fantasy setting can have their own distinct languages. Many fantasy settings keep things simple by having only one language to a race, or a few languages. Nevertheless, the real world has about 5,000 different human languages, and each fantasy race could have similar diversity.

In a campaign, language diversity has two main functions. It provides an obstacle; when explorers encounter a new race, they may not be able to communicate. It also is a source of color; a nonhuman, or a human from a different culture, may have an accent, or a strange way of phrasing things.

In treating language differences as an obstacle, remember that obstacles exist to be overcome. Rolls against Gesture can be entertaining, but when the communications barrier gets in the way of the story, provide a way over it: high-speed learning by immersion, or a friendly bilingual visitor, or a spell of translation or telepathy.

A GM can use language for flavor in two ways. First, he can decide on the sound patterns of a language and introduce words that fit those patterns. Commonly, GMs use this to produce exotic names for characters. But it's sometimes useful to have a few words from the language. For example, explorers may borrow native names for unusual plants and animals, or for dangerous supernatural beings. Writing out a list of the sounds of a language can help produce a consistent effect in its words and names.

As an alternative, the GM can use odd turns of phrase, suggesting strange grammar or peculiar ways of thinking. This doesn't require any made-up words at all. Use ordinary English, but say strange things in a strange way. Insults and curses are good ways to do this. Having an offended NPC call someone "husband of a dozen pigs" shows that his native language isn't English.

Enthusiastic worldbuilders may want to go into more detail, with family trees of languages and lists of words. J.R.R. Tolkien did this in *The Lord of the Rings* and the invented mythologies in its background. M.A.R. Barker's classic fantasy game world Tekumel also involves serious linguistic speculation. Looking at their work is a good introduction to linguistic worldbuilding. However, most players won't want to learn any invented language, or puzzle out relationships between languages.

Magic and Technology

An imaginary culture with a different technology can be just as exotic as one with a different religion or a different cuisine. How people travel to distant places, fight their enemies, and heal the sick – matters of life or death in a fantasy campaign – all depend on technology.

If magic is powerful, reliable, and widely available, it may function as an alternative form of technological advance. A realistically portrayed society with such magic may function much like a society with much more advanced material technology.

GURPS divides technology into *tech levels*, or TLs, from 0 (the Stone Age) to 12 (the most advanced technology that can be envisioned from current scientific theories). Most historical fantasy is set in societies at TL1-4. Despite the centuries of progress from ancient Sumer to Stuart England, these societies have certain things in common that make them congenial to fantasy. Their economies are agricultural, with most people living in the country, close to folk traditions. Religion is the basis of the state and of most people's worldviews, unrivalled by science, so few people doubt the supernatural. With few exceptions, rulers are hereditary monarchs or aristocrats who consider themselves better than common people. Travel is limited, especially on land, where the poor walk and the rich ride. Places a few hundred miles away are distant realms where anything could happen.

All these societies draw a line between themselves and the tribal "savages" or "barbarians" around them, who do not have kings, armies, or organized religions – a category

that includes all TL0 societies and some from higher TLs. The supernatural beliefs of tribal societies may furnish civilized religions with spirits, demons, or gods of the earth and underworld. Lesser supernatural beings and tribal peoples are considered contemptible, dangerous, or both.

Alternative Technologies

Technology doesn't develop in a rigid lockstep. Native American and Far Eastern civilizations, far away from Europe and the Near East, developed quite differently, with some innovations coming earlier and others later. For example, China had cast iron at TL3, while the West didn't achieve it until TL4; the Mayans, at TL1 overall, never developed bronze at all, while many African peoples went straight from stone to iron.

The simplest approach to alternative technology requires some inventions come early and others late. The Mayans, for example, were TL1, with advanced mathematics and astronomy (TL3) and retarded materials and transportation (TL0).

A more freewheeling approach supposes that the technological dreams of the past became realities. The steampunk genre uses this basis, assuming that engineering schemes such as Charles Babbage's analytical engine, Nikola Tesla's beamed power, or fictional speculations by writers such as Jules Verne could have been realized. But earlier eras had their technological dreams as well: Renaissance ornithopters and perpetual motion machines, Roger Bacon's talking brass head, and Cretan wonders such as Talos, a bronze warrior, and the wings of Daedalus and Icarus. Designate such mechanisms as TL(n+1); Daedalus's wings were TL(1+1), and Renaissance ornithopters are TL(4+1). Occasionally a higher bonus may be appropriate. For example, the Flintstones live in a TL(0+7) world, with Stone Age technology mimicking television sets and automobiles.

Magically Enhanced Technology

One basis for variant technology in a fantasy setting is the use of magic to improve technology. Achieve this by augmenting either the abilities of the technologists, or the tools and resources they use.

The basis for the first approach is the *Talents as Magic* rules (p. 160). What if an armorer or engineer gained augmented skill through suitable rituals, perhaps by praying to Thoth or Hephaestus for aid in his work in the form of Artificer Talent? Other gods might enhance the skills of farmers (Green Thumb), physicians (Healer), architects (Master Builder), or even mathematicians (Mathematical Ability). Traditional Japanese mathematicians made offerings of their theorems, carved into fine wooden plaques, at Shinto shrines, and a god or spirit might reward such devotion.

In the second approach, magic substitutes for certain kinds of technology, and thus helps other technologies advance. This could happen in various ways.

Improved Materials

A magical world may have superior materials, whether found in the natural environment, such as orichalcum (p. 23) or Tolkien's *mithril,* made by alchemy, or strengthened by enchantments or holy blessings. Armor or fortifications could weigh less but be harder to breach, or swords could have sharper or longer-lasting edges. There are also subtler possibilities: a blast furnace with magically heat-resistant brick, a mile-high tower that won't collapse under its own weight, or a flying craft light enough to be man-powered.

Power Sources

With the widespread use of mills in the Middle Ages, speculations about perpetual motion gained an audience. A captive spirit might keep a wheel turning with no physical energy source, or a wheel made of celestial matter might share the endless turning motion of the heavens. Once steam engines come into use, elemental spirits might induce them to run more efficiently, or magically improved materials could let them run at higher pressure without bursting.

Variant Natural Laws

Nothing requires a fantasy setting to follow the same natural laws as the real world. Flat worlds, for example, obviously have different laws. In settings with different natural laws, different technologies may be possible.

The history of science includes many theories that are no longer accepted, but could be true in a different world, such as Babylonian celestial divination, flat Earth geography, humoral or chi-based medicine, or phlogistonic chemistry. Many of these suggest variant technologies. For example, one of the reasons chemists rejected the phlogiston theory (which interpreted fire not as combining with oxygen, but as giving off phlogiston) was that phlogiston seemed to have negative weight. If phlogiston were real, it could be an even better lifting gas for balloons than hydrogen.

It's also possible to work in the other logical direction. The technological fantasies of past ages don't work because they would violate natural laws if they did. So identifying those natural laws, and envisioning a world where they don't apply, can make such imaginary inventions possible. Perpetual motion machines, which violate the conservation of energy, are an example of such an invention. In a fantasy world, energy might *not* be conserved.

Automata

Spirits can do more than just move; they can perceive, communicate, remember, and even think. A fantasy world that learned to control spirits, or gain their cooperation, might have its Information Revolution hundreds of years early. If the same spirits could control the motion of artificially made bodies, the result would be an early age of robots, whether in the form of man-shaped golems and homunculi, or of self-moving tools and artificial songbirds. A fantasy world could have an artificial intelligence acting as the library for a university – or the tax assessor for a government – or the inquisitor for a church.

Biotech

Living creatures can be altered by changing either their environments or heredity. In a magical setting, spells, enchantments, or rituals may produce a more favorable environment, leading to better crop yields (see *Agrarian Magic*, p. 95). Better nutrition may make people taller and stronger. Herbal or alchemical elixirs may cure diseases and infections and speed the healing of wounds, lowering the death rate. Alchemical techniques may transform the human body (or the bodies of other living things) or allow strange experiments in crossbreeding (see *Alchemical Hybrids*, p. 51). Spirit magic could uplift individual organisms, and perhaps entire species. If these various sorts of life magic work well, the world may look like that old favorite of science fiction, the civilization that developed biological science and technology earlier than physical.

Technomagic

GMs running fantasy campaigns in a TL4 or higher campaign may want to add new colleges or subcolleges, reflecting the changing kinds of objects people deal with in everyday life. Possible colleges could include Machine spells (TL4), Microorganism spells to accompany Plant and Animal spells (TL4), Energy and Fuel spells (TL5), Synthetics spells (TL5), Electronics spells (TL6), Radiation spells (TL6), Genetics spells (TL7), and even Nanotech spells (TL8). Older technologies might have given rise to Metal spells (TL1) or Acid spells (TL3).

When Magic Becomes Technology

Arthur C. Clarke stated, "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic." However, in a fantasy context, the converse may be true: sufficiently advanced magic may be indistinguishable from technology.

GURPS can take widely available magic into account when defining the tech level. In normal- or low-mana worlds where Magery is rare, any magical effect is effectively a prototype. The same may be true in a very-high-mana world where casting spells is extremely risky. The ability of a small number of mages to cast a spell doesn't raise the TL of their world or society. If common (see *How Many Mages*, p. 103), magic may function as technology's equal and change the effective TL. Spells may have widespread accessibility in a high-mana world or in a world where most people have Magery. Or enchanted objects might be common, since most don't require Magery.

In either approach, the TL may be difficult to define. Magic may make some things easy that look like TL12, while straining to do other things that look like TL6. Look at a number of commonly used spells, assign them to approximate TL equivalents, and see if these cluster around one or two TLs as usually defined; if so, use a rough equivalent TL in that range. If that doesn't work, the TL concept may not fit the setting – but don't simply assume that it's "just like TL3, but with wizards."

Settings with magically based TL ratings are effectively alternative histories, where the point of departure is the invention of reliable magic. They're closer to realistic fiction than myth, both in their focus on working out a divergent timeline and in their concern with the practical uses of magic. Magic in mythic fantasy is often too unpredictable for routine use, even if it's more powerful than in settings that treat magic as technology.

Technologically Enhanced Magic

Mages in a technological society may use various devices to enhance their own spellcasting or enchanting. The same may apply to other magical arts.

Examples of Magic as Technology

The following spells might be widely available, because they either have few or no prerequisites, or can be enchanted into objects that anyone can use. Technological equivalents for each are noted.

Spell/Item	*Comparable Device*	*Equivalent TL*
Accuracy	Gunsight	5
Armor	Subdermal armor	10
Continual Light	Electric light	5
Create Air	Oxygen tank	5
Create Fire	Fire siphon	3
Cure Disease	Antibiotics	6
Extinguish Fire	Fire extinguisher	6
Foolishness	Alcohol	1
Ignite Fire	Matches	5
Lend Vitality	Emergency room equipment	6
Purify Water	Water filter	6
Seek Earth	Remote geosensors	7
Sense Foes	Intruder detection systems	7
Test Food	Chemical analysis	6

Precision Instruments

An alchemist working in a high-tech laboratory gains some effective skill (see ***GURPS Magic***), which is better than he could achieve with traditional equipment and ingredients. Similar benefits may accrue to any other mage who manipulates natural forces in some way. Precision instruments may also aid observation and magic that involves observation. For example, if astrology works, an astrologer with a good telescope and a stabilized mount gains +TL/2 to skill rolls to interpret planetary configurations (see *Soothsaying*, p. 150).

Industrial Magic

Standard magic is conducted like a handicraft; single workers or small teams cast spells, as artisans turn out handiwork. Can magic be organized like a factory or an assembly line? If so, the amount of magic will increase tremendously; this may lead to a very-common-enchantment setting.

At TL6, a magical production line that creates any enchanted object might exist. A process of enchantment in itself, the energy cost is twice that of setting up a magical workspace to build a prototype item, or (number of prerequisite spells +1) × (800 energy points). Each production line can only produce one kind of item. It turns out one copy of the prototype in (energy cost of enchantment/4) hours. Each mage working on the line can contribute 10 energy points per working day, reducing the cost of hiring mages.

Another option is alchemical production on a production line scale. See *Alchemic Inventions* and apply the standard rules for production lines (p. B156).

In a setting where symbols are magically potent, a printing press can be a potent magical production line, turning out multiple copies of a spell. Available at TL4, it works just like any other magical production line. The printing must be of extremely high quality to make the symbols work.

Finally, if naturally magical creatures or substances exist, a society may harvest them on an industrial scale. High-tech societies with magic may have greenhouses or farms raising magical herbs, or deep mines or wells seeking deposits of magical minerals.

Mechanically Powered Magic

Magic can obviously control, and perhaps create, the kind of energy that physicists study. Spells such as Ignite Fire, Light, and Lightning all cause a release of energy. Can it work the other way? If so, an enchanted machine can provide magical energy as long as it has power. A power storage system, such as a mainspring, battery, or flywheel, will supply power until its stored energy runs out. A fuel-burning engine, such as a steam engine, internal combustion engine, or fuel cell, will keep supplying energy so long as it is refueled. In a world where perpetual motion machines are possible, they will provide energy until physically destroyed.

Regardless of the machine's power, the value of the enchantment would limit the energy output. An enchanted battery would not discharge until its power was put to use, but would always be visibly magical to anyone with Magery. An enchanted engine would release energy whenever it was running; unused energy would simply dissipate into the environment. It would be visibly magical when running, but not when shut off. Starting the conversion process might require a small input of magical energy, perhaps from a magical battery.

Thaumaturgic Automata

Can a machine cast a spell? The answer depends on how magic works in the campaign setting.

If magic is a product of consciousness, only a conscious machine – usually a computer with sophisticated artificial intelligence programming and high enough Complexity to run – can cast a spell. In an animistic setting, a conscious machine may have a spirit inhabiting it. In some settings, any conscious machine can use magic; others require a separate Magery 0 program.

Spirits might not have fixed residence in specific computers, but travel between linked computers. Cyberpunk offered animistic and magical ideas as a metaphor for virtual reality or cyberspace; in a fantasy setting, these could be more than a metaphor.

If magic involves the control of mana, a computer may carry out a spell with a mana co-processor. The computer will still need to understand the spell, which will require enough Complexity to process a sophisticated language, but less than needed to become conscious.

Finally, if symbols themselves have magical power; any machine that manipulates the appropriate magical symbols can work magic. A system as simple as a music box or a prayer wheel may cast a single spell infinite times. A system comparable to a word processor, but with magical symbols programmed into it, could assemble spells from a library, or even work out new spells from thaumatological principles. This would probably involve manipulating symbols with extremely high resolution, comparable to that for magical printing presses; this ability could be Magery.

Where do machines get the energy for spells? Typically, mana comes from the FP and HP of living organisms. Entities with the Machine meta-trait often don't generate it. A mana co-processor may contain systems that emulate mana-generating life processes or convert physical energy to mana. A symbol-manipulating machine may gain the necessary energy from the symbols themselves. A machine inhabited by a spirit draws energy for magic from the spirit's FP and HP.

Exotic Settings

Many fantasy stories show cities or civilizations in unusual surroundings. Technology (or magical technology) may make it possible for human beings to inhabit such environments, or nonhuman races may live there and may develop different technologies as a result.

Magic could seal a city beneath the sea against the water, or encase it in a dome of adamant. Other spells could provide air and light. Or its inhabitants could be adapted magically to their aquatic life by spells enabling them to breathe water or giving them gills and fish tails. A city could float in the air with levitation, or huge chambers of lifting gases perhaps enhanced by magic. Its inhabitants might fly, use flying carpets, or ride huge flying beasts such as gryphons tamed by magic. Even more exotic examples are possible: communities living underground, or in the craters of live volcanoes.

Nonhuman races such as devilfish (p. 105) could also live in exotic places. Underwater races would not have fire, and as a result could not produce ceramics, metal, or glass. Races in more exotic settings would have other limitations; a race that lived in the crater of a live volcano might be unable to use organic materials.

Civilizations

Just as natural forces shape landscapes, political and economic forces shape civilizations. A political map that reflects these forces will offer more ideas for adventures. Magical arts and supernatural forces might alter these forces in a variety of ways.

True Kings and Sacred Covenants

Real societies often attribute supernatural origins and powers to their kings. Citizens may worship kings as gods, claim divine ancestry, or act as the gods' favored servants. In a fantasy setting, a king may gain a level of Charisma at his coronation. Or he may have supernatural gifts, such as a touch that cures the sick; the True King template (p. 125) reflects this idea. He may have a special bond to the land, as in the myth of the Fisher King, whose wounds reflect the injuries of the land.

The hand of the d'Anconias, it was said, had the miraculous power of the saints – but it was not the power to heal, but the power to produce.

– Ayn Rand, ***Atlas Shrugged***

Priests may also have special powers. They often accept restrictions on their conduct, to maintain "purity"; this may be more than ritual in a fantasy setting. Perhaps only the man who is insulated from daily life can be a vessel of supernatural energy. Alternatively, they may be specialists in maintaining the purity of a sacred king. Priests and scholars are often knowledgeable, especially about secret matters hidden from other people. This knowledge may turn into magical power; the word "glamour," for faerie magic (p. 168), was originally a mispronunciation of "grammar," and writing systems such as the Norse runes may have magical powers. Or the physical expression of their knowledge may be supernaturally potent. For example, a Bible may be literally holy.

Lesser aristocrats don't have the same magic as kings, but they may have their own gifts. A nobleman may have not just a Code of Honor, but a Higher Purpose that enables him to exceed his normal limits. He may actually be the knightly ideal of chivalric romance, superior to common men in both fighting prowess and willpower. His bloodline may even have some special magical heritage.

In addition, he'll probably have exceptional wealth. Aristocrats traditionally get their wealth by inheriting it, not by working for it; they consider most forms of work degrading. Myth, legend, and folklore often share this view, seeing wealth as an inherent personal quality – the rich man *is* rich by nature, and the poor man *is* poor. Only divine favor, or luck so extraordinary as to be supernatural, can change him from one to the other. Even merchants get their wealth not from careful investments, but from buying one pearl of great price, or from trade ventures that are virtually heroic quests.

Many fantasy settings support the aristocratic idea that wealth equals land. The rich man who deserves his wealth has invested in the earth and has a bond to the earth much like the true king's special bond to his country – or the peasant's closeness to his own soil, which has its own magic (see *Everyday Magic*, p. 70).

The hands of a king are the hands of a healer, and so the true king was ever known.

– J.R.R. Tolkien, ***The Return of the King***

Supernatural Elites

In a fantasy setting, magically gifted people or beings may rule civilizations. This adds to the standard list of government types.

Theocracy

Theocracy usually means rule by priests, but in a fantasy world, a god may rule a civilization directly. Harry Turtledove's *Between the Rivers* portrays such a world. Priests of such a god, despite their authority, won't be supreme rulers, but anxious servants hoping not to offend their divine master.

Teratocracy

A human civilization may have nonhuman rulers. Powerful beings such as dragons, elves, or vampires may find human servants convenient. Or human beings may be semi-wild associates of a more civilized race; for example, a dwarvish empire might rely on human mercenaries and tenant farmers. This might take malignant forms, such as human beings becoming the slaves of exceptionally capable orcs (see *The Red Orcs*, p. 62).

Thanatocracy

Vampiric overlords verge on a different type of exotic system, where human beings serve their own dead. This might simply involve ancestor worship, with the ancestors replying. Or it might involve rule by more powerful undead, whether spiritual or corporeal, who regard the living with contempt, envy, or good will. Perhaps funeral rites are ancient magical techniques freeing the living of such authority, remnants of some ancient spiritual revolution.

Thaumatocracy

If magic really works, mages may gain forms of power other than magic. The ability to cast spells may be the jealously guarded prerogative of a Guild of Wizards, with unlicensed spellcasters facing anything from fines to the destruction of their magical talent. If Magery is hereditary, a different sort of aristocracy generates – one that may either share power with warriors and priests or displace them. If mages, like other professionals, mostly live in cities, thaumatocracies may be relatively urbanized. If cities have lower mana, magical rulers could live in remote high-mana fortresses to which cities pay tribute.

Charismatic Rulers

The German sociologist Max Weber defined charisma as a quality of unique personal authority seen in the founders of new faiths and new empires. ***GURPS*** defines this as Charisma 5 or higher, seen in historical figures such as Alexander and Muhammad, or their fantasy analogues. If gods have half-mortal children, such demigods might become charismatic rulers. Mortals possessed by gods or powerful spirits might also have such authority. A god might rule a civilization by selecting certain mortals to speak with his voice; while doing so, such spokesmen might take on the god's charismatic force.

Charisma and glamour (p. 20) may be the same thing, or closely related. If so, explorers may discover the rulers of faerie realms have personal charisma instead of legal authority.

Charismatic rulers can establish new laws and customs by decreeing them. A civilization with established charismatic rule is almost a self-contradictory idea; historical turmoil and rapid change surrounds charismatic leaders. If charisma is inherited or transmitted, a charismatically ruled civilization may be a place of rapid social change – perhaps constructive progress, like that of the Industrial Revolution, or perhaps repeated disruption and outright revolution.

Pirate Commonwealths

Before the American and French Revolutions, the great majority of civilized societies were monarchies of some sort. Few thought about republics, democracies, or anarchies. Law was the command of a sovereign; being without a king meant being without law.

One exception was the organization of pirate ships in the era of the Spanish Main. A pirate ship was owned in common by its entire crew and governed by their communal will, under a compact they all agreed to – sometimes under duress, as refusing to sign the articles could be grounds for marooning. The captain was not a sovereign, but an agent of the crew. His authority began when the ship prepared for combat, and ended when combat ended. During that period, he was an absolute ruler, but with victory or escape, authority reverted to the quartermaster, including the authority to supervise the division of spoils. On a larger scale, accounts exist of a pirate republic in Madagascar called Libertatia.

Larger commonwealths earlier in history often have traits reminiscent of these pirate republics. Iceland, founded by Vikings in the ninth century, had only one government official, the lawspeaker, who presided over annual meetings of Iceland's judicial body, the Thing. Icelanders proclaimed that "The law is king." Much earlier, pre-Monarchic Israel's only officials were the Judges, under the legal codes of the Old Testament – and the Israelites started out as nomadic desert raiders preying on the more civilized Canaanites, whom they eventually conquered. Rome doesn't fit this pattern as well, since it immediately developed from an armed band to a monarchy, and only later instituted a republic under magistrates. But its organization as a republic has some parallels, including the office of dictator, which held absolute authority only for the duration of a war, much like a pirate captain.

In a historical fantasy setting, these may serve as models for a commonwealth, in the nature of their founders or in the organization of their institutions.

Fantastic Customs

Legends and literature describe many customs and institutions that fall closer to myth than history, ranging from the debatable to the entirely imaginary. In a fantasy setting, some may be real and may form part of fantastic civilizations.

Communism

Some historians have remarked on Marxism's similarity to the prophetic traditions of Near Eastern religions. Marx's vision hasn't worked out in the real world. However, in a fantasy setting (perhaps a postmodern one), communistic economics might work. The economy of Oz, for instance, is communistic, with great storehouses from which people take what they need. (Potlatch and reciprocity, discussed on p. 57, provide real-world models for such customs, on a small scale.)

Matriarchy

Legends of countries ruled by women, or even inhabited solely by women, go a long way back. Nineteenth- and 20th-century anthropological speculations about matriarchal civilizations remain unproven. (This is not the same as matrilineality, discussed on p. 57.) But fantasy settings may contain such civilizations.

Women may get their power from being warriors, such as the Amazons of Greek legend, whose combat skills few men could equal. Or they may be priestesses or sorceresses, with magical powers that men can't share. A matriarchy may worship a goddess whose divine power protects her mortal daughters from male violence.

Oaths

In the real world, personal convictions and social forces – such as the desire to preserve a good Reputation – enforce oaths. In a fantasy setting, oaths may have supernatural power (see *Oaths*, p. 147). A society where oaths have such power may rely upon them in a way that doesn't work in the real world.

Reversal

Many societies have a custom such as the Roman Saturnalia, a period when authority relations briefly reverse, with masters waiting on slaves and a King of Fools on the throne. Some legends describe serious versions of reversal among nonhuman races. The faeries often split rule between the seelie and unseelie. (See *Zeitgeists*, p. 78, for one way this might come about.)

Secret Kings

Who's really in charge? Historical societies had popular legends about secret manipulators, much like today's conspiracy theories. From the Renaissance on, the Jesuits were favorites for this role, particularly in Protestant countries. Hidden Illuminati might rule a fantasy country. They might even be benevolent, as in Lois McMaster Bujold's *The Curse of Chalion*, with its church guided by a network of hidden saints.

The Genius of a People

In Roman beliefs, the Genius was the spiritual power that enabled a man to beget children, especially sons who would carry on his name. Many cultures have similar spirits. Sometimes these are ancestral spirits, sometimes totem animal spirits, and sometimes abstract principles of virility, as in Roman household cults (p. 202).

An entire nation or people may descend from an original ancestor or household, biologically or adoptively. So it may have a Genius of its own, as the Romans thought they had. Or it may have the protection of a greater spiritual being. Medieval Catholicism thought every nation had an angel to guide and protect it; the angelic order of Principalities specifically had this function. Much earlier, Yahweh was very specifically the god of Israel, which claimed descent from Abraham. The Genius may grant a people protection from disasters – or, if offended, may make them worse (see *Divine Punishments,* p. 89).

A people with such a spirit may also have a common spirit in an everyday sense. For example, they may have an emblematic trait (p. 213). The taciturn speech of Spartans and the reckless bravery of Gascons are both literary clichés.

Everyday Magic

In many real cultures, common people have their own sorts of magic. The same is sometimes true in fantasy settings. Alongside the court enchanter with his potent spells may be a village wise woman or hedge wizard with folk magic handed down from distant ancestors. If these spells actually work, they may make the common people's lives easier. Plant and weather magic can improve crop yields (see *Agrarian Magic*, p. 95); healing magic can prevent women from dying in childbirth, or children from becoming sick; fertility magic can help barren women conceive children. Magic can turn away harm from a house, or help a judge discover the truth in a dispute.

Folk magic is like folk music. It doesn't use expensive instruments. It doesn't have highly skilled practitioners. It is performed by soloists or very small groups, not hundreds or thousands. They perform small, simple pieces instead of elaborate symphonies. (See *Low Magic*, p. 147, for more on these distinctions.) But folk music entertains millions of people, especially in rural societies, and folk magic may provide aid in daily lives.

In a "magic as technology" setting (pp. 64-67), elaborate magic may contribute to daily life. If production of enchanted objects is inexpensive, people may use those instead of mundane tools.

In a society where magic is common, people will expect it. There will be magically skilled guards and detectives; appropriate precautions will be taken against spellcasters by anyone who can afford it. Even those who can't afford countermeasures will be mentally prepared for most common magical tactics.

Guards will be ordered to distribute themselves so that a single Mass Sleep spell cannot get them all. The wealthy will have Spell Shields and Scryguards in their homes. Large jails and dungeons will have at least one cell rendered a no-mana zone with the Drain Mana spell (Mages' Guild chapter houses may well have similar facilities).

Magic as a Resource

A world's mana level may vary from place to place. If so, sites with higher mana levels will provide sources of power in a magical and political sense. Wizard-lords with towers in high-mana areas will defend them fiercely. If mana can be transported from place to place, perhaps embodied in magically charged physical objects, mana-rich sites will become wealthy and need more defenses against invading wizards or kings.

But another factor also determines a society's magical capabilities: the size of its pool of trained wizards. A society that develops better methods of magical training, or that identifies and trains more of the magically gifted, will have more people who can make use of its available mana. If Magery is not found equally in all races, the peoples with more mages will be more powerful. Or if only divine favor grants access to the supernatural, the peoples who worship stronger gods, or enjoy more favor from the gods, will be more powerful.

In a campaign with realistic economics, a subtler kind of change will take place, through the process of *comparative advantage*. If higher mana enhances some kinds of production more than others, the industries that benefit more will concentrate in the higher-mana areas, and the industries that benefit less will concentrate in the lower-mana areas, even if magic would help them, too.

For example, one ceremonial casting of a 100-point Bless Plants spell will double the crop yield on 6.5 acres (see *Agrarian Magic*, p. 95). That's a small wheat field, but a substantial vineyard – and good wine sells for more than good bread, so doubling the yield pays off even more. Farmers who live in a high-mana area will probably use their land for vineyards, and spend some of the extra income to bring wheat from normal-mana areas nearby.

The Control of Magic

In worlds where magic exists, magical abilities are an obvious subject for legal regulation. Wizards could use magic to resist the authority of the state or the law, or to kill people. Many classes of spells may be limited to licensed wizards, or even banned. The following Magical Legality Classes (MLCs) provide a rough average rating, based on the potential social and political impact of the spells in question:

MLC 4: Spells of healing; spells of perception, knowledge, and communication; spells of crop fertility and food production.

MLC 3: Movement spells; protective spells; spells that shape materials or control natural forces or living creatures; spells of illusion or concealment; temporary incapacitation spells.

MLC 2: Spells that inflict injury or break material objects; permanent incapacitation spells; mind control spells; flight spells; death spells; resurrection spells.

MLC 1: Elemental summoning and control; teleportation spells; spells for perception through physical barriers.

MLC 0: Gate and necromantic spells; large-scale destructive spells; large-scale mind control spells; large-scale curses.

In a fantasy world, most societies will have the same CR for magic as for other concerns, but variations are possible. MLC interacts with CR in the same way as weapon LC (p. B267). Cultural variation in attitudes usually places increased restrictions on magic, but a society might consider spellcasting a basic right, or even require that everyone capable of

learning certain spells do so. In a high-mana world, the law might require all free citizens to know certain spells. Societies with wizardly aristocracies might have one set of rules for aristocrats, another for commoners, and still another for slaves. A society where priests call on the gods may consider priestly status a license to use divinely granted powers, while regulating or forbidding ordinary spells.

Alternately, spellcasting may be illegal in its entirety – *no one* may practice magic legally! In such a world, mages are universally hated and feared. All wizards must take a negative Reputation; just how strong depends on the depth of the popular distrust for mages. Legal penalties for magic use may be heavy, ranging from extortionate fines to outright slavery – many illegal-magic regimes are motivated not so much by a desire to eliminate magic as to control it, and such a government might well take any and all spellcasters into bondage. Armed press-gangs with an aura-checking wizard might sweep populated areas from time to time.

These sorts of settings can be very exciting for a mage PC. Simply staying alive and free will be a challenge. On the other hand, not every player is happy being the target of a manhunt, and simple carelessness can easily kill a mage in this kind of setting. It can also be frustrating for a party when their single mage repeatedly gets them in deep trouble with the law.

Above the Law

Some settings may not have such stringent standards. In rare-magic settings, the civil authorities may never have taken the time to make laws about magic. In settings where magic is not widely acknowledged to exist, it may not even possible to charge wizards – it's hard to charge someone with negligent telepathy if such abilities aren't admitted to exist.

Also, some very powerful mages may simply place themselves above the law, either by making themselves an integral part of the local power structure (see *Thaumatocracy*, p. 69), or simply by being so powerful that no one would dare to arrest them.

Magical Guilds

Wizards also police themselves. In many societies, this means organizing into guilds. These range from diffuse professional organizations through mutual defense societies to a rigidly organized "closed shop" on the medieval guild model, designed to regulate magic with an iron fist, for the common good of all magicians . . . or at least the Guildmasters.

Strong guilds typically charge hefty dues – 10% to 30% of the member's income, increasing with his Merchant Rank. However, strong guilds often have the clout to have laws passed banning the practice of magic by non-members. And if the law isn't a sufficient deterrent, they aren't above sending a golem squad around to have a few words with the renegade. In the end, strong guilds usually end up with a monopoly on magical training and traffic in magic items. A few hedge-wizards may live out in the sticks, but the cities are guild territory.

At the same time, however, a guild can do a lot of good for its members. A guild that can bring pressure to bear on a recalcitrant enchanter can discourage the people who might incite a torch-wielding mob. And only the most corrupt of guilds will ignore a dues-paying member when he comes looking for help or advice. Guilds can be a source of information, training, and even employment for the young wizard.

Guilds offer a way to restrict access to potentially unbalancing spells. Learning a powerful spell may require access to secret guild archives where such spells are recorded, or lessons from an authorized guild instructor. Mages seeking such access may have to show a record of reputable practice, or demonstrate a need to know the secret lore – or simply make a large donation to the guild treasury.

Religion

In a setting where magic works, prayers can be demonstrably effective. In a low fantasy setting, praying may simply focus the worshipper's Will on a desired result; the gods themselves may never appear. In a high fantasy setting, the gods may truly control the operation of the natural world, so that storms are the wrath of the thunder god and crop yields are the blessing of the Earth goddess.

If a temple invites people to pray for the deaths of their enemies, or of the king, or for war, famine, or plague, the local rulers will take that amiss.

Multispecies Empires

Many fantasies assume that political authority only operates within a single species. If elves and dwarves exist, they have their own rulers, who owe allegiance to no human ruler, nor does any human ruler owe allegiance to them. If the different species naturally prefer different habitats, this is a plausible assumption, but it's not the only one possible. Human political arrangements involving contact between people from different cultures suggest several alternative models for contact between different species:

Enslavement

If a species has superior combat abilities, it may enslave other species after its armies defeat theirs. In an idealized fantasy setting, only evil empires will practice such slavery. In a strongly realistic one, it may be commonplace. Slaves may actually live better than their free kin. The slaves' desire for freedom partly determines whether the exchange is good. Slaves usually have Social Stigma (Subjugated); an escaped slave has his master's entire race as an Enemy. Slave races that have been enslaved for a long time may have Slave Mentality.

Castes

A system somewhat like slavery, but more complex, is the caste hierarchy most strongly developed in India. Each of several species may be assigned a place in society, with certain permitted or favored occupations and with specific rights and duties in relation to other species. (A society where humans are not the top caste offers interesting dramatic possibilities.) A simple model of such a society gives each caste a Social Status. Hybrids (if they exist) have Social Stigma (Minority Group).

Enclaves

A species may live according to its own laws and customs, but be subject to the authority and taxes of another species. The subordinate species may occupy separate "quarters" of cities and towns, live confined to reservations, or have their own cities with internal self-government. This usually amounts to Social Stigma (Second-Class Citizen) or (Minority Group).

Equality Under the Law

In the 19th century, some empires treated all their subjects as officially equal. Englishmen and Jews and Sikhs might not intermarry or socialize with each other, but were all legally free. This assumption fits especially well in a light fantasy campaign set in the 19th century. An idealized treatment of earlier historical settings may have the same assumption. Nineteenth-century British writers such as Thomas Macaulay and Rudyard Kipling viewed Roman law in this way – though, as the example of Rome suggests, equality may not apply to slaves. In a society that takes such ideals seriously, the worst Social Stigma is normally Second-Class Citizen. An empire with such rules might have a wealthy orc merchant, a halfling military commander, or a dwarf senator.

Religions that pray for blessings can usually do so openly; religions that pray for curses usually need secrecy. Mortal rulers might not be able to punish a god, but they can make life hard for his priests.

Foreign Relations

Like people, nations usually have neighbors. In rare cases, one state conquers every state that borders it,

leaving itself surrounded by uncivilized lands without many inhabitants, like China's Ch'in Dynasty. But even vast empires usually have to deal with other empires. In the ancient Near East, for example, an elaborate diplomatic protocol classified some rulers as Great Kings entitled to precedence over other rulers; the rulers of Egypt and the Hittites called each other "brother" and wrote letters asking about each other's wives, sons, and chariot horses. Interaction between states takes a variety of forms, including war, trade, intermarriage, and diplomacy.

All of these, but especially war and trade, depend on transportation. Trade requires exporting goods to other lands; war requires the movement of troops, food, fodder, and weapons. If magic can lower transportation costs, whether by producing better ships or instantaneous teleportation, it will make wider-ranging trade and warfare possible.

Foreign relations may be conducted partially via supernatural means. If oaths are binding, the rulers of two countries may have genuinely inviolable treaties. Or alliances may reflect the friendship or enmity of two nations' gods or two peoples' geniuses.

Chapter Four
Histories

This world is older than any of you know, and contrary to popular mythology, it did not begin in a paradise.

– Giles, in ***Buffy the Vampire Slayer***

Old Xenops was out in the public square again, orating about the wrath of the gods. Melanippos and Draco strolled toward him, mostly out of idle curiosity. King Poseidophilios didn't want to silence the old man – rumor made him a royal bastard, two generations back – and as long as no one took him too seriously, exiling him would cause more trouble than it would save. But if the old man's ravings turned dangerous, the king would need to hear of them.

Xenops was in fine form today, talking about his dreams. ". . . I stood on the slopes of Mount Hieronikos, above the orichalcum mines, and I saw a great wave sweeping toward me. I turned, and I saw its crest in every direction, like a wall encircling the island, higher than the highest mountains. Our land was swallowed up in the mouth of Ocean!"

"Poseidon is angry with us. He gave us this land of Atlantis, so that we might live in peace; but our fleets cross the seas, and bring distant lands under our rule. And yet we do not offer him our gratitude, or sacrifice our wealth to appease his wrath."

A young man called out, "I see you don't suffer from unsacrificed wealth, Xenops, judging by the patches in your cloak."

The prophet turned on him, and the soldiers walked on together, laughing. Atlantis sinking beneath the ocean! Next he'd be saying that the sun was going to fall from the sky.

Many fantasy novels have elaborate historical backgrounds. A fully realized campaign setting can profit from background as well. Historical backstory implies that the world didn't just appear at the start of the campaign, but was already there waiting to be discovered.

Even a purely action-oriented campaign has some implied historical background. There's a ruined fortress inhabited by monsters? Then someone long ago built fortresses, and then abandoned them. There's a great battle where the adventurers have to risk their lives? Then two opposed forces have some reason for conflict. Any such assumption implies other things that may provide a basis for further adventures.

Frames

Just as the first step in creating a world is deciding its overall shape, the first step in creating a history is deciding how time works in the world. Is history an inescapable linear progression from past to future? Or are there other options?

Historical Time

Many fantasy settings have "realistic" historical sequences. Each person's life is a continuous stretch of time from past to future, which is only a fraction of the world's history. Memories, records, and relics survive from the past, but few are truly ancient. No one remembers the future or has certain knowledge of it. No one gets to skip ahead, or drop back. In this kind of setting, developing a history is fairly straightforward.

Time travel makes things harder. Science fiction writers talk about "the grandfather paradox," from the question, "If you go back into the past and kill your grandfather, what happens to you?" Telling a story becomes much harder if a later event can change an earlier one, or if the same event can both happen and not happen.

One-way time travel from the present to the future doesn't create such paradoxes. It's just a way to get the same character into a new story and setting. Putting him in suspended animation could also get him into the future. So could simply having him be unaging, if he waited for a while. Fantasy stories often include suspended animation, typically as a magical curse. Merlin was the victim of such a spell, and so was Sleeping Beauty. Visits to the faeries can also produce one-way time travel into the future. Fantasy also has immortals, such as the elves, though they're often more concerned with remembering the forgotten past than with jumping ahead into the future.

Paradoxes arise when someone in the present travels into the past, or when he travels into the future and then returns to the present (or, from the viewpoint of the future, into the past). His actions in the past can alter or destroy the present before it happens; his knowledge of the future can change the future. The very concept of a historical timeline may break down. People who can see the future may try to prevent it from happening; people who can see and influence the past may try to adjust history in their own favor. History may repeatedly melt and recrystallize; encapsulated bits of the old may persist within the new – a plausible source for magical relics. Different histories might even coexist in the same time. Mary Gentle's historical fantasy series *Ash* explores some of the possible complications. Two methods help avoid time paradoxes. One says that the past is difficult or even impossible to change. The other says that changing the past creates a new branch of time, diverging from the history that previously happened. When the time traveler moves forward again, he enters a new future, with an alternate history where things happened differently, and he can't get back to his own world. His presence is an anomaly, but an isolated one. GMs wanting to keep things simple should use one of these answers.

Mythic Time

Civilizations in the past often included supernatural events in their histories, beginning with a mythic age ruled by the gods. In fantasy, especially high fantasy, such legends may be true. A high fantasy world may have been created by some mythological process, and may retain legends, records, or memories of a time when the gods still walked the earth. The age of myth may have ended in some sudden catastrophe, or gradually faded into history, with magic becoming less common and ancient races dying or departing to make room for humans.

Prophecy

Actual bodily travel into the past isn't common in fantasy. However, sending information from the present into the past, or receiving information from the future, can also create paradoxes. Stories about prophetic foreknowledge frame the problem differently – rather than reaching back into the past and trying to change what has already happened, the prophet looks ahead to Destiny and tries to change what is doomed to happen. But it's the same basic problem.

In many stories, horrific visions of the future are too vague to prevent. Oracular statements are famous for this kind of vagueness. When the king of Lydia asked the Delphic Oracle what would happen if he made war on Persia, the oracle said, "A mighty empire will be destroyed," and so it was – the Lydian empire.

In other stories, people simply don't believe the prophet's visions and warnings. In Greek legends, the Trojan princess Cassandra foresaw Troy's conquest by the Greeks, but couldn't prevent it, because no one would listen to her.

Finally, everything the protagonist does may simply make sure that the prophecy comes true. When the Greek hero Oedipus learned of the prophecy that he would kill his father and marry his mother, he left his home and traveled to Thebes, not knowing of his adoption or of his biological parents, the king and queen of Thebes. Thinking he was fleeing his Destiny, he was actually going to meet it.

If the future can change, then what a prophet sees can't be his Destiny. At most, it can be *a* destiny. Looking ahead lets him choose which of several possible timelines will become real.

A world may also have mythic events in its future. Jewish prophecies of the Messiah, and the Christian and Muslim beliefs derived from them, imply such a return. A fantasy world could reawaken myth in its future, based on real-world religions and mythologies or invented ones.

A number of mythologies assert that time is not actually a line, but a circle, a great cosmic day or year. In this view, the mythic past and the mythic future may be the same thing . . . a vast renewal of the world.

Mythic ages do not define time as sharply as history does. Mythic events don't usually have calendar dates. External measures of time, such as the sun and moon, may not have existed yet when the age of myth started. Which event happened first may be unclear. Mythic eras may have fluid histories, filled with paradoxes created by divine foreknowledge. A pantheon may include gods whose origin is never made clear, such as Heimdall, the watchman of the Norse gods, described only as "the son of nine mothers."

One possible theme for a fantasy campaign is the appearance of myths in the historical present. Ancient relics may surface, or forerunners of a mystical apocalypse may appear. In a fantasy set in the real world, the heroes may be called on to prevent such anachronisms from turning the setting into a fantasy world – especially when the new age would be one of darkness and horror (one of the recurring themes in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*). Other stories portray the mythic beings more sympathetically, as defenders of humanity or creators of a better future. The present-day heroes may need to form a bond with the mythic beings, or even participate in the events of the mythic age in some mystical initiation. (All these themes are common in the superhero genre; see Matt Wagner's *Mage: The Hero Discovered* for a brilliant treatment of the "defender of humanity" theme.) Bringing myth into the foreground as the focus of dramatic conflict can turn a story or a campaign into high fantasy.

Mythology, Part 1

Whether myths are true, or simply cultural background, inventing a fantasy setting includes inventing its myths. GMs shouldn't hesitate to steal good stories from existing mythologies. The mythologies of cultures in the real world did this all the time! For example, ancient Babylonian legend described a great flood and a man named Utnapishtim who survived it by building a huge ship. The Bible tells a similar story about Noah, and in Greek myth, a hero named Deucalion survived a flood by taking refuge in a mountaintop temple. Identifying themes that occur in many different mythologies can also provide inspiration for a newly invented myth. Scholars such as Joseph Campbell and Georges Dumézil discuss many common mythic themes in their books. The following themes are typical of both real and invented mythologies.

The Birth of the Gods

Where did the gods come from? Theologians describe eternal and uncreated gods, as in Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism. Mythology often has the gods emerging from some older, unformed chaos, as in Greek legend, where Chaos and Night were the first gods and the parents of all the other gods.

Many mythologies describe several generations of gods preceding the "current" ones that people actually worship. The earlier generations may still exist, or they may have suffered destruction or exile. Their roles may be vaguely defined, or correspond to those of the current gods, or they may retain control over obscurer domains.

The Creation of the World

Whatever their origin, the gods' first tasks typically include creating the world. This may not be literal creation out of nothing, as in Genesis. The gods may instead create the world out of the unformed matter around them, dredging islands out of the sea or shaping clay on a wheel. They may make it out of their own substance, or out of other beings. Giants whose dismembered bodies become the world appear in many mythologies: Tiamat in Mesopotamia, Adam Kadmon in Jewish mysticism, Purusha in Hindu beliefs, and Ymir in Norse myths, among others. Relics of the original chaos may linger in corners of the world, or under or outside it. This may include monsters of various kinds (see *Primordial Entities*, p. 56).

War in Heaven

Another early activity of many gods is warfare. One group of gods may battle another, like the Norse Aesir and Vanir. The gods may battle primordial beings, or their own rebellious servants, as the Christian God battled the angel Lucifer and cast him out of Heaven. This sort of warfare often takes place after the creation of the world – the prize for which the gods compete. During such wars, any remaining areas of chaos may provide refuges for the gods' enemies.

Mythic Time and Cosmic Change

A number of fantasies carry the idea of mythic time a step further, envisioning a remote past when the actual shape of the world was different. Tolkien's Middle-Earth was one example: it was originally created as a flat world with stars close overhead, but near the end of the Second Age, it was remade into the present physical universe. White Wolf Games' ***Exalted*** presents a similar flat earth and suggests that it could be the actual precursor to our world. William Blake's epic poems, written in the early 19th century, described a cosmic transformation caused by a change in human consciousness. Both Blake and Tolkien connected the world-changes they described with the fall of Atlantis.

. . . The eye altering alters all:
The senses roll themselves in fear,
And the flat earth becomes a ball.

The stars, sun, moon all shrink away,
A desert vast without a bound . . .

– William Blake,
"The Mental Traveller"

Playing With Timelines

A timeline of historical events provides a world with a chronological framework, just as a map provides it with a geographical framework. When creating such a timeline, a GM can use various methods, depending on how similar the fantasy world is to the real one.

Real History

In fantasy set in the real world, the basic timeline is the same as appears in any historical text.

However, this is only a starting point. The next step is to look for real historical events that point to some occult secret. There may be a magical explanation for a death, a war, or an expedition. Perhaps the German oceanographers on the *Meteor* in 1925-1927 were looking for Atlantis, or the death of Alexander the Great was the result of a magical curse. Or a visible event may have invisible consequences; what were the magical aftershocks of the first moon landing? Many of Tim Powers' novels use this approach.

Historical events that reveal a hidden magical influence may not be the most visible ones. Relatively minor events may be more significant. Researching actual incidents of this sort and adding them to a timeline can provide a fund of ideas for scenarios. Rumored or reputed events with specific dates can reveal something going on – not necessarily what the people who report them think. Perhaps the flying saucer sightings and contacts that began after World War II were actually an upsurge in faerie manifestations.

Mythology, Part 2

Whereas previous themes discussed the Gods, the following themes focus more on humanity's presence in mythology.

The Creation of Man

Once the world exists, the gods commonly make human beings to inhabit it – and possibly other sapient races as well, in fantasy worlds. They may need human sacrifices to sustain them or human servants to fight for them. They may simply want love and enjoy worship. They may create human beings as a work of art, or even as a practical joke that gets out of hand.

Ages of Heroes

Many mythologies describe earlier ages when humans were closer to the gods, and when some humans became great heroes. Heroes may even be demigods, children of a god and a mortal, most often a male god and a mortal woman (see *Half-Mortals*, p. 32). Heroes often face battles with monsters of various sorts, especially primordial entities. A hero may be welcomed into Heaven after his death, either as a new god or as a warrior in the service of the gods, as in the Norse myth of Valhalla.

Heroes also create civilization and technology. Sometimes the gods teach a hero, so he can pass on their knowledge. Sometimes he steals it from them – fire seems especially singled out as the sort of thing the gods want to keep to themselves, instead of entrusting it to mortals.

As the Greek legend of Prometheus illustrates, a story's hero can be a god instead of a mortal. In fact, gods can play any sort of heroic role in their own legends, if the world contains suitable adversaries for them.

The End of the World

Finally, mythology often describes what will eventually happen to the world and the gods. In cyclical worlds, time will loop back on itself and the world will begin anew. In some mythologies, such as Mithraism, this happens all at once, in a huge cataclysm. In others, such as Hinduism, the world will first decay and perish, God will rest, and eventually he will create another world. In noncyclical worlds, the usual ending is a great battle to destroy evil, such as the Christian Armageddon or the Norse Ragnarok. In either case, mythology often describes these future events with as much certainty as past events.

Divergent History

If magic is openly used, then history will be different. Many fantasy campaigns are effectively alternate histories.

An alternate history's timeline starts from a point of divergence, the first event that happened differently. There are two ways to find such a divergence point. One is to look for chancy events, where things could easily have turned out otherwise, and ask what would have happened as a result. The other envisions the large-scale outcome, then traces backward looking for the smallest visible change that would have generated it. In either strategy, the first visible change can be the first date in the timeline.

In a fantasy setting, the first visible change will probably involve magic or religion. For example, John M. Ford's *The Dragon Waiting* grows out of the emperor Julian's successful restoration of paganism in the Roman Empire, and Randall Garrett's Lord Darcy series starts from changes in medieval history that made possible a science of magic.

Whatever the starting point, the timeline grows by building up a chain of consequences. If *this* event had *this* outcome, how did the important people and organizations of the time

Zeitgeists: Spirits of Time

Just as a forest, a country, or a planet can have a spirit, so can a time. Folk images often treat these spirits somewhat humorously, envisioning the new year as a baby and the old year as a dying man with a long white beard, but serious personifications exist. Historians don't really believe in "the spirit of the 20th century," but they use the image to talk about something real. And mythology sometimes contains beings such as spirits of the hours or the seasons. In a fantasy setting, spirits of times could be real and have a measure of power.

Zeitgeists come in three main types. First, there are spirits of specific periods, which have a start and an end. At midnight on December 31, 2000, the spirit of the 20th century was out of a job (after a year of struggle for control with the spirit of the 21st). Such spirits take their character from the historic events they preside over (or vice versa). Second, there are cyclical spirits. Times of day and seasons are obvious examples, such as a goddess of dawn or a god of winter. But astrology offers other cycles: the sun's yearly movement through the signs of the Zodiac, or the vastly slower precession of the equinoxes, in which the earth spends 2,000 years under the "rule" of Pisces, then under Aquarius, and so on. Finally, there are spirits of open-ended periods: the spirit of the past, obsessed with history and tradition; the energetic, rebellious spirit of the future, often seen at science fiction conventions; and the spirit of time itself. Ritual magicians might invoke these beings in working their spells.

A cyclic zeitgeist has some level of the Sleepy disadvantage. For example, a spirit of winter would be inactive 3/4 of the time, a dawn spirit 7/8 of the time. If the spirit doesn't actually lose consciousness at other times, but is simply passive and unenergetic, treat this as a special -50% limitation on the disadvantage. A spirit of a specific time has Self-Destruct and suitable levels of Extended Lifespan or Short Lifespan; for example, the spirit of the 19th century would have Self-Destruct and one level of Extended Lifespan.

respond to it? What consequences did their actions cause? What people or organizations became more or less important as a result, and more or less able to shape the history that followed? Tracing these connections can produce unexpected implications of the original change.

Invented History

An entirely new setting will have its own history. Its timeline won't start with a divergence point, but with the first written records, the memories of the oldest living beings (in a world with long-lived or immortal races), or the point at which myth gave way to history (in a high fantasy setting). Start by imagining the important people and organizations at that time, and then build the rest of the timeline in the same way as for a divergent history.

Historical Eras

In a fantasy setting, history is a *story*. Each historic period has its own character, which makes it possible to tell certain kinds of stories. And the movement from one period to another is a larger story. (This takes history itself a step closer to myth.) So the approach presented here is a somewhat literary one, a series of portraits of historical periods. Once you've decided to set a campaign in such a period, you can define the details of that period.

You can also use these portraits as building blocks to create the history of a fictional world. For a familiar history, have city-states give rise to empires that become decadent, are overwhelmed by catastrophes, pass through dark ages, and then experience a new dawn. For something less familiar, mix them up: have an idyllic dawn age end in a catastrophe, or have a decadent empire emerge revitalized from catastrophe. Literature, mythology, and real history offer many models.

Dawn Ages

Often fantasy worlds are created by gods, or magically come into being. In such a history, intelligent beings usually emerge or are created soon afterward. The world they inhabit may still be intensely magical, regularly visited by gods or their servants. Real historical societies that believe in such a process of creation often look back in their legends to a time of innocence: the Golden Age of Greek myth, the Garden of Eden, or similar eras in the legends of other lands. A later variation on this belief was the 18th-century idea of the Noble Savage.

Dawn ages are times of freedom; they have leaders and holy men, but not rulers. Their inhabitants are seldom wealthy in material goods, such as elaborate clothing or huge estates with numerous servants (they may not have servants at all) . . . but they seldom lack food or simple pleasures. They usually have a high degree of equality and little occasion for envy. Medical treatments are simple and "natural," but effective in preventing pain. Inhabitants of many dawn ages have very long lives (such as the thousand years of Methuselah or of the Greek Golden Age). At a minimum, they should have Immunity to Disease and Longevity.

Most portraits of dawn ages include the original invention of familiar technologies, such as fire, metallurgy, and writing. Culture heroes may be important figures.

Dawn ages evoke childhood, as a time of innocence and new discoveries. If gods are present, they may play the role of parents and teachers to the whole world. Immortality reflects a child's unawareness of time horizons. Freedom from need or danger reflects the care a child receives from its parents. The common occurrence of magic may reflect the way children see the world, without fully grasping cause and effect (called "magical thinking" by psychologists; see p. 18).

Settings

Dawn ages aren't often campaign settings; they tend not to have enough conflict for intense drama. A dawn age threatened by some hostile force provides one way around this problem. More often, dawn ages survive in the memory of later ages. Sometimes this is literally true; a fantasy world may have a few immortal inhabitants who still recall the beginning. A very fortunate year, or a place or time blessed by the gods, can recapture some of this quality. A society may even have a holiday or festival that recreates the dawn years, such as the Roman Saturnalia, when participants feasted and distributed gifts, and masters waited on their servants.

The best genre for portraying dawn ages is high fantasy, where characters are larger than life and the world is full of magic. Such a campaign setting should be a sparsely populated world, with perhaps one-fifth or one-tenth of the land occupied and little clearing of new fields. However, soil fertility should be high, with good yields every year. Settlements will be mostly villages, or even isolated large farms; the largest settlements will be towns. They may not even have walls or armies. Much of the world may be unexplored, inviting long voyages of discovery.

Characters

Neither warriors nor rogues are suitable characters, as war and crime are unknown or nearly so. Explorers, scouts, or hunters (if anyone hunts) may have comparable skills. Craftsmen and inventors are likely characters; a "culture hero" campaign may use the rules for new inventions and building up technology (p. B513). There isn't enough formal organization for diplomats, or enough history for scholars – there may not even be writing – but bards will pass on lore (see *Bardic Lore*, p. 99). It's common for dawn ages to be high-mana worlds. There may not actually be mages, but all of the above character types may know magic suitable to their professions. Advantages such as Blessed are also common.

Wealth should normally be Comfortable, and neither wealth nor Status should vary much (see *Classless Meritocracies*, p. B28). Social Stigma should be unknown. Marriages do not depend on wealth or political advantage, nor does social standing restrict them. Some versions of dawn age societies may not have marriage at all; festivals such as Saturnalia or Mardi Gras often include considerable sexual freedom.

City-States

City-states arise early in the history of most civilizations. The Sumerians, the early Egyptians, the Chinese, the Mayans, and the ancient Greeks, among others, established such polities. They also appear in other periods; for example, Renaissance Italy was divided among many cities, more or less independent. City-states that coexist with empires or large nations will probably have their choices limited by external forces, much more than city-states existing on their own.

The term "city-state" sounds as if the territory of the state is limited to the land within the city walls. This actually wasn't true of most city-states. In general, they controlled farmland around the central site. Cutting a city-state off from access to the land that fed it was an act of warfare, called a siege (see *Strategic Positions*, p. 188). Such warfare was common in areas that had independent city-states, and as a result, the cities were usually fortified.

In an age of independent city-states, each large town will probably be independent; there will be many relatively small "cities," with hundreds or thousands of inhabitants. The largest cities can have a hundred thousand or more (see *Settlements*, p. 93).

Any city except the very smallest will be too large for a ruler to know every inhabitant. Written records become necessary to keep track of land ownership, taxes, and other administrative matters. Cities have scribes who keep such records. The senior scribes have Area Knowledge at a high level. The Art of Memory (see *Eidetic Memory*, p. 128) may develop (historically, it's recorded as far back as TL2) to help deal with the unwieldiness of low-tech media and filing systems. Cities also have merchants and specialized craftsmen, who produce enough wealth to pay for elaborate temples and luxury goods. Long-distance trade and exploration become common.

Settings

City-state eras offer many opportunities for campaign creation. In any historical era, city-states are constantly quarreling and fighting small-scale wars. To add opportunities for adventure, they often hire mercenaries instead of maintain full-time armies. Coastal city-states often maintain fleets.

The lands occupied by city-states are often densely populated. Farm communities aren't limited to the most fertile land, but occupy all the reasonably good land. Each city-state constructs roads, harbors, and fortifications, seeking to control the flow of trade in its area.

With the emergence of literacy, specialists in knowledge become important – a good basis for mages in a fantasy setting. A link between wizardry and writing fits well in such settings. Practically any branch of real knowledge can be associated with a form of mysticism: astronomy with astrology, mathematics with numerology, chemistry with alchemy, and so on. Scribes may also be priests. City-states should have at least one temple, and often many, including a temple of the city's divine patron, such as the Parthenon in Athens devoted to Athena. Legends often envision the gods as a royal household, with each god running a departmental function, from scribe to armorer. The favor or disfavor of the gods may be real and important; regular prayers and sacrifices may prevent natural disasters, or their neglect may invite them (see *Disturbances*, pp. 85-90).

Characters

The classic fantasy character types all work very well in this setting. City-states constantly on the edge of war are ready to hire mercenaries and not ask too many questions about their origins; skill with spear or sword is easy to prove. A full-sized city is large enough for various sorts of rogues to find shelter in anonymity, supporting a small underworld; Streetwise becomes a useful skill. Literacy and the rise of specialized knowledge justify a variety of learned professions, including bards and surgeons as well as priests and wizards.

The densely settled lands controlled by cities usually have a periphery inhabited by barbarians, outlaws, or monsters, suitable for heroic quests. Navigation makes longer journeys possible, such as the search for the Golden Fleece. Bands of adventurers going on such quests are common in epic literature. They may even have supernatural Contacts, Allies, or Patrons if they are adventuring on a city's behalf.

Status becomes important in city-states. A typical hierarchy ranges from -4 for a common slave to 7 for the king of a city. A divinely favored ruler may have Status 8. Wealth can reach high levels, at least up to Filthy Rich, but the bulk of the population will be Struggling. Adventurers can come to a ruler's attention and gain Status; they may even be members of a royal household whom the king sends on various missions.

Empires

Empires come into being when one city-state defeats its rivals, gaining control of a wide expanse of land. The capital of an empire may be a city of a million or so inhabitants. Early imperial ages may involve a large city-state struggling to gain control of smaller states or two empires locked in battle for supremacy; Roman history offers examples of both. Mature empires usually control everything in easy reach, though they may have rivals that are more distant. Two great empires may find it convenient to have border kingdoms between them.

Mythologically, empires aspire to universal rule. A fantasy empire may command an entire world. Realistically, empires expand to a certain extent, determined by problems of logistics and supply, and then stop. An imperial legion is the equivalent of a large town, with special needs, such as weapons-grade metal. It can function indefinitely in a region that can afford to support an extra town. In a less prosperous region, its presence drains local resources; it may pass through on an expedition, but it can't establish a permanent base. In sparsely populated lands, a military force depends on what it can carry and what can be shipped to it. The Romans never permanently occupied Europe beyond the Rhine, nor the Chinese the interior of Asia. The Crusader states of the Near East held only the areas that ships could supply. Changing this limitation would require reliable magic either to produce food, fodder, fuel, and water, or to transport them long distances cheaply.

Empires commonly include different races, religions, and languages within their boundaries. Their rulers typically come up with legal rules that apply equally to all and that override local customs. Universal religions also emerge: Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam all address their teachings to the entire human race, not just to a single nationality, and past religions such as Mithraism and Zoroastrianism made similar appeals. Imperial philosophers often teach that the gods of other countries represent an intuitive awareness of the universal god.

Settings

Many campaigns set in imperial eras take place in the capital cities. Emphasis tends to be on intrigue, whether between aristocratic families (based on Savoir-Faire), within the bureaucracy (based on Administration), or in the underworld (based on Streetwise). Some outright corruption will exist, but a healthy, vigorous empire should have ways of restraining it – variants on "police procedural" campaigns may examine their details.

Empires also have frontiers far away from the capital city, sometimes requiring two months' march or sailing. Such outposts are the other classic location for imperial adventures. Tribes of Picts, Huns, or Fuzzy-Wuzzies may offer bitter resistance to imperial armies.

An empire going through a civil war presents special challenges, from surviving on the battlefield to guessing which contender will end up on the throne. A civil war campaign may involve both frontier and metropolitan settings, as the most competent generals are likely to be at the edge, but their ambitions will look toward the center.

Because of their reliance on organized armies, empires are poor settings for sword and sorcery. If heroic warriors can defeat armies, then empires can't protect their boundaries and are unlikely to survive. The founding of an empire, on the other hand, may offer such warriors a role as companions of the founder.

Characters

In an empire's early years, citizens may have ideals of aristocratic service to the state. Young noblemen starting their careers, whether as Chinese mandarins or Roman legionary officers, make excellent adventurers. Players should see both the price of upholding the law and the perils of living outside it. Decide whether military command and civil service are separate careers or stages in a single career.

An empire also offers many opportunities for the more supernaturally inclined. The gods of various subject nations have their temples in the capital; new beliefs may arise, no longer tied to a specific nationality. Protection of trade often creates an expanded market economy where professional sorcerers can sell their arts for a fee. The best sorcerers will set up practice in the capital. The imperial court will command the services of many sorts of wizards as well.

Many aristocratic families have clients who come to them for favors and protection. A Sense of Duty to these clients provides a basis for many adventures. Clients may also be interesting player characters, with their patron as a Patron.

Decadence

A common assumption of historical fantasy is that empires become decadent. Heroes built the empire; their sons managed it; their grandsons devote their lives to enjoying it. The wealthy and privileged pursue increasingly exotic pleasures. Public entertainment diverts the masses with spectacle and brutality. Young people from elite families have little enthusiasm for their duty to serve the state, to protect their clients, or even to obey the law. They forget old pieties, and dismiss the gods as fables useful for keeping commoners in their place. New gods with more exciting cults replace them.

A corrupt government is one expression of this decadence. At the top should be a powerful ruler, convinced the whole apparatus exists solely for his own gratification. At the bottom, faceless masses, burdened with crushing taxes, should be kept in line with harsh penalties. Linking the two is a bureaucracy that exists primarily to perpetuate itself and that demands bribes for every activity, from building a temple to punishing a criminal.

Settings

The natural setting for a campaign in an era of decadence is the imperial capital. All the extravagances of a wealthy aristocracy will be at their height there: gladiatorial contests, chariot races, extravagant feasts, drunken orgies, and huge mansions filled with costly toys. All the intrigues surrounding the imperial throne will focus there. Anyone petitioning the state to take action will be there, groping through the mazes of bureaucracy.

To fit the legendary image of a decadent empire, suggest that the gods are losing patience with it. Brooding anger over empty temples and forgotten pieties may give rise to unfavorable omens or outright catastrophes. At the same time, many people in such a society may feel that the gods have failed *them*. Rome's mystery cults drew worshippers who felt that the old faiths were empty rituals (see Chapter 9); some periods in Chinese history had a similar fascination with mystical cults.

The very complexity of government may be a major reason for the growth of cults. People whose lives are subject to the arbitrary whims of the rich and powerful may turn to prayer – or sorcery – to try to get some control back. People denied justice when wronged may buy curses against the criminals.

Characters

Decadent empires are natural habitats, on the one hand, for the wealthy; on the other, for criminals and the underclass. The two come into closer contact than ever before. It's possible for the same character to have Savoir-Faire and Streetwise. Many characters will be Filthy Rich or even Multimillionaires, legally or not.

A fresh way to play a decadent setting makes the corruption of the upper class supernatural. Aristocrats may turn to necromancy or other black arts for thrills or political power. The wealth of the upper classes makes magical experiments affordable for nobles or their favored clients. Aristocrats may rise from the dead as liches, mummies, or vampires (see *Racial Templates*, pp. 105-113).

On a smaller scale, opportunistic rogues can be the stars of an entertaining campaign, perhaps modeled on Fritz Leiber's classic stories of Fafhrd and the Grey Mouser. When everyone is corrupt, a cheerful, ingenious, likeable rogue may be a sympathetic figure.

On the other hand, it can be interesting to play characters who are *less* corrupt than their setting: a seemingly decadent nobleman who retains a sense of honor, or a cynical official who still believes in the law.

Exhaustion

Another way for an empire to break down is by using up its resources. In real history, the commonest form of exhaustion is depletion of the water table by generations of farmers trying to keep their crops irrigated. When the wells and springs dry up, the crops fail, the towns starve, and pastoralists take back the land. Much later, when the water table recovers, new farms and towns spring up. Some parts of the Near East have been through this cycle several times.

Exhaustion of a mineral resource is harder to recover from, unless the world has a very active geological metabolism (p. 41). The 19th century was already worrying about the supply of fossil fuels. At lower TLs, a dwarvish civilization might fall when it mined all the good ore in its mountains.

Magic itself can be an exhaustible resource, as in Larry Niven's "The Magic Goes Away." If an empire relies on mages to provide key services, or even to maintain a magical analog of advanced technology (p. 66), what will it do when the spells are no longer effective?

From a certain point of view, decadence itself is a form of exhaustion. A society's laws and ethical beliefs are part of its capital. When respect for the law is lost, the society may no longer be able to maintain enough order to keep itself working. Or the gods may withdraw their favor from a corrupt empire, as in the Roma Arcana setting (pp. 195-231).

Settings

An exhausted civilization is a less colorful setting than a decadent one. It doesn't have much extravagant wealth, but it has lots of desperate poverty. Its cities have a quality less of rot than of sterility, with empty buildings and half-deserted streets.

In the extreme cases, an exhausted civilization may not even have any citizens. Its cities may be empty ruins, their streets inhabited by whispering ghosts or starved demons. Whatever haunts them may resent the living and fear desecration of its tombs – or see them as new worshippers at the temples' altars. A ruined city may be a repository of forgotten secrets, or it may carry its own charge of supernatural power.

As these motifs suggest, dark fantasy is the natural genre for exhausted civilizations. Mortality is the great source for dark supernatural imagery; the mortality of an entire culture offers such imagery on the largest scale. Even a still-inhabited city may care more for its tombs and monuments than for its children.

The contrast between dying civilizations and the young, vigorous barbarians who surround and threaten them is also a classic theme of sword and sorcery.

Characters

Threats, not rewards, motivate adventurers from exhausted civilizations. If they're from a farm region, the crops may be failing. If they're from a city, trade may have broken down, or too few men might guard the walls, inviting raids or worse.

Any of the typical fantasy character types are possible, but probably a bit poorer than usual. They may have practical skills considered beneath their dignity in other societies. They won't have access to a wide range of equipment, or anything of more than debatable quality. A GM might require reduced Wealth and the "points for equipment" rule, with no ready prospect of buying more than a

limited amount of equipment. A journey to a distant city with a weapons industry might make a useful quest.

Barbarian wanderers venturing into dying cities may have interesting experiences. Such cities may hold unsuspected treasures; they may also have surprisingly strong guards for those treasures. An entire ruined city can provide the ultimate "dungeon crawl" adventure (see *Into the Labyrinth*, p. 174).

Catastrophe

Ultimately, civilizations die – especially in historical fantasy, which is characteristically set in civilizations that are now dead. Why this happens is hotly debated, even for real, well-known cultures such as the Roman Empire. Did Rome fall because moral corruption undermined the discipline of its armies and administrators (decadence)? Did economic collapse make it unable to support its legions (exhaustion)? Or was it simply overwhelmed by invaders (catastrophe)? All of these views have proponents among historians. The fantasy GM may pick one for any fallen civilization in his world, or even leave its fall a mystery.

Certain kinds of catastrophes naturally follow from decadence (military invasion) or from exhaustion (military invasion or famine). Others, such as natural disasters, plagues, and monstrous or supernatural attacks, may destroy even a thriving civilization (see *Disturbances*, p. 85). Either an empire or a city-state may fall to such a disaster. The destruction of Troy, as portrayed in the *Iliad* and *Aeneid*, is the classic example.

Settings

One way to use a catastrophe as a setting is to start a scenario or campaign just before the catastrophe, get the players oriented to the setting, and then inflict the disaster on the setting and their characters. Describe the effects of the catastrophe in detail, hour by hour or even moment by moment. This kind of treatment needs at least a major disaster, and preferably a historic disaster, on a scale wider than a human being can immediately grasp, and with a force that a human being cannot oppose. The emphasis should be on the power of the unleashed elements and the desperate struggle to survive them.

If the players find such techniques acceptable, the GM may narrate a few "cut scenes" showing what is happening in other parts of the affected area. It may be better not to focus these on people the adventurers know. The impact of the disaster will be stronger if they spend the days following it learning who lived and who died. Players may want to participate in such scenes, in the role of 25- to 50-point "everyman" characters caught up in the catastrophe. Most of them will die, like ordinary people in the opening scenes of catastrophe films, but survivors may later join the main party as NPCs.

It's also possible to set a game after the catastrophe has ended. Show the survivors clearing away the wreckage, reestablishing their daily routines, and starting to rebuild. If the catastrophe is large enough to destroy a civilization, show them learning that there is no help and they're on their own, with resources limited to what they have on hand. Look at secondary consequences, including the failure of food production and distribution and the threat of famine, and the breakdown of civil authority, leading to bandit raids or street riots.

Characters

A catastrophic period in history is the ideal setting for "everyman" characters. People who would ordinarily never seek adventure can have adventure come looking for them. The resulting hard choices can make for intense drama.

For more classic adventurer types, a catastrophic period offers a change of theme. The catastrophe can clear away the established leaders of their society, whether they die while heroically doing their duty or while trying to evade it and look out for themselves. Someone has to fill the empty space, and starting ***GURPS*** characters probably have the necessary abilities.

For this type of story, characters with a Sense of Duty, a Duty, Dependents, or the like are best. A catastrophe storyline makes the players actually pay for the points they gain from these disadvantages; in fact, it makes them the central motive for the scenario.

Dark Ages

If a civilization actually falls, whether to catastrophe, decadence, or exhaustion, what follows is a dark age. The classic Dark Ages were the years after the fall of Rome in Western Europe. However, an even wider-scale dark age occurred at the end of the Bronze Age aroud 1000 B.C. There isn't any solid historical definition for a "dark age." Basically, it is a period with few historical records, because the people and institutions that generated such records are gone, or have more urgent concerns.

This very lack of documentation makes dark ages useful settings for fantasy. If we don't know what happened in a real historical period, such as 500-1000 A.D. in Europe, it's easy to imagine fantastic things that weren't recorded. This is a major reason that medieval settings are common in fantasy games, from the swords and sorcery of ***Dungeons & Dragons*** to the high ritual magic of ***Ars Magica***. And since the reason for the lack of documentation is typically that transportation and communication have broken down, any long journey will have the chance of becoming an adventure.

One common assumption about dark ages is that they are periods of technological retrogression. This isn't necessarily the case. The most familiar example, the post-Roman Dark Ages in Europe, saw medical knowledge falling back to lower levels than in ancient Assyria . . . yet technological advances occurred in the same period, including the widespread use of steel weapons and armor. A world that uses magic on a wide enough scale to be equivalent to technology (p. 64) might similarly prosper during a dark age.

Settings

A dark ages setting typically has a smaller population and fewer cities. Weakened central authority controls a much smaller territory. Old institutions have collapsed, and new ones have emerged to take their place. Anyone confident enough to lead a campaign against the local bandit gangs may become the new ruler. At the same time, the formulas of the old authorities may be preserved, as when a successor of German kings carried the title of "holy Roman emperor."

In a severe dark age, large areas may be empty. Various disasters may reduce the population until the survivors can no longer live easily. They migrate elsewhere or cluster together in a few scattered strongholds.

The landscape should be littered with relics of the past: ancient ruined temples, deserted cities, and battlefield monuments to deaths in forgotten causes. In a magical setting, ruins may hide traces of ancient magic. Ancestral gods may still hunger for worshippers. Ancient legends may bear clues, unknowingly passed on by bards or scribes as lore.

Characters

The breakdown of established authority at the start of a dark age leaves room for adventure. Skilled warriors can travel about the ruined landscape, looking for plunder or just trying to pick up their next meal. They may protect others for a variety of motives – compassion for the weak, payment from the rich, or simply keeping other warriors from raiding their territory (the origin of many feudal aristocracies). Other sorts of adventurers can make themselves useful to a band of warriors in various ways.

Another possibility, especially in a setting resembling the familiar Dark Ages of Europe, recruits adventurers from scholars, priests, or wizards, who may group together for mutual aid and protection in monasteries or the like. Such a group may have limited possibilities for adventure –

avoiding adventure may be a main goal – but may be effectively lured by new knowledge. If supernatural forces are powerful, they may have to aid secular authorities. For a variation on this formula, use Buddhist monasteries as a model; in certain periods, they also housed martial artists of various schools.

New Beginnings

After a dark age, civilized life may reemerge. The classic historical example is the European Renaissance, but the rebirth started centuries earlier, not long after 1000 A.D., in the High Middle Ages. Similar renewals have occurred at other places and times.

In many ways, a new beginning is like the first beginning. But there's an important difference: the awareness of something that went before. Renaissance scholars knew about ancient Greece and Rome and doubted that anything they could do might equal ancient attainments; the Greeks themselves looked in awe on the age and achievements of Egypt. This reverent look back to past greatness is one of fantasy's recurring themes. The highest praise a king can receive is to say that in his reign the greatness of the past is renewed.

In an optimistic setting, especially in a high fantasy world, the new beginning may even be, not the age of city-states came back, but the dawn age returned. For a mythic treatment, ancient prophecies of the resurrection of the dead might come true.

Another Athens shall arise
And to remoter time
Bequeath, like sunset to the skies,
The splendor of its prime.
– Percy Bysshe Shelley, "Hellas"

Settings

A time of rebirth often increases trade and travel, as law makes the roads and the high seas safe. People once barely scraping by now have a little to spare; people who were well off are wealthy. Settlers clear fields and build houses in formerly empty lands. A sense of open frontiers is encouraged.

At the same time, make sure the past is not forgotten. Ancient manuscripts hint at lost lore; rare treasures grant forgotten powers. The ruins of great cities lie waiting for an explorer to venture into their rubble-filled streets. The landscape of reborn civilizations should be full of history.

Characters

Scholars often come to center stage in this kind of setting; their knowledge of what happened before may unlock many doors. If they are wealthy, they may fall into bitter rivalries for the greatest discoveries, even sending warriors to harass each other's expeditions. Artists and inventors may also appear, inspired by the example of the past to rival its achievements.

Merchants and explorers gain an expanded range of movement. Their journeys can also be the focus for a campaign. In a world of fantasy, any number of exotic races or creatures may wait over the horizon.

At the same time, there's work for the warriors. If law and order are expanding to larger territories, someone has to implement them. If barbarians hear of the rise of wealthy cities and come to raid them, someone has to defend the walls.

All of this assumes that the protagonists come from one of the new civilizations. But as a new culture expands its boundaries, it may swallow up older cultures. It's also possible to focus on people in one of those older cultures, struggling to preserve their customs and institutions against brash conquerors from other lands. This works especially well in a low fantasy setting, where neither side may be entirely right or entirely wrong.

Disturbances

Both in the real world and in fiction, catastrophes of various sorts punctuate histories. A single event of this kind can add drama to a campaign, or even form its focus, as adventurers struggle to survive and carry on with their chosen missions. A series of minor and major troubles can form part of a fictional world's historical timeline.

To create a timeline of disturbances randomly for a typical inhabited area, use the following table:

Die Roll	*Effect*
3-10	Good year
11-15	Minor disturbance, "bad year"
16-17	Major disturbance
18	Historic disaster

Alternatively, the GM may deliberately place disturbances across an entire story. For this purpose, a minor disturbance represents a year when something bad happened; a major disturbance is the worst year of a generation; a historic disaster is the worst year in centuries.

Disturbances may be more or less frequent at certain times. A dawn age should have +2 or better to all the thresholds. A healthy empire or an age of new beginnings might have +1. A decadent or exhausted empire might have -1. A dark age could have -2. An actual age of catastrophe would be suffering from a historic disaster, or would still be in shock from a recent one.

It's possible to introduce vast catastrophes, beyond even the scale of a historic disaster: continents sinking, floods covering the earth, winters three years long, plagues that depopulate a continent, or other events out of legend. A random die roll cannot generate such events; they occur when a GM finds them suitable. They may be the result of an extremely angry god's intervention.

Disasters generally have four types of consequences.

- People die.
- About five times this number suffer injury.
- About 20 times the number who die have their lives disrupted, losing their homes or their families.
- About 100 times the number who die suffer property damage.

A community's response to a disaster follows a typical course. For a short time, about 1d+1 days, life is entirely disrupted, with normal activities simply ceasing. The community spends about 10 times as long (a number of weeks), restoring normal functions and making short-term repairs. For about 100 times the length of the immediate emergency (typically about a year), the community replaces lost buildings and does other major repairs.

If someone influential in the community can make a Leadership roll (at -3 for a major disaster or -6 for a historic disaster), the period of total disruption is reduced to 1d-1 days (minimum 1 day). The recovery periods shrink proportionately. A GM should allow a player character to attempt this roll!

Here is a partial list of disasters that can be included in a campaign. For any area, choose several common types, and perhaps some rarer ones. It's convenient to list six types, or five types plus the chance of a less common type; then roll 1d to pick one. The disasters described here are large enough to become news for an empire or subcontinent. Scaled-down disasters can occur with similar frequencies in a smaller region, or even a single village.

Some disasters cause intense damage in small areas. Only minor effect levels are defined for these.

Natural Disasters

The unleashed elements can be as destructive as monsters or armies. Monsters or powerful wizards may even be able to command the elements through powers or spells.

Earth

Cave-In

Typical location: Areas supported by strata of water-soluble rock (such as limestone or salt) and subject to heavy subterranean water flow. Collapse is especially likely during droughts.

Minor disaster effects: Collapse of an area (1d+1) × 50′ in diameter; ground level drops (1d) × 25′. All structures in area destroyed; anyone on site must roll vs. DX+2 or be entombed.

Earthquake

Typical location: Areas of intense tectonic activity.

Minor disaster effects: Felt by everyone up to 70 miles from epicenter; lasts 1 minute; Richter scale 5.0-6.5. Roll vs. DX+2 or fall. Poorly constructed buildings damaged; some injuries from debris, typically 1d.

Major disaster effects: Lasts 1d minutes; full effects up to 70 miles from epicenter, minor disaster effects 70-140 miles; Richter scale 6.5-8.0. Walls and buildings damaged; poorly constructed buildings collapse; towers may fall; many injuries from debris, typically 2d. Roll vs. DX each minute or fall.

Historic disaster effects: Lasts 3d minutes; full effects up to 70 miles from epicenter, major disaster effects 70-140 miles, minor disaster effects 140-280 miles; Richter scale 8.0-9.5. All structures severely damaged, many collapse; occupants crushed, 6d damage. Objects thrown into air with effective ST 20. Roll vs. DX-2 each minute or fall.

Landslide

Typical location: At the foot of a slope, especially of 45° or steeper, in an area subject to heavy weathering by rainfall. Limestone is particularly vulnerable to heavy weathering.

Minor disaster effects: Soil travels at Move 6; if unable to outrun it, roll vs. DX to avoid falling and being buried. Roll vs. ST-4 to dig out, once per turn; after HT × 10 seconds, begin losing 1 FP/second. Crops lost and buried buildings will need to be dug free.

Major disaster effects: Soil travels at Move 18; anyone in its path suffers 1d damage, is buried, and must make five rolls vs. ST-4 to dig out. Buildings in poor condition are destroyed; buildings in good condition are reduced to poor condition by structural damage and must be dug out.

Historic disaster effects: Huge masses of soil travel at Move 30 or higher; anyone in their path suffers 5d damage, is buried, and cannot dig out, though very rapid excavation may extract him before he suffocates. Buildings are demolished and other property is a total loss.

Albion gave his deadly groan
And all the Atlantic mountains shook.
– William Blake, "Jerusalem"

Water

Drought

Typical location: Any area that practices irrigation agriculture, such as a Mediterranean climate.

Minor disaster effects: Limited rainfall; all nonessential uses of water cut back; crop yields fall 25% without irrigation (roll against Farming or Hydrology to provide).

Major disaster effects: Severely limited rainfall; crop yields fall 50%, reducible to 25% by irrigation. For a two-week period, roll vs. Survival daily to avoid dehydration (see p. B426).

Historic disaster effects: Crop yields fall 100%, reducible to 50% by irrigation. For a two-week period, suffer dehydration, and roll vs. Survival daily to avoid losing 1 extra FP and 1 HP (see p. B426).

Flood

Typical location: Banks of a large river.

Minor disaster effects: River overflows its banks, covers low-lying adjacent ground (typically not built on); some water in streets. Boats swept away; anyone on river must make Swimming rolls (see p. B224).

Major disaster effects: River several feet above its banks; many communities flooded; poorly constructed buildings destroyed, others suffer water damage, many possessions damaged or swept away. Any resident who fails an Sense roll must make Swimming rolls; others can climb or run.

Historic disaster effects: Flash flood; most structures destroyed. Water cannot be outrun; Swimming rolls required at -2.

Tsunami

Typical location: Seacoasts in tectonically active regions.

Minor disaster effects: Waves exceed 10' and travel at up to Move 5; boats and buildings along coastlines damaged; anyone caught in wave must roll vs. Swimming to avoid drowning.

Major disaster effects: Waves exceed 30' and travel at up to Move 15; boats and buildings destroyed; anyone caught in wave begins to drown.

Historic disaster effects: Waves exceed 50' and travel at up to Move 50; coastal area devastated, with no survivors except those who can climb above height of wave crest.

Whirlpool

Typical location: An area at sea where local rock formations channel currents in opposing directions, typically near shore but with substantial depth.

Minor disaster effects: Pulls a ship downward with ST 150. A small ship will be pulled under; a large ship may capsize or suffer hull damage.

Air

Blizzard

Typical location: Temperate forests, temperate grasslands, or any cold regions during winter months.

Minor disaster effects: Heavy snowfall and severe cold; people snowed in for two days. Anyone caught outside must roll vs. Area Knowledge or Survival to reach shelter or suffer freezing effects (see p. B430).

Major disaster effects: Extremely heavy snowfall; poorly maintained structures may collapse. Anyone caught outside must roll vs. Area Knowledge or Survival at -2 to reach shelter or suffer freezing effects at -2 to HT for wind chill.

Historic disaster: Incredibly heavy snowfall; buildings risk collapse from weight on roof; areas with sloped terrain may suffer avalanches (treat as major disaster landslides). Roll vs. Area Knowledge or Survival at -4; wind chill gives -4 to HT roll.

Hurricane

Typical location: Subtropical coastlines, especially on east coasts of continents; mainly during summer months.

Minor disaster effects: Roll vs. ST to keep footing outdoors. Watercraft roll vs. Shiphandling-2 modified by SM of the ship or suffer swamping and leaking. Vegetation and poorly maintained structures damaged. Coastal flooding to 1d feet (see *Flood*).

Major disaster effects: Roll vs. ST-2 to keep footing outdoors or suffer 1d from impacts. Watercraft roll vs. Shiphandling-5 modified by SM of the ship or suffer severe leaking; ships capsize or roll on critical failure. Vegetation and poorly maintained structures destroyed, other structures damaged. Coastal flooding to 3d feet (see *Flood*) with structural damage.

Historic disaster effects: Roll vs. ST-5 to keep footing outdoors or suffer 3d from impact. Watercraft roll vs. Shiphandling-8 modified by SM of the ship or break up and sink. Some buildings are destroyed, others suffer major damage. Coastal flooding to 5d feet (see *Flood*) with structural damage.

Note: The same effects can represent storms at higher latitudes, except that the temperatures will be lower.

Sandstorm

Typical location: Desert regions and areas at their edges.

Minor disaster effects: Visibility range reduced to 50'. Roll vs. HT or blinded by sand in eyes for duration of storm. Small objects blown away with effective ST 6; sand buries objects to 1d feet.

Major disaster effects: Visibility range reduced to 10'. Roll vs. HT as above. Roll vs. ST or lose footing. Objects blown away with effective ST 13; sand buries objects to 2d feet, anyone who falls down must dig out (one roll vs. ST-4; see *Landslide*).

Historic disaster effects: Visibility totally lost. Roll vs. ST-5 or lose footing. Objects blown away with effective ST 30; sand buries objects to 4d feet, anyone without shelter must dig out (five rolls vs. ST-4; see *Landslide*).

Tornado

Typical location: Mid-continental plains areas, especially during summer thunderstorm weather.

Minor disaster effects: A path 2d miles long and 2d × 50' wide suffers lifting forces averaging ST 30. Animals and furniture carried through air; roofs torn off; poorly maintained buildings suffer structural damage.

Fire

Forest Fire

Typical location: In an area with abundant vegetation, especially during a dry period. Temperate grasslands, deciduous forests, coniferous forests, and monsoon forests are all plausible.

Minor disaster effects: A grassfire or brushfire; sets fire to paper, dry wood, light clothing; inflicts 1d-1 on anyone caught in it – anyone who makes a Sense roll can escape.

Major disaster effects: A forest fire or very large grassfire; sets fire to heavy clothing, leather, seasoned wood; inflicts 3d on anyone caught in it – a Sense roll gives enough warning to reduce this to 1d-1.

Historic disaster effects: A very large forest fire; burns all organic material including human flesh; inflicts 6d on anyone caught in it – a Sense roll gives enough warning to reduce this to 3d.

Volcano

Typical location: Next to converging tectonic plates or at hot spots.

Minor disaster effects: Lava flow, lasting 1 day; flows downhill 1d miles. Treat as landslide. Anything immersed in lava suffers 3d burns per 10 seconds of contact; dry organic materials burst into flame.

Major disaster: Ash flow, lasting 1 day, in radius of 1d miles; typical speed is Move 10. Inflicts 6d burns per 10 seconds of contact; green wood and human flesh may burst into flame.

Historic disaster: Eruption, nearly instantaneous; scatters ash to radius of 2d×10 miles, often many feet thick. Leaves caldera 1d miles in diameter. Ash inflicts 10d burns per 10 seconds of contact. Volcanic ash lowers temperatures for the next year in a "year without a summer," worldwide.

Plagues

An infestation of vermin, or an epidemic, can be a great disaster. Use the same relative intensities and frequencies as for elemental catastrophes. In

appropriate locations, include one or another of the following in a region's list of possible disasters:

Epidemic

Typical location: A large city or other densely populated area, especially one with regular foreign trade.

Minor disaster effects: A disease with a +1 modifier to HT, typically spread only by close contact (sharing a meal, physical intimacy, cannibalism).

Major disaster effects: A disease with no modifier to HT, typically spread by touch or by spitting or sneezing.

Historic disaster effects: A disease with a -1 modifier to HT, spread by simply being in the victim's presence. See p. B443 for modifiers to contagion.

Famine

Typical location: Any agricultural area. Famines often occur in dry areas with irrigation-based agriculture, but that sort of famine is subsumed under *Drought* (p. 87).

Minor disaster effects: Disease, insect infestations, or soil exhaustion reduce crop yield by 25%. A few deaths occur among children (especially nursing infants whose mothers' milk dries up), the old, and the poor.

Major disaster effects: Crop yield falls 50%. Food prices rise steeply in towns; a significant number of deaths occur.

Historic disaster effects: Crops almost wholly lost. Food prices rise steeply everywhere; food riots are likely; many families lose at least one member.

Infestation

Typical location: Any warm, fertile region where animals can breed readily.

Minor disaster effects: A plague of merely annoying creatures, such as frogs or gnats.

Major disaster effects: A plague of creatures that threaten the food supply, such as locusts (1d × 5% of food lost), or of moderately dangerous creatures such as rats (roll vs. Alertness to avoid being attacked by a swarm).

Historic disaster: A plague of seriously dangerous creatures, either poisonous (scorpions) or large and predatory (wolves). Everyone in the area is attacked.

Monster

Typical location: Unpredictable; in legend, monsters appear mainly because an angry god has cursed the land. If the natural disaster frequency rules on p. 86 are used, this requires an unfavorable modifier to the frequency roll.

Minor disaster effects: An unusually formidable animal, mainly interested in food.

Major disaster effects: A creature difficult to kill because of ferocity, cunning, or magic, and interested in human prey.

Historic disaster effects: A superhumanly dangerous creature ferociously hostile to human beings.

Wars

The Bible reckons War as one of the four horsemen of the Apocalypse, along with Famine, Plague, and Death. For many purposes, an invasion is similar to a natural disaster, and a GM may choose to incorporate invasion into the list of possible disasters for an area. In seacoast areas, pirate or Viking raids can be treated as invasions.

Typical location: Any settled region with other settled regions or numerous barbarians outside its boundaries.

Minor disaster effects: Extensive raids or localized invasions. Property taken or damaged; some people kidnapped, especially women; local residents who resist are wounded or killed, unless unusually skilled in combat. Military response leads to a fighting retreat.

Major disaster: Large-scale invasion, aiming to take control of a province or region (for example, the Crusades). Full mobilization required; walled towns besieged; major battles fought. Civilian communities typically suffer 1d deaths per 100 inhabitants and reduction of Wealth levels by one for the next year.

Historic disaster: War of total conquest (for example, the Mongol invasions). If defense is unsuccessful, defending armies annihilated; major cities besieged, may be destroyed if siege succeeds. All portable wealth confiscated; heavy tribute imposed, with permanent Wealth level reduction. Many civilian deaths, typically 1d × 5% of adult population; survivors may be enslaved and/or endure forced resettlement.

Magical Disasters

In a world where magic is widespread, magical forces may also give rise to catastrophes. Some such disasters will result from spells going wrong; others will come about through spontaneous magic. The same categories of intensity and frequency as for natural disasters apply to spontaneous magical disasters. Typical ranges are 1 mile for minor disasters, 1d miles for major disasters, 3d miles for historic disasters. If a world unevenly distributes magic, supernatural disasters will probably be in high-mana or very-high-mana areas or along ley lines. Very-high-mana areas may be uninhabitable, much like flood plains or the slopes of active volcanoes. Here are some possible effects of spontaneous magic:

Breaking

Minor disaster effects: Inflicts 1d of damage on inanimate objects, ignoring DR. Causes a single structural failure in any object whose hits are exceeded.

Major disaster effects: Inflicts 3d of damage on inanimate objects, ignoring DR. Shatters any object whose hits are exceeded.

Historic disaster effects: Inflicts 10d of damage on inanimate objects, ignoring DR. Reduces any object whose hits are exceeded to dust.

Elemental Control

Equivalent to the natural disasters on p. 86, except that the ultimate cause is magical.

Mind Control

Minor disaster effects: Inflicts an intense emotion or a temporary mental failure on each person in range; resisted by Will+4.

Major disaster effects: Causes loss of consciousness or delirium in each person in range; resisted by Will.

Historic disaster effects: Causes amnesia, insanity, reduced IQ (-2), or loss of a skill in each person in range; resisted by Will-4.

Summoning

Minor disaster effects: Summons demons, elementals, or similar beings with a total energy cost of 20 for one hour.

Major disaster effects: Summons beings with a total energy cost of 100 for one day.

Divine Punishments

A land that is under a curse, or has angered the gods, may have a negative modifier to all these thresholds; -1 for a minor curse, -2 for a severe curse, with -3 or worse only for lands that are actually becoming depopulated. (A -1, for example, would mean that a bad year occurred on a 10 or above, a major disturbance on a 14 or above, and a historic disaster on a 17 or above.)

A land that is blessed or has a god's favor may have a positive modifier. The GM should decide whether a natural 18 still indicates a historic disaster, or whether such a happy land is immune to the worst disturbances.

If diviners or sorcerers can communicate with zeitgeists (p. 78), the mood of a zeitgeist may reflect these probabilities. For reaction roll modifiers, double the disturbance roll modifiers – the reaction rolls for the zeitgeist of a dawn age would be at +4, for example.

Historic disaster effects: Summons beings with a total energy cost of 500 for one year.

Transformation

Minor disaster effects: Affects a single body part on each person in range, changing shape or material; resisted by HT+4.

Major disaster effects: Affects the entire body of each person in range, changing it to that of another living creature; resisted by HT.

Historic disaster: Affects the entire body of each person in range, changing it to some inanimate material such as stone or salt; resisted by HT-4. A variant may affect some category of plants or animals.

Shadows of the Past

Most of this history won't actually come into the action, at least not directly. It may explain how the powerful people and states gained their power, and what their goals are, but it's not usually a good idea to reveal this to the audience . . . because historical lectures are dull, and take away the pleasure of finding out what's going on. The players may actually never see large parts of a richly detailed history. However, several methods can make the past relevant to action in the present.

Genealogies

Fantasy commonly assumes that certain families are especially important historically. Age after age, the same bloodline will keep turning out notable people. And even if a bloodline seemingly has lost all importance, its latest descendant may reclaim its former glory.

This partly reflects the ideas of the aristocratic societies where much fantasy is set. Royal titles really do pass down the generations, sometimes unpredictably, giving special powers to their recipients. Mythically, kings may have magical powers such as the ability to heal (p. 68). This makes it plausible to envision other gifts passing on in the same way. In fact, royal families often claim descent from a god. In a fantasy world, demigods may pass on supernatural gifts to their descendants.

Knowledge of genealogy comes from several skills. History includes the details of any lineages that are important to a given place's history. Bardic Lore includes the same knowledge, and also one's own descent and the major deeds of one's ancestors. Area Knowledge includes the relationships between specific living people who are important to the area, and as much knowledge of previous generations as is essential to define those relationships. Literature may be useful, if the literary works are about historic figures and if they present accurate information, but Literature skill can't separate history from fiction. Research can locate genealogical records if any archive maintains such records. (See *Information Sources,* p.99.)

In societies where blood relationships are important (such as European monarchies and many tribal societies), genealogical skills can apply to influence rolls. A success indicates the discovery of a common ancestor, leading to a Good reaction. A failure produces a Bad reaction. This may indicate that the genealogical discussion recalled some ancestral feud or grudge!

Influence rolls can also be helpful in negotiating with ghosts or other revenants, or with ancestral spirits. Ancestor worship is a compact of mutual aid between the dead and the living. By proving their descent, the living prove that they are entitled to that aid. Ghosts often return because of family obligations or obsessions with family concerns. Even a lich or vampire might aid a living relative on a whim.

Ruins

An area inhabited for more than a century will have some abandoned structures. Inside a city, where living space is scarce, these won't stay empty for long. Even if they're accursed or haunted, someone will pay to have them purified, or desperately poor people will move in as squatters (roll vs. Streetwise, modified by settlement size, to find housing of this kind). In a village, a house may stay empty for years. In a remote area, an isolated house may be entirely forgotten until a stray wanderer happens upon it.

An area occupied for a number of centuries will usually have older structures below the current ground level. Normally these will have collapsed. However, a construction project that involves digging, such as a sewer, may turn up human remains, artifacts, or even sealed chambers with unusually solid walls.

After a major catastrophe, entire settlements may become uninhabited; large cities may be reduced to fractions of their former populations. Here the buildings will gradually decay over time: their facades will weather away, their floors will collapse, and eventually even their walls will fall. How long this takes depends on the material. Mud brick structures will collapse in the first massive rainfall, wooden buildings may last a generation, and solid stone structures may endure for a century before suffering major deterioration.

Ruins can serve as markers of a great civilization of ancient times, now destroyed. Faded inscriptions may hint at the fates of those past civilizations, or reveal arcane secrets. Roll vs. Archaeology to find anything informative, with a critical success turning up an actual text or relic (see *Relics,* p. 91). If the language is unknown, it won't be very useful, though an inscription can be copied and taken back to a scholar in a settled area.

Desperate travelers may take shelter in ruins. In a sword and sorcery or dark fantasy campaign, less pleasant things may already be there, ready to attack intruders or curse them. An Exorcism roll may be needed to drive away supernatural guardians. Inhabitants of this sort – or ancient curses – may keep hidden treasures safe from tomb robbers; otherwise, any treasure has probably already been stolen. A critical success on an Architecture roll may uncover hidden troves, if there are any.

Relics

In an adventure story, "relics" usually means objects that are either useful or valuable, left over from the historical or forgotten past. Valuable objects are usually gems, precious metals, or works of art made from durable materials. Useful objects are most often weapons and armor, especially if finely made. These may be magical, and other sorts of magical objects generally count as useful as well.

Magical relics aren't particularly interesting or valuable if every city has an enchanters' market selling equivalent objects. Finding magical relics is more important in a setting where enchantment is rare, or the specific magic objects in question are rare. Whether made in a mythic age, by forgotten mystic arts, or by a uniquely skilled enchanter, a fading magic setting makes the surviving magical treasures stand out.

In a subtler treatment, both useful devices and magical objects may be valuable clues to how past inventors or enchanters created them. Information, in general, can be valuable. This is obviously the case for a grimoire with lost spells, or a technical manual . . . but a map could hold the location of a treasure trove or the route to a distant land, or the records of a castle could reveal the identity of a lost heir or the true name of a dangerous foe. The discovery of a bilingual – the same text in two different languages – could provide the key to an unknown language, making it possible to read previously undecipherable grimoires, technical manuals, or other documents.

Most adventurers look for such relics in ancient ruins, or take them from the hoards of defeated foes. But in some settings, adventurers may buy and sell magic items and volumes of lore, finding them in obscure shops run by eccentric antiquarians. Getting access to them may call for a roll against Savoir-Faire or Merchant, instead of Two-Handed Sword. In either case, adventurers attempting to walk off with their finds should expect to discover why they haven't been carried off already, whether the reason is a city watch, a jealous dragon, or a magical curse.

In fantasy settings, scientific archaeology usually doesn't yet exist. Adventurers sell their finds for as much as they can get. Sometimes merchants want them – these may be the same eccentric antiquarians who sell volumes of lore. In other cases, the only possible buyers will be emperors, kings, or high nobles. If the relics are of religious significance, the safest course is to donate them to a church or temple and hope for gratitude. A valuable relic may create new perils for the finder before he can get it to his market, as in Kipling's story "The King's Ankus."

Adventurers who find useful or magical objects may instead want to use them in their further adventures. In a low fantasy setting, materials may wear out, and even enchantments may weaken. In high fantasy or sword and sorcery, the question of whether an ancient sword has rusted, or a suit of armor's leather fastenings have rotted through, won't usually arise; valuable relics are immune to age and decay.

Chapter Five
Localities

. . . Eventually the South became an indescribable conglomeration of duchies, earldoms, free cities, minor kingdoms, independent bishoprics, and counties. These little worlds were often the size of small farms, though they might be named the Grand Union of the Five Counties, or the Duchy of Irontree-Dragonrock. Each of these petty potentates coined his own money and levied troops . . . Seldom could a chieftain gather enough support for anything the size of a civil war, but there was constant feuding, bickering, and bullying.

– John Bellairs, ***The Face in the Frost***

The streets of the capital were filled, day and night. Wu had never seen such crowds. And many of them dressed richly, their silken robes dyed in elaborate many-colored patterns. Such an opportunity for a man of skill! Wu drifted through the edges of the crowd, his eyes lowered, his steps keeping him out of people's way. But as he passed, silent as the wind, purses fell into his hands like autumn leaves, and then found their way into hidden pockets of his specially made clothing.

Then he stepped into a side street, and was lost to sight.

But as he made his way to the hostel where he was staying, he felt that something was wrong. Some presence troubled his mind. As he began an unobtrusive survey of the area, he felt two arms intertwine with his.

"You are very good," said the one to his left. "But you did not seek permission before gleaning in our fields. That shows a lack of respect. You will come to speak with the Elder, and he will instruct you in proper manners."

Wu moved to extricate himself from their grasp, but their skill was the equal of his own. He was held fast.

Once the world is fleshed out, there's one more step to get it ready for the game. The GM must map and describe the starting point – the place where the campaign begins. This can serve a variety of functions. If the heroes grew up there, it's part of their backgrounds; if they came from elsewhere, it's the place they meet. It's a source of equipment, supplies, and training. It's a place where they can sell their loot and spend their proceeds. It may be a source of plots, if they defend it or enforce its laws. A detailed map and a list of the important inhabitants are useful resources for making the players believe in it.

Settlements

Most people in civilized human societies have permanent homes. Farmers stay near their crops. A landowner, or his bailiff, supervises his estate. Anyone with equipment needs a place to store it . . . a craftsman's tools, a ruler's arms and steeds, a bureaucrat's records, or a wizard's enchantments. As a result, civilized societies form settlements, ranging from small villages to cities with a million or more inhabitants.

Most people in historical fantasy settings live in rural areas and work on the land or the sea, producing food, fiber, and fuel. Up until the 19th century, no country had even half its population living in cities. As a guideline, assume that 1/5 of the population is urban in a prosperous and well-settled land, 1/10 in a poorer land, and 1/20 in a barely civilized country. That does not mean that, for example, 1/5 of the settlements are cities! Cities and towns have bigger populations, so there are fewer of them. Suppose there are 800 villages, for example, and an urban population equivalent to 200 villages; if towns and cities average 10 times bigger than villages, there are only 20 towns and cities. A barely civilized country might have only one small city.

Isolates

In some historical places and times, and some fantasy settings, country people are thinly scattered. This lifestyle involves some tradeoffs. Each farmer's farmhouse rests in the middle of his own fields. He doesn't need his neighbors' approval for how he manages his farm, nor does their management affect him. He has a relatively short, straight journey from the farmhouse to the fields. On the other hand, in an emergency, the neighbors are far away. Isolated settlements occur in sparsely inhabited colonial lands, where good soil comes in small patches, and the law effectively controls banditry.

Isolates have small populations, less than 100 being typical. Their homesteads range from an American backwoodsman's log cabin to a Viking's farmstead to a Roman senator's slave-cultivated villa. Whatever their numbers or situation, they all work on the farm, whether as owners, hands, or slaves. Anyone attempting to find a hireling rolls at an extra -2; so does anyone looking for a job, except during harvest season, when it becomes an extra +2!

Villages

Villages form the other settlement pattern for farm communities: a group of houses built close together, with the land surrounding them divided among the inhabitants. Usually each farmer has the use of multiple strips of land scattered through a larger area. As a rule, everyone does the same work on the same days. Villagers can come to each other's aid in emergencies, such as attacks by wild animals or solitary outlaws. They can also share the cost of religious or magical ceremonies that make their farms more fertile.

Most villages have 100 to 999 inhabitants. Only very small villages, called *hamlets*, have fewer than 100. Most households in a village belong to farmers, but there's some division of labor. Job and hireling rolls have only the normal penalty for community size.

Living in a village requires a longer daily trip to the fields. If oxen travel at two miles per hour, it takes a farmer half an hour to get to a field a mile away. A circle a mile in radius has an area of just over 2,000 acres. That's a rough average for the cultivated area of a large village; once the trip to the fields takes longer than half an hour, some of the population will probably migrate away. Outside that area will be a strip of forest, hills, or wasteland, and beyond that the fields of the next village.

In a densely settled land, cultivated areas will actually be hexagonal instead of circular, bounded by the next village's fields, and taking up about 1,600 acres rather than 2,000. There won't be many trees, and farmers will cook over dried manure or charcoal imported from remote forests.

Manorialism

Many European countries, in the Middle Ages and later, had a manorial pattern, derived partly from Roman villa communities. Fantasy landscapes often organize along manorial lines, usually in idealized medieval worlds.

In manorialism, a village community grows up adjacent to a large single farm. Often slaves or serfs work the manor, but the villagers are mostly free farmers or farmhands. Generally, the village has more inhabitants than the manor, by a factor of two to five. The lord of the manor usually collects rents, taxes, or fines (if he runs the village's court of law). He also benefits from having a large labor pool to draw from, especially at harvest time. The villagers gain added security from living near the manor. Just having it there keeps some bandits away, and they may retreat inside its walls when attacked. This protection makes the lord's taxes and rents a comparatively good bargain.

Market Villages

Some craftsmen and other specialists cannot find enough work to support themselves in a single village. To minimize competition, they spread out among villages in a regular pattern. Visualize a set of hexagons. One specialist lives in the village at the center of each hexagon. There will also be a village on each side of each hexagon, halfway between two specialists. So each specialist gets all the trade from his home village and half the trade from each of six villages surrounding it, a total of four villages' worth. If each village can keep him busy one-fourth of the time, he can make a living.

A more elaborate trade network may have smaller and larger market villages; the larger ones provide services to larger areas, including smaller market villages.

Naturally, specialists of different kinds end up living in the same slightly larger villages. Many village economies have markets that open once a week or so. Operating such a market may require one or more specialists – an innkeeper, a scribe, or a watchman. So markets space out in roughly the same way; perhaps one

Idealized trade network in an agricultural economy, with four levels: ordinary villages, small market villages (typically holding a market every two weeks), large market villages (typically holding a market twice a week), and a town (every day a market day). Small settlements buy services from specialists centrally located in larger settlements, shown by arrows. Each settlement has its own roughly circular area of cultivated land. Realistically, differences in soil fertility and ease of transport would produce a less neat pattern; obviously, therefore, this map is not to any set scale.

village in four will have a marketplace. Market villages are somewhat larger than other villages, but still have 100 to 999 inhabitants.

Towns

Towns are larger versions of market villages. Because of increased demand, towns support specialists who provide services rarely needed in villages, such as armorers and jewelers. These craftsmen mostly deal with the wealthy (the richest one or two families in each village, who may be its lords). A normal town generates enough business that the market is open all the time, not just once or twice a week. Specialists make up a significant part of a town's population. They may keep gardens or raise pigs or chickens, but they get most of their food by selling their services, so food comes in from the countryside to feed the townspeople. Total population is typically 1,000 to 4,999.

Food costs more in a town, anywhere from 1 1/2 to 3 times as much as in the villages. Since food is the biggest cost of living, anyone who cannot earn enough in a town will move to a village.

Because towns have money, they both need and can afford protection. A typical town has at least a low wall, hard to climb over (8 to 10 feet, for example). Building walls is expensive, so the wall encloses as small an area as possible; and because it's safer inside the wall than outside, people crowd in, raising the population density. A town's built-up area occupies from 12 to 60 acres, at about 80 people per acre. A large town is typically about a quarter-mile across.

Openings in a wall are vulnerable to attack, and gatehouses to protect them are costly. So towns have only a few gates. The country roads pass through those gates and connect with the major streets; less important streets branch off from these. Most towns pay a gatekeeper for each gate, and often a night watchman to patrol the streets.

Cities

Cities are normally located at key points on major transportation routes: for example, on natural harbors, or on large, navigable rivers, typically at the upstream ends of the navigable portions. As a result, they can draw on areas larger than the local countryside for food. The next three population bands – 5,000 to 9,999, 10,000 to 49,999, and 50,000 to 99,999 inhabitants – include most of the large cities of history. A typical city with 50,000 inhabitants would occupy 625 acres, or just under a square mile, and would be about a mile across. This area isn't available for farming, and a large city won't have farmers among its residents, though it may have specialized enterprises such as vegetable gardens or vineyards.

People in all the common businesses, and even in some luxury trades, make cities their homes. Tradesmen compete for business with others in the same trade. They may organize guilds to keep out new competitors, legally or illegally. They may deliberately call attention to themselves through advertising (using the Propaganda skill). Or they may specialize in a particular product or service. If mages work for hire, a city may have several mages, and even a guild or school of wizardry.

Anonymity makes it possible for thieves to live in cities as permanent residents, instead of just passing through and carrying off whatever they can pick up. A thief can keep his

Agrarian Magic

The commonest setting for fantasy campaigns amounts to "Europe in the Middle Ages, but with magic." However, if magic is common, it may change the way people live, to the point where it no longer looks medieval.

Suppose, for example, that every village has either a mage who specializes in plant or weather magic, or a priest who serves a harvest god, with at least one or two spells at level 15. Any but the smallest village will have at least 100 adults and adolescents, and they'll probably be willing to contribute a minute or two of ritual in the morning to help bring in a good harvest. So what can 100 points do when spent on a spell?

Bless Plants: 100 points will double the crop yield for a season within a radius of 300 feet, or roughly 6.5 acres. Casting this over all the fields may take too much energy, but the built-up area of a village of 260 people will be about 6.5 acres – and there will be plenty of vegetable gardens there. The village may also use this spell on orchards or vineyards.

Heal Plant: 99 points will get rid of plant diseases and parasites within a 99' circle. Most plant infestations will end before they can spread.

Predict Weather: 90 points will generate a perfectly accurate weather forecast for the next month and a half. Farmers will know exactly when to plant and when to take precautions against bad weather.

Purify Earth: 100 points will remove foreign substances and add nutrients to the soil in a radius of 150 feet, which covers about 1.6 acres. Magic will ensure that the fields are fertile.

Rain: 100 points will make 1" of rain fall in a circle 1,000 yards in radius; that's an area of 649 acres or just over a square mile. Farmers will almost never lose crops to drought.

With just these five spells, a farm village can make every year a good year, and double the yield of its most important fields. Farmers can feed themselves on smaller fields, which means the same amount of magic will aid even more farms.

occupation secret by not practicing it in his own neighborhood, by stealing from travelers instead of locals, and by fencing his loot to a merchant who can ship it to another city. Many thieves, especially young ones, can also blend into the crowd of poor city people. For the same reason, corporeal undead, black magic cults, and other supernatural threats find cities a good place to look for victims.

As a transportation center, a city will have specialized facilities to support traffic. Most cities have docks or other support for ships. Cities on rivers have bridges. And cities often build major roads and have housing for draft and riding animals. Protecting the traffic is often a major goal for a city's rulers.

Most cities have at least some measure of self-government. Three common patterns are an independent city that controls the surrounding villages, a free city in a feudal system whose aristocrats control all the nonurban land, and a provincial capital in an empire or nation-state. A provincial capital may have few defenses, if it's in the interior of a pacified empire. A city-state or medieval free city will have substantial walls, typically over 30' high. In an emergency a city can send its entire adult male population, about 20%, to guard its walls; a city of 50,000, occupying a square mile, will have about 10,000 men to guard four miles of walls, or one man per yard and one-third of its men as a reserve. Conquering a defended city typically requires a prolonged siege.

City life has other hazards as well. Food costs at least twice as much as in the country. If there's a crop failure, the city will run out of food quickly. Large numbers of people crowded together create a higher risk of disease. Cities normally depend on immigrants from the country to maintain a stable population. Fire can spread quickly from building to building. Rumors can spread and mobs can form; a city's rulers have to worry about keeping order, and its minority groups may become targets of violence.

Temporary Settlements

A society that can't support a city on a year-round basis may have short-term gatherings that are as large as cities. The merchant fairs of the Middle Ages drew many buyers and sellers, often emphasizing one type of goods, such as cloth or books. The Althing in early Iceland gathered together people with legal disputes for settlements – and enforced attendance by outlawing anyone who failed to honor a summons. Many countries have religious festivals that draw large audiences. Nomadic societies can also have these events, which may be the only time large numbers of nomads gather.

Whatever the motive, such events are easier to support than full-scale cities. An area that can feed 100 permanent town residents can feed 36,000/N visitors, where N is the number of days an event lasts.

A variation on this pattern is the mobile royal courts of some medieval European societies. Kings and their retainers traveled through the country, visiting various noblemen and cities for a few days or weeks. This let a king maintain a larger household than any region could support. It also gave the king a weapon to use against annoying noblemen; he could drop in for a visit and stay until their supplies were exhausted, knowing they wouldn't dare ask him to leave. The same kind of calculation can determine how long a region can host a royal court of any given size.

Imperial Capitals

A city that has enough military power may overcome lesser city-states. The result is an empire, containing several cities with one dominating the others. Commonly the capital of such an empire is even larger than ordinary large cities, exceeding 100,000 inhabitants. The largest, such as Rome and various Chinese capitals, may attain a population of a million or more. As a rule, a pre-industrial world can only support one or two such cities at a time, in widely separated regions. Feeding their inhabitants requires access to highly productive farmland, such as Chinese rice paddies or the wheat fields of the Nile Valley, and secure, reliable transportation to the capital. Naturally, protecting commerce becomes one of an empire's top priorities. A city of this size doesn't just have the power to control a huge territory; it *needs* the huge territory to survive.

An imperial capital is a large city even by 21st-century standards; to anyone from a historical fantasy milieu, visiting it will be an unforgettable experience. Its sheer size will be overwhelming, with walls 5 to 15 miles long enclosing from 1 1/2 to 15 square miles. Even with this area, it will be crowded, with many of the residents living in multistory buildings. The streets will constantly be full of people. Businesses will be highly competitive and diversified; an occupation that would support a single specialist in any other city may have its own small guild.

The ruler's palace will be a virtual city in itself, though typically it will operate as a single gigantic household. Its staff won't be for hire in the usual sense, but "hiring" rolls describe the search for the right department to get something done. The palace may actually have its own walls, with restricted access even for other residents of the capital. The palace grounds will be works of art, and the buildings will be treasuries. In a decadent empire (see *Decadence*, p. 81), the residents of the palace may be concerned only with the microcosm of their own society, scarcely able to imagine the lives of the people outside. Savoir-Faire (High Society) may be *defined* by the actions of the court, and provincial nobles may hire instructors in proper courtly behavior.

City of Wonders

Because of its size and complexity, an imperial capital is naturally mysterious. No one can understand everything about how it works, and important decisions are made behind the scenes. In addition, as a wealthy economy, it has unusual goods for sale and arcane specialists for hire. Its name will be known in remote lands and attract a variety of travelers, from diplomats to merchants to pilgrims, often bearing exotic objects as gifts or merchandise. It may have a foreigners' quarter where people follow the strange customs of their native lands.

Even the gods may pay special attention to the imperial court. In a high fantasy setting, divine manifestations may surround it, or the gods may descend to make their wishes known or grant the ruler their aid. In a light fantasy setting, visits from gods and other supernatural beings may be common and disruptive; think of the trouble that fairy godmothers cause in classic fairy tales!

In short, imperial capitals have a magic of their own, which makes them natural settings for fantasy. A campaign can combine overt fantasy about a generally magical landscape with cryptic fantasy about more powerful magic, hidden by the very density of human beings on the crowded streets.

Old cities have even richer possibilities. Small cults or old families may preserve ancient customs and magics. If a city has stood in the same place for a thousand years, it almost certainly stands on the rubble of its own earlier buildings (see *Ruins*, p. 90). Who knows what might lie buried in the empty rooms?

Services

Whatever size the starting place is, adventurers need to find supplies, equipment, and services there.

Finding a service requires an IQ or Area Knowledge roll, modified by the size of the settlement: -3 if population is under 100; -2 if 100 to 999; -1 if 1,000 to 4,999; +0 if 5,000 to 9,999; +1 if 10,000 to 49,999; +2 if 50,000 to 99,999; and +3 if 100,000 or more. PCs may attempt one roll per day, but with cumulatively increasing difficulty, as the adventurers search through the obvious locations: -2 for each failed search. Any roll at -5 or worse automatically fails. This includes the modifier for the size of the settlement; in a community with 80 residents, the first failed search is the end, but in an imperial capital, up to four searches are possible.

It's easier to find larger establishments: -1 for a one-man shop, no modifier for two to five workers, +1 for six to 20, +2 for 21 to 100, and +3 for larger businesses. Apply this modifier *after* deciding if further search attempts are possible. For a single man with no fixed location, use the *Hireling* rules (see p. B517) instead.

Some services only deal with specific clienteles. Finding them requires a roll against an appropriate skill (or its IQ default) instead of IQ: Savoir-Faire for establishments that serve the upper classes, Streetwise for criminal establishments, Merchant for establishments that deal with a specialized trade, Administration for special-purpose government agencies, or Research for scholarly archives. At the GM's option, any of these skills may default to Area Knowledge in place of IQ for this specific type of search.

A service that actively seeks out clientele through advertising or other forms of public visibility has +5 to Area Knowledge. A service that makes systematic efforts *not* to be found has -5.

If, in the GM's judgment, the physical site that houses a service is highly visible, because of its size or noticeable features such as signs or steeples, no roll is required to locate the service.

Actually obtaining the service may require a reaction roll. If the prospective clients want a standard service and offer the standard price, don't bother with the reaction roll. Services that limit their clienteles react at -3 to inquiries from the wrong people, and a bad reaction may have unusually severe penalties.

If a service, its provider, or one of his employees is a Contact or Patron, no search is required, and obtaining services involves the usual processes for dealing with Contacts and Patrons (see pp. B44-45 and pp. B72-74).

If a settlement has several services of the same type, adventurers who don't find what they want at one can look for another. Start the search process over again, but with -1 for each provider already visited.

The contents of its window were curiously varied. They comprised some elephant tusks and an imperfect set of chessmen, beads and weapons, a box of eyes, two skulls of tigers and one human, several moth-eaten stuffed monkeys (one holding a lamp), a old-fashioned cabinet, a fly-blown ostrich egg or so, some fishing-tackle, and an extraordinarily dirty, empty glass fish-tank. There was also, at the moment the story begins, a mass of crystal, worked into the shape of an egg and beautifully polished.

– H.G. Wells, "The Crystal Egg"

Arms and Armor

In general, villages don't have armorers or dealers in combat gear. Even if there's a resident smith, he probably makes most of his living from shoeing horses (at TL3 and above) and repairing tools. However, adventurers looking for combat gear in a village do have several options:

Knives are often weapons as much as tools, but every smith knows how to make or sharpen them.

Many tools, from hatchets and mallets to pitchforks and shepherd's crooks, work as improvised weapons, typically at -1 to effective skill.

If hunting is legal or poaching is common, many villagers will have hunting weapons, such as bows, slings, or spears (or rifles, at TL4 and higher).

In some countries, the law requires every man to have light infantry weapons for militia duty. The Norman kings of medieval England required regular archery practice, for example.

Availability of serious military weapons varies with historical conditions. In an unsettled era, individual landowners may have to fight off bandits, or mercenary forces may hire out their services. Armorers and arms dealers will supply them with weapons. If society is generally peaceful, or a powerful ruler wants to keep weapons out of private hands, armorers may work exclusively for the state. Roll vs. Streetwise to find a black market dealer, or Administration to figure out which official might divert weapons from their intended uses. Persuading him to do it will take a lot of money and influence rolls.

If weapons are legally available, any town will have an armorer or arms dealer. He'll provide ordinary gear out of inventory. Expensive weapons such as swords, elaborate armor, and horse barding, or any gear of Fine quality, must be custom-made. Payment is half at the start and half on delivery.

In a city, an armorer may have such gear in stock, and several armorers will probably compete. Use the repeated search rules. Cities are also large enough to have self-sustaining underworlds with their own armorers. A Streetwise roll can locate a supplier for weapons banned by local law, at -2 for each level by which the weapon's LC falls short of the local CR.

Cities often employ mercenary companies. These companies often have members with Armoury skills. Their services will mostly be committed to their own companies, of course, but the right approach to the armorer or the captain of the company may work wonders.

Imperial capitals have that status only because they're able to repulse rebels and invaders. The imperial bodyguard will almost certainly have the best equipment bought or made. If the weapon shops are all owned by the empire, gaining access to their products will be difficult and perilous . . . but if private merchants or armorers compete to supply the troops, one may be willing to do an extra job for a small private band of adventurers with the right credit rating. And if another country makes high-quality or exotic weapons, an arms merchant, a wealthy aristocrat, or an eccentric member of the imperial family will have some in his collection.

Medical Care

The most basic medical facility is a secure place to rest and heal. This is available almost anywhere, except during a war or other disaster.

Many TL0 societies, and all societies at TL1 and above, have specialists in medical care, whether they use surgery, herbal potions, or divine blessings. Starting at TL2, armies have their own medical specialists. Intelligent and conscientious soldiers know how to dress wounds and assist surgeons. In some armies, they may become surgeons; others may recruit civilian physicians for military medical care.

For a wider range of medical skills, many societies turn to the gods. Some temples have priests trained in healing magic or medical skills; they may also operate hospitals. Cities of any size have professional physicians and surgeons. Normally they come to the sick person's house and provide care there, and family members nurse the sick. Nonmagical remedies are mostly straightforward and manageable without specialized training, given directions from a physician.

More advanced techniques, such as reconstructive surgery, are available in some societies. Only guilds or other associations of specialists will teach them. They need not be magical, but will be as mysterious to most people as if they were.

Transportation

Transportation falls into three main types: land transport, river transport, and seagoing transport. Historically, land transport is five times as costly as river transport, which is five times as costly as seagoing transport. Shipping thousands of tons of grain from Egypt to Rome cost less than hauling it over roads in Italy.

Villages must form on fertile land, since the majority of their residents work that land. However, trade supports the towns. They naturally form in locations where traders and other travelers are common. And they invest in making travel easier by building roads, bridges, canals, or docks. Towns concentrate on small facilities that support local trade; cities and imperial capitals build larger facilities for long-distance trade. An imperial capital can afford to create a port city for its shipping, or construct a network of roads for its armies and merchants.

Adventurers intending to travel long distances may want to join a caravan, or take passage on a ship – or on a balloon or flying carpet, in a more exotic setting. Whatever form of long-distance travel is prevalent will be available mainly in cities.

Inns and Taverns

Nearly every human community bigger than a single household has a place for people to eat, drink, and socialize. In a communal economy, this is a private club, and gaining admission requires a local sponsor. It may even be religiously based, only open to worshippers of the same god. In a market economy, it will be a business. Small businesses may sell only recreational substances, usually alcohol, though chocolate, coffee, tea, and tobacco are other possibilities. Many taverns also sell food, or give it away. Such gathering places don't usually have lodgings for travelers; a traveler staying in a village will need to find a household with a spare bed.

In a setting with regular traffic, market villages will have inns and hostels. Often the inn will also be the main tavern. The innkeeper will probably be

a prominent citizen. Inns operate along major trade routes, even far from settled lands, but they become more rare, often more than a day's ride apart, with large enough staffs to deter banditry, and often with walled compounds. These inns will charge high prices for food and lodging.

In communal economies with little trade, inns won't exist. Travelers can become guests of local residents, paying with small gifts (roll vs. Savoir-Faire to choose something suitable) and news of the outside world, or they can stay at temples or monasteries. People in such societies often consider guests sacred. A host must allow even a sworn enemy, once invited under his roof, to leave in peace. These customs may persist for a time while regular trade is developing. Travelers may find lodging at monasteries or prosperous households – or fall into the company of robbers and murderers – more often than they find actual inns. Obtaining lodging calls for a reaction roll: Fair for a large household or monastery with spare rooms, Good for ordinary households.

Cities often have more specialized businesses. Restaurants may serve expensive or exotic food and host banquets. Large inns or caravanserais offer lodging. The streets may also be crowded enough to support wandering vendors who sell the local food. If a city has religious or recreational gatherings, food and drink vendors will often attend them. It's possible to search for any of these specialized types of establishments rather than just looking for "a tavern" or "an inn."

Lodging places in market economies actively advertise for customers, giving +5 to rolls to find them. Places that are exclusive to a particular clientele are an exception.

Information Sources

In any setting, people may have questions and will search for places to get answers. But different kinds of answers will be available and different sources will provide them. The kinds of knowledge sources vary with the TL.

Whatever the information source, the obscurity of the question modifies the knowledge rolls. Modifiers generally range from +5 for matters of common knowledge to -5 for obscure points that even scholars usually don't know.

Folklore

Folklore is the knowledge of people who don't specialize in knowing things. Part of it is an individual's accumulated life experience; part is the common property of a community; part is small secrets passed from parent to child, or master to apprentice.

Most times, adventurers don't need to go to anyone for folklore. They're folk, as much as anyone else is – they can remember folk knowledge with a roll against IQ. At most, they may find it helpful to visit the wisest man in their community and ask his advice. On a Good or better reaction, he'll take an active interest in the question; roll against his IQ to determine if he knows anything.

Adventurers who have traveled to a foreign country can't use IQ to learn about local conditions. Instead, they roll against Area Knowledge, if they have that skill, with modifiers for distance from their native area. Or they look for a local informant. Anyone whose profession involves talking with a lot of people is a suitable choice – innkeepers and priests, for example. Adventurers in their own countries may need similar help with unfamiliar social strata; finding someone with Savoir-Faire or Streetwise will help. Usually this consultation calls for a reaction roll; a Neutral response is good enough to get a chance of helpful information, since casual local knowledge will be new to visitors. Adventurers who have already been in an area for a while may have a Contact.

Bardic Lore

In nonliterate societies, people develop methods for remembering information. One of the oldest is writing poetry about it. Every human culture has the equivalent of "Thirty days hath September." In nonliterate societies, the skill of Bardic Lore (p. 99) includes all the sorts of information that literate societies put into reference books. In literate societies, Bardic Lore mostly includes archaic information, which may be obsolete nonsense or perilous secrets or a little of both. TL0 societies rely on Bardic Lore, and TL1 societies still use it for many things. By TL2, the oral tradition is fighting a losing battle with written records.

Consulting a bard requires finding one. Most bards travel from place to place. An inn or a minor noble's court may have a bard visiting or passing through. A major court probably has a resident bard. Once the bard is located, apply the standard reaction rolls for requests for information, rolling against the bard's Bardic Lore skill if he feels inclined to help.

Scribal Records

Written records originally served official purposes; they recorded who owned which plot of farmland, or the terms of a contract, or who had paid his taxes. Professional scribes keep these records. Most scribes are government employees; some are in private practice. In either case, they live mostly in cities, starting at TL1.

Getting a scribe to consult his records requires a Good or better reaction for any unknown information. The actual consultation requires a Research or Administration roll by the scribe.

If adventurers are literate, they could sneak into an archive and find the records they need. Since they won't know the filing system, this calls for a Research-2 roll to locate anything useful.

Scholarly Libraries

At TL2, flexible writing systems encourage the writing of books that people read, instead of looking things up in them. The old bardic traditions start to fade, or transfer to written scriptures or epics. Somewhat later, scholars start to collect libraries. Any city will probably have an educated man who has such a library. An imperial capital, or a city such as Alexandria that specializes in knowledge, may have a great archive with tens of thousands of books.

An individual scholar has a library for his field he consults when answering any question that isn't obvious. This doesn't require a Research roll. If he has no access to his books, he rolls against the appropriate skill at -5 (-2 if he has Eidetic Memory; no modifier if he has Photographic Memory).

If that fails, he can go to the best institutional library available – or adventurers can go there themselves, either asking the help of a librarian or using their own skills. Finding a relevant book calls for a Research roll. This is unmodified for the library of a monastery, school, or town; +1 for the library of a city; and +2 for the library of an imperial capital or a world-renowned institution such as the Library of Alexandria.

The Printing Press

With the invention of the printing press, books become far more widespread, as does literacy. The libraries of great cities and major universities grant +(TL/2), rounded down, to Research skill. Because many copies of a book can be produced in a short time, the concept of publication date becomes meaningful, and librarians catalog books and journals partly by when they first appeared. Over a few centuries, standardized book cataloging develops.

The printing press also makes possible the rapid growth of science, as the results of scientific research can quickly reach a substantial audience. First publication of a new discovery is important to scientific reputation, leading to bitter priority disputes; some scientists publish cryptic notes about their findings or put them in code.

At the same time, magical theories draw increased interest, often from the same people. Magic may not have the same standards of publication as science; public recognition for magical discoveries might create a bad reputation instead of a good one. Hints, incomplete results, and codes and ciphers are much more common in books on magic; the uninformed reader usually finds them to be gibberish.

Courts and Castles

Adventurers often have to deal with the rulers of their societies. If successful enough, they may *be* the rulers. Less powerful adventurers often work for the rulers, whether as members of their households, mercenaries, or unacknowledged agents. And even adventurers avoiding official ties may come before the rulers to face lawsuits or criminal or ecclesiastical charges – or need to get in, by force or stealth, to rescue imprisoned friends.

In historical fantasy settings, the rulers are often landowners. Land is the main source of wealth. It's also the most respectable source of wealth. From Roman senators to feudal lords, the upper classes agreed that a man who makes money in trade dishonors himself.

That doesn't mean the landowners actually live on their land. In medieval societies, this was common, and it is even more so in medieval fantasy. However, the rulers of the ancient world often lived in city-states and had stewards to manage the land for them. Roman senators had the same preference, though they might have huge estates centered on palatial villas. During the High Middle Ages and Renaissance, European countries developed a pattern where minor nobles lived in the villages, but great nobles came to the royal court and attended the king.

Feudal societies had a further complication: their rulers found it hard to collect taxes from peasants who rarely touched money. Instead, they assigned land to their knights; the knight lived on the land and collected rent from the peasants in exchange for supporting the king. Naturally, this turned from a temporary administrative convenience into a permanent right.

The lower ranks of the nobility have just enough wealth to support one man, with expensive military gear and freedom from labor so that he can practice using it. From the Roman Empire through the age of chivalry, "expensive military gear" included a horse trained for the battlefield. Earlier, TL1 noblemen owned chariots and chariot ponies, or were supplied with them by their kings. Above these village lords are the upper nobility, with enough land to support other elite warriors as personal retainers – from a handful to a small army. The most powerful noblemen are on the level of the weaker kings.

In disorderly eras, such as the Middle Ages or much of Japanese history, nobles live in castles with elaborate fortifications. Cities often grow nearby important noble residences. To get into the private residence of a noble, adventurers must pass through one or several guard stations, offering a good reason for admission, and sometimes paying bribes. In cinematic treatments, sly groups could disguise themselves as servants and sneak in, or find conveniently unguarded tunnels or low walls. Realistic nobles are often suspicious enough to close such convenient access routes, or guard them. In less suspicious eras, a noble may invite in any traveler asking politely, to tell his story or present his petition for aid.

Even in a suspicious and disorderly society, though, rulers want their subjects to know where to find them. There is no need to roll to find a castle. Usually a ruler's court is large enough to have at least a bonus from size. The court and the residence are usually in the same building, but admission to the court is much easier to arrange. There may be several distinct areas with progressively higher security. Access to these, if not gained from Rank or Status, is a type of Security Clearance (p. 130).

Dungeons

In feudal societies, the aristocrats are also the judges and law enforcers. This means that castles and strongholds have dungeons – not abandoned ruins filled with monsters, treasures, and traps, but well-guarded prisons holding criminals, heretics, enemies, or other inconvenient people.

Imprisonment wasn't as common in historical societies as it is in present-day societies. Keeping a man locked up is expensive. He must be fed, provided for, and prevented from escaping. Imprisonment isn't a common punishment. Past societies favored punishments that could be completed: temporary unpleasant experiences such as fines, whippings, or public humiliation, or permanent injuries such as confiscation of property, mutilation, or death. Imprisonment was for people who were too wealthy and powerful for a convenient execution – the sort of people who ended up in the Tower of London or the Bastille – or was a temporary measure, to keep a prisoner available until trial.

A prisoner might require interrogation or punishment, and often this meant torture. So a dungeon may have a torture chamber nearby, whether equipped with improvised devices or with the most sophisticated implements a twisted mind might devise. A scaffold, headsman's block, or other place of execution is also likely. Any adventurer taken into custody will probably see such threatening apparatus, a hint of his fate if he fails to cooperate . . . or to escape.

Holy Places

Nearly every settlement has at least one sanctified place; religious activities take place there, such as prayer and sacrifice. If gods are real, they pay attention to those activities and places. As a result, shrines and temples acquire high sanctity (see *Sanctity,* below), whether they had it to start with or not. However, they may start out that way in the first place. If a god or spirit frequently spends time somewhere, visibly or invisibly, anyone interested in gaining divine notice will go there, and the resulting worship will add to its sanctity. It's also possible to take a physical relic of the god to a site intended for a new shrine, letting its holiness become the seed of new sanctity.

Sites of worship have boundaries or enclosures; not only do these mark out the limits of sanctified ground, but the very act of drawing limits has a ceremonial effect that enhances sanctity. Typically, each temple's grounds are a high-sanctity area, or occasionally a very-high-sanctity area. These grounds often contain holy objects, images of divinity, and items used in worship. In an empire or other large polity, an entire city may have high sanctity.

The smallest sites are *shrines*, usually built in an alcove or corner of a house, or in a sheltered place on a city street or public road. A shrine has no priest assigned to it; an inscription or image shows which god it honors, and anyone who passes may stop to pray or make an offering. Any village, farm, or even household may have a shrine. Only the interior of the shrine is high sanctity.

Sanctity

Some fantasy settings have parallel systems of standard magic and clerical magic, or have *only* clerical magic. In the same way that standard magic works differently in environments with lower or higher mana, clerical magic works differently in environments with lower or higher sanctity. But there are important differences between mana and sanctity. The levels of sanctity aren't simply the levels of mana with different names.

What gives an area sanctity? It may be the actual presence of the god (or spirit) to which it's sacred, or of things that concern the god; for example, a dryad inhabiting a tree may sanctify the grove where it stands. But it may also be regular worship of the god in a certain location. Or there may be actual ceremonies that can consecrate a place to a god. In other words, human activity strongly influences the level of sanctity, where magery depends mainly on the natural environment.

Mana levels usually remain the same in areas miles across, or even hundreds of miles (see *Unevenly Distributed Magic*, p. 43). But human worship usually occupies much smaller areas. The worshippers need to see and hear the ceremony, and a sense of enclosure gives a stronger feeling of sacredness. So holy areas may be as small as a park, a temple, or even an alcove that holds a shrine or relic.

Sanctity, with respect to any particular god, ranges from "holy ground" down to "cursed ground":

Very High Sanctity (Holy Ground): Places most strongly consecrated with respect to the god in question: the most ancient temples, sites where the god came into the world and performed miracles, etc.

High Sanctity (Blessed Ground): Natural places where the god's power is particularly strong due to his sphere of influence (e.g., a live volcano, for a fire god). Any location specifically consecrated to that god (e.g., ordinary temples).

Normal Sanctity (Neutral Ground): Most places in the world, most of time (including the temples of other gods that aren't explicitly opposed to the deity in question).

Low Sanctity (Unhallowed Ground): Natural places where the god's presence is weak as a result of his sphere of influence (e.g., the sea, for a fire god); any site of high sanctity to a diametrically opposed deity.

No Sanctity (Cursed Ground): Any location explicitly and formally desecrated with respect to the god in question; any site of very high sanctity to a diametrically opposed deity.

Several types of human action can affect a place's sanctity level. *Consecration* is a ritual performed by someone with Clerical Investment. It raises a place's sanctity level from normal to high or very high.

Deconsecration is performed by a priest of the god and reduces a place's sanctity level from holy or blessed to normal. *Desecration* is performed by a priest of an opposed god, and reduces a place's sanctity. *Purification* removes evil influences and increases an area's sanctity. If an opposed god inhabits the hostile place, of course, the purification is a desecration from his viewpoint!

Pollution is any action that a god finds offensive, performed by anyone, with or without deliberate intent. Minor pollutions can be cleaned up through ordinary rituals of atonement or purification, which anyone with Clerical Investment can usually perform; they rarely take a place to worse than low sanctity. Major pollutions can remove all sanctity; they're as bad as intentional desecrations. It can take truly heroic measures to restore a holy place that has suffered a major pollution.

Temples and *churches* are public buildings dedicated to a god. Such a building will normally house a priest, either in residence or nearby. A larger temple will have a staff of up to a dozen priests, including one with Religious Ritual-14 or higher, and may have other personnel. Some religions have specialized officiants for functions involving the shedding of blood, such as sacrifices and guarding against intruders. Any community with more than 100 inhabitants may have a temple; any community with more than 1,000 may have a large temple, and one with more than 5,000 definitely will have. Both the building and the site it stands on are high sanctity. A large temple may have a sacred relic.

Great temples and *cathedrals* are important sites for a widespread religion. In a polytheistic religion, they will be devoted to the religion's principal god or gods. A great temple may have dozens of priests, or even hundreds, especially in a bureaucratic religion where many priests have administrative duties. In any case, it will have an internal staff with Administration skill. High-ranking priests will have Politics skill, in addition to some priests with very high Religious Ritual and Theology. The temple will normally be a multi-building complex, often in the form of a walled compound. Some great temples are effectively independent cities, such as Delphi. The entire site will be high sanctity, and an inner cell may be very high sanctity. Great temples usually keep major relics.

A *sanctum* is a private place of worship, reserved to the use of a cult or society. Temples enclose sancta in secured buildings, build them into hidden places, or place them in remote natural areas such as sacred groves where they're locked or fenced off. They may also have divine protection to turn away intruders. The ground in a sanctum is high sanctity.

Priests at high-sanctity sites can cast divinely granted spells, if any are available in their faiths, or call on other powers of their god. But in addition to this, the god himself may protect his holy places. Intruders and blasphemers may find themselves under supernatural attack by spells cast by the god, by spirits serving the god, or by other supernatural powers. Many gods have the power of Affliction on high-sanctity ground.

Temples that are sites of public worship gain the same +5 on location rolls as courts or castles.

Magical Capabilities

For an analysis of the levels of magical capability for settlements of various sizes, see *How Many Mages?* (p. 103).

In a setting where magic is rare, cities won't normally have mages at all. Mages may attach themselves to the courts of great rulers, live in isolated sites where they pursue personal goals, or wander from place to place as their services are needed. In a world where magic is common but stigmatized or illegal, openly acknowledged mages will find safety in similar roles.

If magic is everywhere, it will integrate into everyday life. The same is true if enchanted items are common. Since anyone, not just a mage, can use most of them, they may give everyone access to a few useful spells – or they may be the jealously guarded prerogatives of specialized guilds or professions. Magical academies may also exist in the larger cities.

She had graduated already, coming first in English, equal first in Music, third in Mathematics, seventh in Science, second in Fighting Arts and fourth in Etiquette. She had also been a runaway first in Magic, but that wasn't printed on the certificate.

– *Garth Nix,* ***Sabriel***

Magic as Infrastructure

"Allied trades" may be found along with magical general practitioners. These groups of people know only a few spells, but their services would be useful enough to repay them for learning those spells. In villages, this will often be the domain of hedge wizards (see the *Hedge Wizard* template, p. 119). In cities, magical universities or trade guilds may offer formal training. Anyone whose (IQ + Magery) score is 13 or less will be guided into one of these trades. Here are some examples of useful occupations that a practitioner with IQ 12 and Magery 0, or IQ 11 and Magery 1, can enter with no more than 12 points of training:

Entertainer: Sound-12 [4], Simple Illusion-12 [4], Complex Illusion-12 [4].

Schools for Sorcerers

Schools of magic appear in many fantasy stories, from Roke in Ursula Le Guin's *A Wizard of Earthsea* to Unseen University in Terry Pratchett's Discworld series to Hogwarts in J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series. Such settings often apply to light fantasy, but are not confined to it; Le Guin's treatment ranges between high fantasy and dark fantasy.

Schools of magic must meet several conditions to be viable. It has to be *possible* to study magic; if magical is the gift of the gods, or gained through ritual ordeals or freakish accidents, or otherwise more like an advantage than a skill, there won't be schools to teach it. Magic has to be directly useful; if its main use is to enhance nonmagical skills, making warriors better warriors or smiths better smiths, then warriors and smiths will learn it during their regular training, not at arcane academies. Finally, enough potential mages have to exist so that training them as a group is more economical than apprenticing each one to a local wizard or witch. This can occur either in a high-mana world (or one where Magery is commonplace) where most intelligent people can learn magic, or in a normal-mana world where potential mages travel long distances to master their art.

Firefighter: Ignite Fire-12 [4], Extinguish Fire-13 [8].

Food Tester (very popular at royal courts!): Test Food-13 [8].

Gardener: Seek Plant-12 [4]; Identify Plant-12 [4]; Heal Plant-12 [4].

Ghostfinder: Death Vision-12 [4]; Sense Spirit-13 [8]. (Requires Magery 1.)

Healer: Lend Energy-12 [4], Lend Vitality-12 [4], Minor Healing-12 [4]. (Requires Empathy or Magery 1.)

Illuminator: Light-12 [4]; Continual Light-13 [8].

Messenger: Haste-12 [4]; Quick March-13 [8]. (Requires Magery 1.)

Witness to Truth of Testimony: Sense Foes-12 [4], Sense Emotion-12 [4], Truthsayer-12 [4].

Behind the Curtain: How Many Mages?

A civilization's magical capabilities depend on how many people can cast spells, and how well they do it.

In normal-mana or low-mana settings, only people with Magery can cast spells or use the most potent magical objects. The setting determines how many people have Magery. Most fantasy stories treat magically gifted people as unusual or even rare. But this doesn't have to be true. Nearly all the human beings in a fantasy world could have Magery 0.

In some worlds, people can acquire Magery, either through special training in meditative exercises, or visualization, or by being magically empowered. Magery might still be rare, if the cost of gaining it is high . . . but it might also be commonplace.

If Magery is rare, anyone with it will learn some spells. Someone with Magery 1 should learn Lend Energy first, so he can supply 6 energy per hour to a higher-level spellcaster. If Magery is commonplace, some mages will never develop their talents. In particular, those with Magery 0 who aren't naturally gifted at casting spells – as measured by IQ and levels of Magery – may prefer to become swordsmen, priests, or gardeners. The same is true for a high-mana setting where spellcasting doesn't require Magery 0. Whether people study spells will depend mostly on the level of skill they expect to attain. There are several important skill thresholds:

Skill 10: Spells work only half the time, making them marginally useful. They are only for emergencies.

Skill 12: Spells usually work; the caster can get a job as a mage.

Skill 14: Spells work nearly always and are reliable in a crisis.

Skill 15: Spells have reduced energy cost, making them easier to maintain. Enchantment becomes possible.

Skill 16: Critical failures are rare; the caster is a master mage.

Skill 20: Spells have substantially reduced energy cost; enchantment works even in low-mana areas.

Unlike ordinary workers or soldiers, whose jobs require only a handful of skills, most mages need one or two dozen spells. This takes enough time to prevent prolonged study of more than one or two spells. Mages normally spend only 1 point on most spells. Most spells are IQ/Hard, so that 1 point gets them at IQ + Magery - 2; for example, an enchanter with IQ 15 and Magery 2 can reach level 15 for 1 point. In the preceding list, add 2 to each skill level to find the equivalent (IQ + Magery).

Considering only IQ (and assuming Magery 0 is common or unnecessary), every community has people with IQ 11-12. In a common-magic setting, every village has a hedge wizard who knows a few basic spells, and one or two advanced ones. Every town or city has people with IQ 13-14, so at least every small city has a professional mage with formal training in intermediate-level spells. A large city, or a county, duchy, or small country without medium or large cities, will have people with IQ 15-16. A large country will have people with IQ 17-18, capable of becoming enchanters or affecting the outcome of a battle. People with IQ 19-20 will be found somewhere in an entire world, but there will be only a few. If the public tolerates magic, some mages will be world-famous. In low-mana worlds, they may be capable of making enchanted objects.

Adding levels of Magery into the calculation improves the odds a bit. Magery is effectively a specialized Talent for working magic; it's reasonable to suppose, for example, that people with IQ 14 and Magery 1 are more common than people with IQ 15, but less common than people with IQ 14. Higher levels of Magery are less common and won't affect the distribution nearly as much. Figuring Magery into the equation means that a community that would otherwise have one mage of a given type will now have a handful, and a community that is marginally too small will now have one. For example, any medium or large city would probably have a single enchanter.

Making Magery 0 rare shifts the odds. If one person in 10 has Magery 0, professional wizards will only live in medium or large cities; if one person in 100, only in imperial capitals – or in a less centralized world, in large cities that specialize in offering magical services. On the other hand, training can help overcome this; if magic has useful effects, anyone with Magery 0 may be recruited and taught just two or three useful spells. See *Magic as Infrastructure*, p. 102, for some examples.

Chapter Six
Characters

A knight of the Table Round should be invincible,
Succeed where a less fantastic man would fail:
Climb a wall no one else can climb,
Cleave a dragon in record time,
Swim a moat in a coat of heavy iron mail.
No matter the pain he ought to be unwinceable;
Impossible deeds should be his daily fare.

– Alan Jay Lerner,
"C'est Moi" (from ***Camelot****)*

In his stumbling Elvish, Ing said, "I seek Valakal of the Wind." His own wind was nearly gone; he had just climbed a quarter-mile on a steep, narrow path cut into the rock. The elf-woman said something too fast for him to follow, and nodded toward the edge of the great sea cliff.

Drawing near to it, Ing had to remind himself that a Northman didn't show fear. He had climbed trees and ships' masts, but now, if he stepped closer to the edge, he could look down at *Sea Otter*'s mast, from many times its height. Carefully, he took that one step, and then another . . . and there was his new friend, at the cliff's very edge.

Valakal turned, moving casually, and came back toward him. "You're just in time," he said. "The reavers ought to be coming into sight today; I was going to have a look for them."

Ing shaded his eyes with his hand, and looked out to see. Nothing, not even the top of a sail. "Your eyes are keener than mine," he said, "if you can see them coming."

"Ah, but Elven eyes see over the horizon! And yours can too, my friend. I'll show you the secret." Valakal led him along the cliff, to where several tall, unusually well-muscled elves stood waiting around . . . what was it? Some kind of Elven boat, very lightly built as they all were, but with a sort of sail reached out flat to each side, like . . .

"Wings? Like a bird's wings?"

"You have the eyes that see true, and that's a rare gift in mortal men," Valakal said. "Yes, like the wings of a great gliding bird, or like the sails of your ship. As the wind blows past a sail and pushes the ship forward, the wind blows past Keen Eyes and pushes it upward, and so it carries us through the air. Us, that is, if you wish to go out with me!"

"And my weight won't overburden your craft?"

Valakal looked at him appraisingly. "You weigh more than an elf," he said, "but not that much more. I think I can get you back down."

And so Ing found himself in the rear seat, as half a dozen elves lifted the winged craft and ran at full speed toward the edge of the cliff.

Actually playing a fantasy campaign starts with creating the characters. Fantasy stories and campaigns commonly emphasize adventure, and a certain mix of skills has become customary in both: combat, stealth, and spellcasting, the specialties of warriors, rogues, and wizards. But advisory and support specialists such as the healer or the scholar can be useful too, and offer roles for players who want to try something different.

Campaign Styles and Point Values

Fantasy novels include characters at a wide range of power levels, often in the same story. Roleplaying campaigns generally need a narrower range. Too wide a gap leaves the low-point-value characters without much to do. But if a campaign will have a standard point value, what should that point value be?

In low fantasy, and in fantasy based on folklore and fairy tales, point values below 100 often work well. An ordinary man thrown into adventure can be a 50-point character. In higher fantasy, characters built on 100-200 points work better; the added points can represent the Rank, Status, and Wealth of aristocrats, or the skills of veteran adventurers such as the heroes of sword and sorcery. In a dark fantasy setting, PCs may need the added points just for survival! Still higher point values are possible, but move the campaign to the level of epic, with heroes who can contend with the gods or challenge fate. This chapter assumes that the base for typical characters is 100 or 150 points, with up to 50 or 75 points in disadvantages.

Racial Templates

The following templates define various fantasy races in ***GURPS*** terms. These designs illustrate the creation of races and offer versions of most fantasy standards, plus a few more unusual types such as devilfish. GMs should feel free to make up additional races to suit the needs of their campaigns.

Not all of these templates are suitable for player characters in every campaign. GMs are free to set character point limits that make some templates prohibitively expensive, to disallow specific templates, or even to forbid PCs of any nonhuman race. Some more powerful templates, such as the djinni and dragon, will be unsuitable in the majority of campaigns. GMs can still use such templates to design NPCs that a group of adventurers may encounter.

Because racial templates are completely rigid, list them on a character sheet as a single trait – for example, "Dwarf [35]." An unusual member of a race, who lacks a typical racial trait, can have its absence listed as an individual trait on his character sheet; for example, a dwarf might have "No Stubbornness [5]."

Centaur

90 points

A centaur is a six-limbed being with the head, arms, and torso of a man emerging from the shoulders of a horse. An average centaur weighs about 1,200 lbs. and is 3 hexes long. Centaurs attack with a variety of weapons, but can also kick to the rear (doing thrust as crushing damage).

Centaurs are highly mobile, nomadic, and famed for their untamed behavior. They own no more than they can carry, though that can be a substantial weight. Centaur tribes usually trade for a small range of goods: beer or wine, salt, and iron for horseshoes. Many of them have traits such as Berserk and Compulsive Carousing. However, a few centaurs became scholars famed for their wisdom. One such was Chiron, the tutor of several mythical Greek heroes.

Attribute Modifiers: ST+8 (Size Modifier, -10%) [72]; IQ-1 [-20]; HT+2 [20].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: SM +1; Per+1 [5].

Advantages: Claws (Hooves) [3]; Enhanced Move 1 (Running) [20]; Extra Legs (Four Legs) [5]; Fearlessness 1 [2].

Disadvantages: Impulsiveness (12) [-10]; Overconfidence (12) [-5].

Quirks: Compulsive carousing; Finds the trappings of domesticated horses – saddle, harness, stables, etc. – particularly odious. [-2]

Devilfish

70 points

Devilfish are creatures of the oceans, favoring reef environments, though they can leave the water for a short time when necessary. Despite their name, they are neither devils nor fish, but intelligent cephalopods resembling large octopuses. They communicate by skin pattern changes and use those same changes to cast spells (see *Nonhuman Magic*, p. 167). Devilfish technology was spawned from magic; their underwater habitat prevents them from using fire, which they regard as a mysterious and deadly force. They compete constantly for status, often based on skill in magic and rank in magical societies (see *Rank*, p. 130). Unlike other cephalopods, they care for their offspring and pass on knowledge and wealth to them.

Devilfish are more or less globular, averaging 4' in diameter, and weigh about 200 lbs. A devilfish's normal first move in combat is to grapple (at up to +12 if using all his arms); his size gives him a 1-yard reach. Once he has immobilized the foe he will attempt to bite him, inflicting thrust-1 large piercing damage.

From Creature to Character

One source for additional races is animal/creature descriptions, whether from the ***Basic Set*** (*Animals and Monsters*, p. B455), from this book (p. 46), or from a sourcebook for a particular fantasy world. Abbreviated creature statistics can translate into full racial templates, allowing creation of characters belonging to those races. Racial templates can also be used to define a companion animal that is a PC's Ally (see p. 132, *Ally or Asset?*) or to define the animal form(s) of a shapeshifter (see the selkie and werewolf templates here, for examples).

First, turn the creature's attributes into racial attribute modifiers. An attribute score above 10 turns into a racial attribute bonus; one below 10 turns into a racial attribute penalty. The cost is unchanged; for example, DX 8 costs -40 points, so a racial modifier of -2 to DX costs -40 points.

Now, compute the base values for the secondary characteristics. If the actual secondary characteristics are higher or lower than this, treat the difference as a secondary characteristic modifier, at the usual point cost. Animal species usually have IQ 5 or less, but wild animals usually have Perception 12. For example, a tiger has IQ 4 but Per 12; as a template, this would be IQ -6 [-120] and Per +8 [40].

Sort the list of traits into advantages, disadvantages, perks, and quirks. Assign each its appropriate point value. List meta-traits such as Quadruped with their combined point values, either as advantages or as disadvantages. In a fantasy setting, a creature may have an emblematic trait; include that as a racial advantage or disadvantage. Add any other traits needed to define the species fully.

Any skills included in the creature statistics should also be in the racial template; they are either instinctive or learned in childhood by every normal member of the species. For a wild animal species, include Survival for its native habitat at Per (usually Survival-12).

It's also possible to create an upgraded version of an animal template, to represent either a superior animal or a sapient animal. Remove the Fixed IQ Taboo Trait, raise the racial IQ (typically by 1 point for a superior animal; at least to IQ 6 for a sapient animal), and remove or reduce mental disadvantages. For example, Bestial [-10] can be removed; Hidebound [-5] can be reduced to Dull [-1], a quirk; for sapient animals, Cannot Speak [-15 or -25] can be removed (a sapient animal's only distinctive trait is usually Dull). When increasing IQ, decrease Per bonuses to give the same final Per score.

Superior Horse

75 points

Gods and legendary heroes often have extraordinarily gifted horses, such as Odin's Sleipnir, Alexander the Great's Bucephalus, and Gandalf's Shadowfax. Such a horse might have the following template.

Attribute Modifiers: ST +12 (No Fine Manipulators, -40%; Size, -10%) [60]; DX -1 [-20]; IQ -5 [-100]; HT +1 [10].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: SM +1; Will +6 [30]; Per +7 [35]; Basic Move +5 [25].

Advantages: Claws (Hooves) [3]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Empathy [15]; Enhanced Move 1 (Ground) [20]; Fit [5]; Higher Purpose (Devotion to Rider) [5]; Peripheral Vision [15].

Disadvantages: Cannot Speak [-15]; Quadruped [-35]; Social Stigma (Valuable Property) [-10].

Quirks: Dull. [-1]

Skills: Brawling-10 (DX+1) [2]; Mount-13 (DX+4) [16].

Notes: This template is based on the cavalry horse (see p. B459). IQ is increased by 2 points; HT is increased by 1 point, which gives a Basic Speed of 5. Will and Per bonuses are reduced to give unchanged final scores of 11 and 12. Increase Basic Move to 10, faster than a typical racehorse, to reflect the legendary capabilities of superior horses. Include advantages Fit. Empathy and Higher Purpose, and the adjustment of Mount skill to DX+4, reflect the horse's extraordinary bond with his rider. Reduce Hidebound to Dull to reflect superior equine intelligence.

The greatest legendary horses might have even higher point values; raising Fit to Very Fit, giving them levels of Hard to Kill, or raising their IQ would be appropriate.

For a race of sapient horses, such as the Houyhnhms of *Gulliver's Travels*, keep the same physical traits, but raise IQ to 10 or even higher, and remove Cannot Speak, Dull, and Social Stigma. Among the Houyhnhms, it was human-shaped beings, the Yahoos, who counted as (possibly) valuable property!

Some devilfish join the Abyssals, a secretive cult of the deeper oceans, lured by the promise of secret magical power. Abyssals have a Dread of sunlight and cannot come within three yards of the ocean's surface by day.

Attribute Modifiers: ST+1 (Size, -10%) [9]; DX-1 [-20]; IQ+1 [20]; HT+1 [10].

Advantages: Absolute Direction (Only by Day, -20%) [4]; Chameleon 2 [10]; Constriction Attack [15]; Doesn't Breathe (Oxygen Storage When Out of Water, 25×, -50%) [10]; Enhanced Move (Water; ×2; Costs Fatigue, 1 FP/minute, -5%) [19]; Extra Arms 6 (Extra-Flexible, +50%; No Wounding, -50%; Modifiers apply to normal arms) [60]; Flexibility [15]; Injury Tolerance (No Neck) [5]; Magery 0 [5]; Night Vision 3 [3]; Sensitive Touch [10]; Teeth (Sharp Beak) [1].

Disadvantages: Cannot Speak (Mute) [-25]; Cold-Blooded (Below 50°) [-5]; Colorblindness [-10]; Deafness [-20]; Innumerate [-5]; Invertebrate [-20]; Selfish (6) [-10]; Semi-Aquatic [0]; Short Lifespan 1 [-10].

Quirks: Dislike of fire. [-1]

Features: Cannot tell shape of objects by touch; Doesn't Breathe (Gills; Breathes Water Only).

Abyssal

0 points

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: Will +1 [5].

Advantages: Dark Vision [25] replaces Night Vision; Power Investiture 1 [10]; Pressure Support 2 [10].

Disadvantages: Curious (12) [-5]; Disciplines of Faith (Asceticism) [-15]; Dread (Sunlight, 3 yards) [-12]; Fanaticism [-15].

Djinni

247 points

Arabic legends say that Allah made men from earth, but djinn from smokeless fire (see *Spirits in the Material World*, p. 30). The natural form of a djinni is a cloud of vapor, which can be either visible or invisible. Djinn can also materialize in the shape of tall, powerfully built humans (determine height and weight according to the rules for Gigantism, p. B15). When dematerialized they can only speak in peculiar breathy whispers.

Djinn as a race have great magical power and often are mighty sorcerers. This template does not include spells, but nearly all djinn know Food and Illusion spells (pp. 169 and 170). They are proud by nature, but some are obedient Muslims.

Attribute Modifiers: DX+2 [40]; IQ+2 [40]; HT+2 [20].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: SM +1; HP+5 (Size, -10%) [9].

Advantages: Alternate Form (Materialized Djinni) [15]; Body of Air [36]; Doesn't Eat or Drink [10]; Invisibility (Carrying Capacity, No Encumbrance, +10%; Normally On, +0%; Switchable, +10%) [48]; Magery 3 [35]; Unaging [15].

Disadvantages: Dread (Solomon's Seal; Occasional) [-10]; Disturbing Voice [-10].

Quirks: Proud. [-1]

Materialized Djinni

200 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST+5 (Size, -10%) [45]; DX+2 [40]; IQ+2 [40]; HT+2 [20].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: SM +1.

Advantages: Appearance (Very Handsome/Beautiful) [16]; Magery 3 [35]; Unaging [15].

Disadvantages: Dread (Solomon's Seal; Occasional) [-10]; Gigantism [0].

Quirks: Proud. [-1]

Dragon

300 points

These dragons are a version of the winged, fire-breathing reptiles of European myth. This template represents a large, old dragon, more powerful than the template on p. B261. It is usually a major foe for a team of heroes, though it might be a Patron or even an Ally for a great hero or wizard.

Dragons eat only meat, and it takes a lot of it to sustain their huge bodies and fast metabolisms. A full-grown dragon needs a hunting territory with a radius of 10 to 20 miles. As a result, dragons are fiercely territorial. Each male dragon has his mountaintop domain, from which he watches for gold, rivals, and threats from human adventurers, often drawn by his hoard.

Dragons have a passion for gems and precious metals; the reason is uncertain. It may be a mating ritual, since legends mainly describe male dragons as hoarding. Dragons are incredibly passionate about their wealth and enraged at losing any of it.

All dragons are capable of using magic, and most learn spells. Their intelligence may be a byproduct of their magical natures.

A dragon on this scale weighs 3,000 to 5,000 lbs. and has a 30' wingspan. His claws inflict thrust cutting or impaling damage; his bite causes thrust-1 impaling damage; and his fiery breath does 4d burning damage.

Attribute Modifiers: ST+20 (Size, -40%) [120].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: SM +4; Will+3 [15]; Per+3 [15].

Advantages: Burning Attack 4d (Cone, 5 yards, +100%; Limited Use, 6/day, -10%; Reduced Range, ×1/5, -20%) [34]; Claws (Long Talons) [11]; Discriminatory Smell [15]; DR 6 (Can't Wear Armor, -40%) [18]; Eidetic Memory [5]; Enhanced Move 1 (Air) [20]; Extra Attack [25]; Extra Legs (Four Legs) [5]; Flight (Winged, -25%) [30]; Hard to Kill 5 [10]; Longevity [2]; Magery 1 [15]; Night Vision 8 [8]; Striker (Tail; Crushing) [5]; Teeth (Fangs) [2].

Disadvantages: Bad Grip 3 [-15]; Gluttony (12) [-5]; Greed (12) [-15]; Horizontal [-10]; Miserliness (12) [-10].

Dwarf

35 points

Dwarves are a race of miners, metalworkers, and craftsmen. They live underground, which is their workplace and protection from enemies. Dwarves are small but strong and enduring, with highly developed combat skills. They may become alchemists or specialize in enchanting, if they are magically gifted, but few dwarves practice other sorts of magic. Many have Magic Resistance.

Dwarves might be only 2/3 as tall as humans, but they are much longer-lived, with a nose for gold and a flair for all forms of craftsmanship. Dwarves often live in underground halls, and their eyes are adapted to dim light. Many dwarves have Miserliness, but this is not a racial trait.

Attribute Modifiers: HT+1 [10].
Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: SM -1; Will+1 [5].
Advantages: Alcohol Tolerance [1]; Artificer 1 [10]; Detect Gold (Vague, -50%) [3]; Extended Lifespan 1 [2]; Lifting ST +2 [6]; Night Vision 5 [5].
Disadvantages: Greed (15) [-7].

Elf

70 points

Elves are the quintessential fantasy race: very similar to humans (and cross-fertile with them, in many settings), but exceptionally beautiful, ageless, and naturally magical. Some descriptions make them superb artists, while others say that they ultimately lack creativity; this version avoids either option, while making them sensitive to the beauty of landscapes and living creatures. Elves normally live in forested areas. They use their magic to enhance the growth and fertility of their forests. Survival rolls in an elven forest are at +1 or better. They find clearing the land repugnant, and since elven leaders have centuries of skill in warfare, elven forests tend to stay forested.

Elves are comparatively slender, relying on speed and agility more than raw strength. Determine their height normally from their ST and add 2".

Attribute Modifiers: ST-1 [-10]; DX+1 [20].
Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: Per+1 [5].
Advantages: Appearance (Attractive) [4]; Magery 0 [5]; Perfect Balance [15]; Telescopic Vision 1 [5]; Unaging [15]; Voice [10].
Racially Learned Skills: Connoisseur (Natural Environments) (A) IQ-1 [1]-9.

Faerie

140 points

Faeries are a naturally magical race. Their bodies are magically created, with little actual substance (see *Insubstantiality*, p. 128). This lets them change their appearance and apparent size freely. Many of them are masters of magic, though their spells cannot create or change anything substantial (see *Nonhuman Magic*, p. 167). Among other things, the touch of iron dispels faerie magic, and iron weapons are especially deadly to the faeries. Faeries can wear, handle, or even consume illusions. Many of them are skilled in illusion spells and in using Art (Illusion) to shape illusionary objects.

Attribute Modifiers: DX+2 [40].
Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: Per+2 [10]; Will-2 [-10]; Basic Speed +0.5 [10].
Advantages: Appearance (Very Handsome/Beautiful) [16]; Chameleon 5 [25]; Doesn't Eat or Drink [10]; Insubstantiality (Carrying Capacity: No Encumbrance, +10%; Always On, -50%; Illusionary Form, -15%) [36]; Magery 0 (Impermanent, Dispelled by Iron, -20%) [5]; Morph (Cosmetic, -50%) [50]; Unaging [15].
Disadvantages: Dependency (Mana, Constantly) [-25]; Impulsiveness (12) [-10]; Vulnerability (Iron, ×3) [-30].
Quirks: Annoyed when mortals talk about them; Keep their promises. [-2]
Features: Can use illusionary objects as if they were substantial; Felt as ghostly touches by material beings; Must take on winged shape to move vertically.

Variant Races: This version of faeries is only one interpretation! Portraying them as creatures of illusion explains their ability to change size and shape, their lack of need for food, and various other traits. But other versions are certainly possible: material beings, like elves, who always veil themselves in magical illusions, or true spirits who only take on visible form when it suits them.

Ghoul

0 points

Though as mortal as humans, ghouls are often confused with undead beings because they need to feed on the dead. The only food that sustains them properly is human flesh, though it doesn't have to be freshly dead. A ghoul who eats other meat in an emergency must roll vs. HT. On a failure, his HT attribute decreases by 1; on a critical failure, retching incapacitates him (see p. B429). Ghouls can only regain lost HT with medical care, usually from a ghoul physician – physicians of other races seldom study the special dietary needs of ghouls.

Ghouls can pass for human, especially if they conceal their sharp

teeth, but they look slightly unappealing. A ghoul who has recently eaten or handled human remains may cover the unpleasant smell by washing or using perfumes.

A ghoul's bite inflicts thrust-1 cutting damage.

Attribute Modifiers: ST+2 [20].

Advantages: Acute Taste and Smell 2 [4]; Night Vision 5 [5]; Reduced Consumption 4 (Cast-Iron Stomach, -50%) [4]; Silence 1 [5]; Teeth (Sharp Teeth) [1].

Disadvantages: Appearance (Unattractive) [-4]; Restricted Diet (Human Flesh; Substitution, Other Flesh, -50%) [-10]; Secret (Imprisonment or Exile) [-20]; Skinny [-5].

Variant Race: This template represents a ghoul who is passing for human. A ghoul who lives in hiding and sneaks out to feed replaces Secret (Imprisonment or Exile) with Social Stigma (Monster) [-15], raising racial template cost to 5 points.

Halfling

20 points

Short and fond of comfort, halflings seldom leave their farms, but those who do sometimes make surprisingly good adventurers, thanks to natural stealth, superb marksmanship, and resilient health. They're not at their best in a stand-up fight, but make fine skirmishers, with thrown rocks, slings, bows, crossbows, or even muskets. The ability to move noiselessly through grass or underbrush also helps. Halflings seldom seek out a fight. They are fairly egalitarian, with chieftains but no kings. Many cultures expect chieftains to give feasts and hand out presents to the guests.

By choice, halflings live underground, in shabby burrows or elaborate tunnel complexes. The ones who build aboveground are the poor.

An average halfling (ST 5) stands 2'8" to 3' tall and weighs 18 to 29 lbs. (This takes Overweight into account.) Adjust height by 1 to 2" and weight by 2 to 4 lbs. per point of ST above or below 5.

Attribute Modifiers: ST-5 [-50]; DX+1 [20]; HT+2 [20].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: SM -2; Will+2 [10].

Advantages: Green Thumb 1 [5]; Hard to Kill 4 [8]; Silence 4 [20].

Disadvantages: Mundane Background [-10]; Overweight [-1].

Quirks: Fond of food and drink; Prefers to live underground. [-2]

Imp

125 points

Imps are the small change of hell, just capable enough to cause mischief and frustration. They tempt their mortal victims into minor sins of anger. This requires a Quick Contest of the imp's Will against the victim's HT. If the imp wins, the target has Bad Temper (12) for one minute per point of success. The imp's roll is at -1 per yard of range.

Imps can't physically manifest on the material plane and thus their actions speak louder than their appearance. To those who can see spirits they appear as very small, repulsive humanoids, about 18 inches tall, like children with unnaturally nasty expressions.

Attribute Modifiers: ST-8 [-80]; IQ-1 [-20].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: SM -4; Per+2 [10]; Basic Speed+1 [20].

Advantages: Affliction 1 (Disadvantage: Bad Temper (12), +10%; Malediction, +100%) [21]; Infernal Rank 0 (p. 130) [0]; Magical Spirit [80]; Unmanifested Spirit [149].

Disadvantages: Appearance (Ugly) [-8]; Callous [-5]; Dread (Holy Objects) [-10]; Duty (Tempt or harass mortals; Nonhazardous; 12 or less) [-5]; Enemy (Celestial hierarchy; 6 or less; Rivals) [-10]; Enemy (Immediate infernal superior, 6 or less; Watcher) [-2]; Odious Personal Habit (any) [-5]; Selfish (6) [-10].

Variant Race: Bad Temper is only the most common effect of an imp's attack. Other sorts of imps can inflict other disadvantages, usually mental ones such as Bully (12) or Jealousy, though some imps favor Unluckiness. Some imps simply have the Difficult Speech meta-trait; they can speak, usually whispering to a single victim, at a cost of 1 FP for each brief utterance.

Myrmidon

In ancient Greek myth, the myrmidons were warriors magically created from ants. When humans encountered a sapient insect race, scholars gave it the same name. Myrmidons look like ants, but stand erect on a single pair of legs, using the other two pairs for manipulation. Like ants or termites, they have castes of workers, warriors, and breeders or "queens," plus an extra caste of "priests" who preserve the memory of a nest. Adventurers are likely to encounter only the first two castes; the others remain hidden inside the communal nest.

A myrmidon is the same weight as a human of equal ST. A worker myrmidon's height is also the same; a warrior myrmidon is 25% taller. Warrior myrmidons have sharp, intimidating beaks that inflict thrust-1 large piercing damage. Either workers or warriors can use weapons, but workers are ineffective combatants.

Cold Iron

Accounts of the faeries often say that they are vulnerable to "cold iron." What that means is widely disputed; some recent sources suggest native iron metal from meteorites or iron worked without heating it.

In older literary works, any iron may count as "cold iron." The word *cold* doesn't define a special type of iron, but describes iron in general, as "red blood" describes blood in general. Rudyard Kipling's poem "Cold Iron" says that cold iron gained its special powers by being used to nail Christ to the cross . . . and the Roman legions weren't using rare meteoric iron for executions. This book's treatment of faeries assumes that all iron hurts faeries and defines iron as Occasional. In a campaign where only some special form of iron is effective, it is Rare.

Worker

0 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST+1 [10]; IQ-1 [-20]; HT+1 [10].

Racial Advantages: Discriminatory Taste [10]; DR 2 [10]; Extra Arms 2 [20]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Payload 6 (Liquids Only, -40%) [4]; Peripheral Vision (Vulnerable, -20%) [12]; Social Chameleon [5]; Single-Minded [5].

Disadvantages: Combat Paralysis [-15]; Deafness [-20]; Hidebound [-5]; Mute [-25]; Selfless (6) [-10].

Quirks: Sexless. [-1]

Warrior

100 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST+2 (Size, -10%) [18]; DX+1 [20]; IQ-1 [-20]; HT+3 [30].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: SM +1; Per+2 [10].

Racial Advantages: Combat Reflexes [15]; DR 3 [15]; Extra Arms 2 [20]; Extra Attacks 1 [25]; Fearlessness 2 [4]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Payload 2 (Liquids Only, -40%) [1]; Peripheral Vision (Vulnerable, -20%) [12]; Social Chameleon [5]; Single-Minded [5]; Teeth (Sharp Beak) [1].

Disadvantages: Bloodlust (12) [-10]; Deafness [-20]; Hidebound [-5]; Mute [-25]; Selfless (6) [-10].

Quirks: Sexless. [-1]

Orc

-9 points

Orcs are to humans what humans are to elves: short-lived, shortsighted, aggressive, and disliked. All this makes them the natural warrior race of many fantasy worlds. With short generations and intense territoriality, orcs have split into many subspecies. These statistics are for an orc the same weight as a human, but about 2" shorter because of bowleggedness and a squat overall build. Other breeds may be larger or smaller.

Attribute Modifiers: IQ-1 [-20]; HT+1 [10].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: Basic Speed+0.75 [15].

Advantages: Acute Taste and Smell 2 [4]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Fearlessness 2 [4]; Fit (Only at Night, -20%) [4]; Infravision [10]; Rapid Healing [5]; Resistant to Disease (+3) [3].

Disadvantages: Appearance (Unattractive) [-4]; Bad Temper (12) [-10]; Callous [-5]; Disturbing Voice [-10]; Impulsiveness (12) [-10]; Sadism (12) [-15]; Unfit (Only by Day, -20%) [-4].

Quirks: Bowlegged. [-1]

Behind the Curtain: Selkie Design

To illustrate the mechanics of Alternate Form, here are the computations for the point cost of the selkie template. The template cost of the base form is 89 points; subtracting the point cost for Alternate Form, 13 points, leaves 76 points. The point cost of the human form is 80 points, an excess of 4 points. The base cost of Alternate Form is 15 points plus 90% of 4 points, totaling 19 points. A -35% limitation reduces this to 12.35 points, rounding up to 13.

Selkie

90 points

A selkie is a seal with the peculiar ability to remove his skin and turn into a man. If a selkie's skin is lost, stolen, or destroyed, he's trapped in his mortal form. Selkies are one of the faerie races and share the common weakness of that kindred for iron. However, their bodies are fully substantial in both forms (in contrast to the Faerie template, p. 108). In human form, they're exceptionally handsome, with graceful movements.

A selkie in seal form can inflict thrust-1 cutting damage with his teeth.

Attribute Modifiers: DX+2 (No Fine Manipulators, -40%) [24]; HT+2 [20].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: Per+2 [10].

Advantages: Alternate Form (Human Form; Skinbound, DR 1, Repaired by Healing Rolls, SM -4, Can Be Stolen by Stealth or Trickery, Does Not Work for Thief, Unique, -35%) [15]; DR 1 [5]; Doesn't Breathe (Oxygen Storage ×25, -50%) [10]; Enhanced Move 2 (Water; Handling Bonus +5, +25%) [50]; Fur [1]; Nictitating Membrane 1 [1]; Penetrating Voice [1]; Perfect Balance [15]; Pressure Support 1 [5]; Teeth (Sharp Teeth) [1]; Temperature Tolerance 1 (Cold) [1]; Unaging [15].

Disadvantages: Chummy [-5]; Colorblindness [-10]; Horizontal [-10]; Impulsiveness (12) [-10]; No Fine Manipulators [-30]; Semi-Aquatic [0]; Vulnerability (Iron; ×2 Damage) [-20].

Quirks: Distractible; Sexually attracted to mortals. [-2]

Skills: Survival (Ocean) (A) Per+1 [4]-13.

Selkie Human Form

80 points

Attribute Modifiers: DX+2 [40]; HT+2 [20].

Advantages: Appearance (Handsome/Beautiful) [12]; Charisma 1 [5]; Perfect Balance [15]; Unaging [15].

Disadvantages: Impulsiveness (12) [-10]; Vulnerability (Iron; ×2 Damage) [-20].

Quirks: Sea-aspected moods. [-1]

Skills: Acrobatics (A) DX [2]-12*; Sex Appeal (A) HT+4 [2]-16†.

* +1 from Perfect Balance.
† +4 from Appearance.

Troll

This version of the troll is based on folklore; for an alternate version, see ***GURPS Bestiary.*** Male and female trolls have different templates. Female trolls have almost always studied magic and are often skilled enchanters; male trolls rely on strength. Both sexes are larger than most other humanoid races, though not as large as giants. Their greatest weakness is turning to stone in sunlight. Trolls are incapable of learning to read but have retentive memories and a large body of oral tradition.

Male trolls average 900 to 1,400 lbs.; female trolls average 400 to 600 lbs. Increase or decrease weight by 100 lbs. per point of difference from racial average ST. Both sexes average 8 to 9' tall; the difference is in bulk, not height. Adjust height by 3" per point of difference from racial average ST.

Male Troll

70 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST+10 (Size, -10%) [90]; IQ-2 [-40]; HT+4 [40].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: SM +1; Per+2 [10].

Advantages: Acute Hearing 2 [4]; Amphibious [10]; Breath-Holding 2 [4]; Combat Reflexes [15]; DR 4 [20]; Discriminatory Smell [15]; Extended Lifespan 1 [2]; Fearlessness 4 [8]; Photographic Memory (Preparation Required: 1 hour, -50%) [5].

Disadvantages: Appearance (Ugly; Not to Own Kind, -25%) [-6]; Bad Temper (12) [-10]; Disturbing Voice [-10]; Dyslexia [-10]; Gluttony (12) [-5]; Nocturnal (Permanent Paralysis: Turn to Stone, +100%) [-40]; Odious Racial Habit (Eats sapient beings) [-15]; Social Stigma (Monster) [-15].

Quirks: Code of Honor (Carries out spoken agreements); Uncongenial. [-2]

Features: Night Vision 8 (Visually impaired by day).

Female Troll

65 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST+5 (Size, -10%) [45]; IQ-2 [-40]; HT+4 [40].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: SM +1; Per+2 [10].

Advantages: Acute Hearing 2 [4]; Amphibious [10]; Breath-Holding 2 [4]; DR 2 [10]; Discriminatory Smell [15]; Extended Lifespan 1 [2]; Fearlessness 4 [8]; Magery 4 [45]; Photographic Memory (Preparation Required: 1 hour, -50%) [5]; Single-Minded [5].

Disadvantages: Appearance (Ugly; Not to Own Kind, -25%) [-6]; Disturbing Voice [-10]; Dyslexia [-10]; Nocturnal (Permanent Paralysis: Turn to Stone, +100%) [-40]; Odious Racial Habit (Eats sapient beings) [-15]; Social Stigma (Monster) [-15].

Quirks: Proud; Uncongenial. [-2]

Features: Night Vision 8 (Visually impaired by day).

Vampire

80 points

This vampire, from Eastern European folklore, differs from the one on p. B262. It doesn't gain control of those it infects with vampirism. Its Dread is limited to objects actually imbued with divine power, such as a consecrated host, though a symbol of divine power in the hands of anyone with True Faith can intimidate it. It doesn't suffer from Draining, as fantasy vampires often go much longer than a day without feeding. It picks up some additional advantages from the Intact Undead meta-trait as well. This version can recover from injury by immersion in blood (at the GM's option, contact with blood may restore 1 HP) or through Vampiric Bite, which grants the ability to inflict thrust-1 cutting damage by biting.

The basic vampire is mainly a combat monster; for the more mystical powers of vampires, see *Vampire Mage* below.

Attribute Modifiers: ST+9 [90].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: HP+6 [12]; Per+2 [10].

Advantages: Acute Taste and Smell 2 [4]; Doesn't Breathe [20]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Immunity to Metabolic Hazards [30]; Injury Tolerance (No Blood, Unliving) [25]; Night Vision 5 [5]; Temperature Tolerance 10 [10]; Unaging [15]; Unkillable 2 (Vulnerability: Wood, -50%) [50]; Vampiric Bite [30].

Disadvantages: Dependency (Coffin with soil of homeland; Daily) [-60]; Divine Curse (Cannot enter dwelling for first time unless invited) [-10]; Dread (Garlic) [-10]; Dread (Holy objects; 5 yards) [-14]; Dread (Running water) [-20]; Infectious Attack [-5]; Supernatural Features (No Body Heat*, No Reflection, Pallor*) [-16]; Uncontrollable Appetite (12) (Human Blood) [-15]; Weakness (Sunlight; 1d/minute) [-60]; Unhealing (Partial) [-20].

Quirks: Ages temporarily when unfed. [-1]

Features: Can be turned by those with True Faith; Sterile.

* Except after feeding.

Vampire Mage

135 points

Some vampires can learn a special magical discipline (see *Blood Magic*, p. 167) that draws on their peculiar nature when working magic. Access to spells through this discipline is the source of many of the more impressive legendary powers of vampires. Ordinary vampires lack those powers, being mainly very dangerous combatants in a physical fight. A trained vampire mage has the skill of Ritual Magic (Vampiric Blood Magic) and spells based upon it.

Attribute Modifiers: IQ+2 [40].

Advantages: Magery 0 [5]; Speak With Animals (Wolves and bats only, -60%) [10]; Vampire [100].

Features: Magic powered by blood pool rather than FP (see *Blood Magic*, p. 167).

Werewolf

29 points

This is more or less a classic horror movie werewolf: ferocious, nearly indestructible but vulnerable to silver weapons, driven to change under the full moon, and coming back to human form with only vague, troubled memories – the victim may mistake this for Nightmares. A victim's bite transmits this form of lycanthropy, which is why it's treated as a racial template.

In wolf form, a werewolf inflicts thrust-1 cutting damage by biting.

Advantages: Alternate Form (Wolf; Nuisance Effect: Partial Amnesia, -10%; Trigger: Full Moon, -40%) [48].

Disadvantages: Compulsive Behavior (6) (Lycanthropy; Trigger: Full Moon, -40%) [-18].

Quirks: Unnatural Feature (Any one classic mark of lycanthropy). [-1]

Wolf Form

25 points

Attribute Modifiers: DX+2 (No Fine Manipulators, -40%) [24]; IQ-4 [-80]; HT+2 [20].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: Will+6 [30]; Per+8 [40]; Basic Move+3 [15].

Advantages: Discriminatory Smell [15]; DR 1 [5]; Fur [1]; Night Vision 2 [2]; Penetrating Voice [1]; Regeneration (Regular) [25]; Teeth (Sharp Teeth) [1]; Temperature Tolerance 1 [1]; Unkillable 1 [50].

Disadvantages: Bad Temper (12) [-10]; Berserk (12) [-10]; Infectious Attack [-5]; Loner (12) [-5]; Quadruped [-35]; Vulnerability (Silver, ×3) [-30]; Wild Animal [-30].

Undead Lenses

In a fantasy setting, the spirits of the dead may continue to watch and influence the world of the living. Given strong enough motivation or compulsion, they may even re-enter it as apparitions or walking corpses. The active dead aren't truly a race; racially, a dead man is still a man and a dead dragon is still a dragon. But various types of active dead beings have distinctive sets of traits. These are presented here as lenses that can be added to a suitable racial template to represent an undead member of that race.

Ancestral Spirit

125 points

In ancestor worship, the living honor and propitiate their dead kindred, and the dead may retain some power to influence the fates of the living. For the most part, they retain the personal and racial traits they had in life, seldom learning anything new. The following lens defines their change of condition:

Advantages: Honest Face [1]; Unmani-fested Spirit [149].

Disadvantages: Hidebound [-5]; Maintenance (Two people; Weekly) [-10]; Odious Personal Habit (Bossy) [-5]; Sense of Duty (Family) [-5].

Feature: Able to curse disrespectful descendants or bless devoted ones.

Notes: If you do not receive weekly maintenance, a failed HT roll makes your Invisibility (part of your Unmanifested Spirit trait) unreliable; you may be seen, especially by your descendants and especially in moments of crisis. If this doesn't do any good, you can curse them with various afflictions: Nightmares and Unluckiness are common. You can also grant blessings to descendants who please you. This ability has no point cost to *you*. However, any descendant who takes you as an Ally does so with the enhancement "Special Abilities" (+50%). If you grant him benefits such as increased Fatigue or advantages, these have the limitation "Granted by Ancestral Spirit" (-40%). Similarly, if you inflict harm on a descendant, he buys you as an Enemy with the same enhancement, and buys whatever harm you inflict on him as disadvantages with the same limitation.

Ghost

175 points

A ghost is the spirit of a dead person, returned to haunt the living. Ghosts are normally invisible, but can become visible when it serves their purposes. Typical ghosts can do no physical or magical harm, but cause unreasoning terror in witnesses. Ghosts are preoccupied with the circumstances of their deaths or with other unfinished business from their lives and have little interest in anything else.

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: SM 0; Will +2 [10].

Advantages: Apparition [2]; Difficult Speech [21]; Terror [30]; Unmanifested Spirit [149].

Disadvantages: Flashbacks (Severe) [-10]; Hidebound [-5]; Incurious [-5]; Obsession (9) [-15].

Quirks: Carries signs of his obsession or of the manner of his death; Haunts a specific place. [-2]

Features: Can be exorcised; Can be turned using True Faith.

Lich

105 points

A lich is a powerful wizard or sorcerer who has used potent spells to transform himself into an undead being. The wizard may have deliberately sought death, seeing the undead form as more powerful and less vulnerable, or simply kept the necessary spells in reserve until he was dying from other causes. If his death was at the hands of mortal foes, he may be eager for vengeance against them.

This template does not include Magery, spells, or other areas of knowledge. The wizard needs to have those *before* he becomes a lich! On the other hand, being undead grants unique insights into the nature of death; hence the racial skill modifier.

Attribute Modifiers: ST-1 [-10]; DX+2 [40]; HT+2 [20].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: HP+3 [6]; FP+3 [9].

Advantages: Doesn't Sleep [20]; Skeletal Undead [68]; Unfazeable [15].

Disadvantages: Dependency (Mana; common; constantly) [-50]; Fragile (Unnatural, Mitigator: Potion, monthly, -70%) [-15].

Features: Can be turned using True Faith.

Racial Skill Modifiers: +1 to Thanatology [2].

Wight

80 points

Many cultures bury their dead with grave goods, ranging from a small sample of their wealth to a vast hoard. Those especially attached to their goods may return from the dead to guard them or avenge their theft. Most tomb guardians were originally human, but this lens could apply to other races; a dragon, for example, might be unwilling to surrender his hoard even in death.

Skeletal wights are only one option; some wights are mummified instead. That template costs 67 points. The other classic "tomb guardian" undead, the mummy, is fairly similar.

Attribute Modifiers: ST+4 [40]; DX+2 [40]; HT+5 [50].

Advantages: Dark Vision [25]; Fatigue Attack 1d (Hazard: Freezing, +20%; Melee Attack, Reach C, Cannot Parry, -35%) [9]; Indomitable [15]; Magic Resistance 4 [8]; Single-Minded [5]; Skeletal Undead [68].

Disadvantages: Dependency (Grave goods; Daily) [-60]; Disturbing Voice [-10]; Frightens Animals [-10]; Hidebound [-5]; Incurious [-5]; Unhealing (Total) [-30]; Weakness (Sunlight, 1d/5 minutes) [-60].

Feature: Can be turned using True Faith.

Player-Designed Races

In a setting with multiple races, some players will want to define new races for their characters. GMs should approach this idea with caution. Racial design allows more freedom than character design. It does not limit disadvantages and allows the selection of exotic or supernatural advantages and disadvantages. This design gives a GM freedom to describe a race accurately. But this same freedom may allow players to create over-powerful characters.

The simplest way to handle this is to limit race creation to the GM. In a world with only a few intelligent races, this is easily justified. However, a GM may want to create a world where new races crop up regularly. A different approach may be useful in such a setting: allow players to choose freely from the lists of racial and super advantages and disadvantages, but limit any disadvantages to a total of half the standard starting points – in other words, treat them like character disadvantages.

Occupational Templates

Occupational templates are standard patterns for adventurers of various types. Each specifies appropriate attributes, secondary characteristics, advantages, disadvantages, and skills. Skills are divided into primary skills, which are absolutely necessary; secondary skills, which are helpful but not necessarily mastered; and background skills, which a character could pick up incidentally in a given occupation or position. Finally, customization notes suggest ways to adapt a template to a different version of the underlying concept.

Most of these templates define actual occupations and have attached job descriptions. For descriptions of less adventurous jobs, see *Jobs*, p. 138.

The majority of these templates are built on 75 points; they can be used in a 100-point campaign with points left over to individualize characters built on the same template. Upgrades of some templates provide 125-point versions to fit into a 150-point campaign. A few higher-powered templates have only 125-point versions.

The template system is a convenience, not a requirement. GMs may choose not to use templates in their campaigns; if they use templates, they may allow characters created with and without templates to play side by side. Templates give no discount on point cost and have no game effect that might unbalance characters. A template is simply a list of choices that work well together in character creation, designed to lessen the work of coming up with well-balanced characters.

Because occupational templates offer choices in character design, actually listing the template on the character sheet is pointless. Instead, use it as a guide to creating the character, and record all the specific choices of attributes, advantages, disadvantages, skills, and other traits.

Archer

75 points

This template works for any light missile troops who provide support to cavalry or heavier infantry. The longbow is the classic weapon, but other options are available.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 12 [40]; IQ 10 [0]; HT 10 [0].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-1/1d+2; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 10 [0]; Per 10 [0]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 6 [10]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Acute Vision 2 [4]; Fit [5]; Striking Strength 2 [10].

Disadvantages: **-**20 points chosen from among Bloodlust [-10*]; Chummy [-5/-10]; Code of Honor (Soldier's) [-10]; Duty [-2 to -15]; Overconfidence [-5*]; Sense of Duty (Comrades) [-5]; Stubbornness [-5]; Wealth (Struggling) [-10].

Primary Skills: One 12-point package chosen from the following: Bow (A) DX+2 [8]-14 and Fast-Draw (Arrow) (E) DX+2 [4]-14; Crossbow (E) DX+2 [4]-14 and Fast-Draw (Arrow) (E) DX+3 [8]-15; Fast-Draw (Ammo) (E) DX+3 [8]-15 and Guns (Musket) (E) DX+2 [4]-14; Sling (H) DX+2 [12]-14; or Thrown Weapon (Spear) (E) DX+4 [12]-16.

Secondary Skills: Hiking (A) HT+1 [4]-11; Soldier (A) IQ [2]-10. *One* of Camouflage (E) IQ+1 [2]-11 or Stealth (A) DX [2]-12. *On e* of Knife (E) DX+1 [2]-13; Shortsword (A) DX [2]-12; Smallsword (A) DX [2]-12; or Shortsword (A) DX-1 [1]-11 *and* Shield (E) DX [1]-12.

Background Skills: Survival (any) (A) Per [2]-10 and *one* of Brawling (E) DX+1 [2]-13; First Aid or Savoir-Faire (Military), both (E) IQ+1 [2]-11; Armoury (Missile Weapons or Small Arms) or Leadership (A) IQ [2]-10; or Observation or Tracking, both (A) Per+2 [2]-12†.

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

† Includes +2 from Acute Vision 2.

Job Description

Archers serve in the army as light infantry.

Prerequisites: Weapon skill 12+; HT 10+.

Job Roll: Weapon skill. On critical failure, in peacetime, lose job; in wartime, suffer 3d injury.

Monthly Pay: $340.

Wealth Level: Struggling. Supports Status 1.

Artificer

75 points

Artificers are the technology specialists of fantasy worlds. They can't use spells or other forms of magic, but they can make devices that seem equally wonderful and mysterious to the untrained, such as singing birds made from gold, temple doors that open by themselves, or Greek fire.

Attributes: ST 11 [10]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 13 [60]; HT 10 [0].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 11 [0]; Will 13 [0]; Per 13 [0]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 5 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: 15 points chosen from among Artificer [10/level]; Flexibility [5 or 15]; High Manual Dexterity [5/level]; Master Builder (p. 132) [5/level]; Military Rank [5/level]; Versatile [5]; or Wealth (Comfortable) [10].

Disadvantages: **-**30 points chosen from among Bad Temper [-10*]; Combat Paralysis [-15]; Curious [-5*]; Hard of Hearing [-10]; Lame (Crippled Legs) [-10]; Loner [-5*]; Missing Digit [-2/-5]; or Workaholic [-5].

Primary Skills: Pick one of the following packages:

Artillery: Armoury (Heavy Weapons) (A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Artillery (Catapult) (A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Engineer (Artillery) (H) IQ+1 [8]-14; Gunner (Catapult) (E) DX+1 [2]-11.

Chemistry: Chemistry (H) IQ+1 [8]-14; Explosives (Fireworks) (A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Poisons (H) IQ-1 [2]-12; Professional Skill: Glassblowing (A) IQ-1 [1]-12.

Heavy Equipment: Carpentry (E) IQ+1 [2]-14; Engineer (Civil) (H) IQ+1 [8]-14; Mechanic (Muscle Engines) (A) IQ [2]-13.

Mechanisms: Engineer (Clockwork) (H) IQ+1 [8]-14; Mechanic (Clockwork) (A) IQ-1 [2]-12; and *one* of Lockpicking or Traps (A) IQ-1 [2]-12.

Secondary Skills: Art (Drawing or Sculpting) (H) IQ-1 [2]-12; Current Affairs (Science and Technology) (E) IQ [1]-13. Either Administration or Leadership (A) IQ-1 [1]-12.

Background Skills: *One* of Astronomy, Expert Skill (Natural Philosophy), or Mathematics, all (H) IQ-1 [2]-12. *Two* of Brawling or Knot-Tying, both (E) DX [1]-10; Gesture (E) IQ [1]-13; Scrounging (E) Per [1]-13; Carousing (E) HT [1]-10; or Freight Handling (A) IQ-1 [1]-12.

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

Upgrade: In a cinematic campaign, an artificer may be a Gadgeteer [25 or 50] or have Gizmos [5/gizmo]. A chemist with substantial skill in Alchemy could produce potions or other wonders.

Job Description

Wealthy patrons often support artificers with monthly salaries.

Prerequisites: Chemistry, Engineer, or Mechanic 14+.

Job Roll: Prerequisite skill. On critical failure, gain -1 Reputation for low-quality work.

Monthly Pay: $3,500.

Wealth Level: Wealthy. Supports Status 2.

Assassin

125 points

Assassins kill people for impersonal reasons, in service to a cause or because someone paid them. Fantasy literature often describes assassins' guilds selling their services to the highest bidder, no questions asked. This template is for a professional assassin, whether a loyal guild member or a freelancer.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 14 [80]; IQ 11 [20]; HT 10 [0].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 11 [0]; Per 11 [0]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 6 [0]; Basic Move 6 [0].

Advantages: Single-Minded [5]; Wealth (Comfortable) [10]; and 15 points chosen from among Absolute Direction [5] *or* 3D Spatial Sense [10], Claim to Hospitality (Assassins' Guild) [5], Contact *or* Contact Group (Go-Betweens) [Varies], Fit [5] *or* Very Fit [15]; Honest Face [1], Night Vision [1/level], Smooth Operator 1 [15], or Striking ST [5/level].

Disadvantages: *One* of Callous [-5] or Code of Honor (Professional) [-5]; Secret (Possible Death) [-30]; and -10 points chosen from among Loner [-5*]; Overconfidence [-5*]; or Trademark [-5 or -10].

Primary Skills: Holdout (A) IQ+2 [8]-13. Either Shadowing (A) IQ+2 [8]-13 or Stealth (A) DX+2 [8]-16. *One* of Crossbow, Garrote, Knife, or Thrown Weapon (Knife or Shuriken), all (E) DX+2 [4]-16; Rapier or Smallsword (A) DX+1 [4]-15; or Blowpipe or Sleight of Hand, both (H) DX [4]-14.

Secondary Skills: Acting (A) IQ+1 [4]-12. *One* of Savoir-Faire (High Society or Servant) (E) IQ+2 [4]-13 or Streetwise (A) IQ+1 [4]-12. *One* of Armoury or Traps, both (A) IQ+2 [8]-13, or Poisons (H) IQ+1 [8]-12. *One* of Guns (Pistol) (E) DX+1 [2]-15 or Cloak or Main-Gauche, both (A) DX [2]-14.

Background Skills: *One* of Scrounging (E) Per+1 [2]-12; Climbing (A) DX [2]-14; Architecture or Disguise, both (A) IQ [2]-11; Observation (A) Per [2]-11; or Cryptography, Forgery, Hidden Lore (Conspiracies), or Intelligence Analysis, all (H) IQ-1 [2]-10.

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

Customization: In a campaign using techniques, assassins often know one or more combat techniques. Plausible choices include Choke Hold, Dual-Weapon Attack, Feint, Neck Snap, and Off-Hand Weapon Training. In a setting with esoteric skills, assassins may have been Trained By A Master [30], giving them access to skills such as Invisibility Art, Light Walk, and Pressure Secrets. Some settings may have magically trained assassins. A good configuration is One-College Magery specializing in Body Control, Illusion, Light and Darkness, or Movement.

Job Description

In legend and fantasy, assassins are specialists who do a highly skilled job and get paid for it – enough to let them turn down jobs that don't suit them. However, they can't spend their wealth openly without making themselves conspicuous. No matter how much they earn, their Status never rises above 1.

Prerequisites: Holdout 14+; any one attack skill (including Sleight of Hand) 14+.

Job Roll: Worse professional skill. On critical failure, wanted by legal authorities; must flee or be arrested and interrogated.

Monthly Pay: $2,500. Adjusted for margin of success or failure.

Wealth Level: Wealthy. Supports Status 1.

Bandit

75 points

Of all outlaws, bandits and highwaymen attract the most hero worship. Anywhere the common people resent the rulers, a bandit may be seen as a defender of the poor, like Robin Hood. In a conquered province, the old aristocrats may actually become bandits; in any society, the bandit's weapons – and often horses – makes him *look* like an aristocrat. Cinematic heroes such as Zorro may deliberately assume the role of bandits for noble motives. Real bandits are usually less noble, even if they take advantage of the heroic image. This template defines an outlaw who really *is* honorable, relying on stealth and concealment rather than overwhelming force in his struggle against the ruling class.

Attributes: ST 11 [10]; DX 12 [40]; IQ 10 [0]; HT 11 [10].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 11 [0]; Will 10 [0]; Per 11 [5]; FP 11 [0]; Basic Speed 5.75 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: 20 points chosen from Allies [Varies]; Ambidexterity [5]; Charisma [5/level]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Contacts or Contact Group (Fences) [Varies]; Daredevil [15]; Fearlessness [2/level]; or Social Regard (Feared) [5/level].

Disadvantages: -30 points chosen from among Code of Honor (Highwayman's or Pirate's) [-5] or (Gentleman's) [-10]; Compulsive Behavior (Carousing) [-5* or -10*], (Generosity) [-5*], or (Spendthrift) [-5*]; Enemy (Law Enforcement) [Varies]; Impulsiveness [-10*]; Lecherousness [-15*]; Overconfidence [-5*]; Pacifism (Cannot Harm Innocents) [-10]; Secret Identity [Varies]; Sense of Duty (Comrades) [-5] or (Oppressed People) [-10]; Social Stigma (Disowned) [-10]; or Trademark [-5 to -15].

Primary Skills: Riding (Horses) (A) DX+1 [4]-13. *One* of Crossbow or Guns (Pistol), both (E) DX+2 [4]-14; or Bow, Broadsword, or Saber, all (A) DX+1 [4]-13.

Secondary Skills: *One* of Navigation (Land) (A) IQ [2]-10 or Area Knowledge (E) IQ+1 [2]-11. *One* of Intimidation (A) Will+1 [4]-11 or Leadership (A) IQ+1 [4]-11. *One* of Camouflage (E) IQ+1 [2]-11 or Stealth (A) DX [2]-12. *One* of Brawling (E) DX+1 [2]-13; or Broadsword, Saber, Shortsword, or Whip, all (A) DX [2]-12.

Background Skills: Savoir-Faire (E) IQ [1]-10. *One* of Brawling (E) DX [1]-12; Carousing (E) HT [1]-11; or Gambling (A) IQ-1 [1]-9.

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

Upgrade: Masked adventurers playing the role of bandits may have far higher levels of skill, especially in their primary weapons. In a cinematic campaign, consider making such a bandit a Weapons Master or Gunslinger.

Job Description

A bandit's income depends on his finding victims worth robbing; it fluctuates a great deal.

Prerequisites: Riding 12+; weapon skill 12+.

Job Roll: Worse prerequisite skill. On critical failure, suffers 1d of injury.

Monthly Pay: $600. Adjusted for margin of success or failure.

Wealth Level: Average. Supports Status 0.

Barbarian

75 points

The half-naked warrior from a primitive land is a stereotype in heroic fantasy. This version is a midpoint between actual tribal peoples and mighty-thewed pulp or cinematic heroes.

Attributes: ST 12 [20]; DX 11 [20]; IQ 9 [-20]; HT 12 [20].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-1/1d+2; BL 29 lbs.; HP 12 [0]; Will 9 [0]; Per 11 [10]; FP 12 [0]; Basic Speed 5.75 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Fit [5]; Hard to Kill 2 [4]; Temperature Tolerance 1 (specify Hot or Cold) [1]; and 15 points chosen from among Absolute Direction [5], Animal Empathy [5], Animal Friend [5/level], Combat Reflexes [15], Fearlessness [2/level], High Pain Threshold [10], Mariner 1 [10], Outdoorsman 1 [10], or improving Fit [5] to Very Fit [15].

Disadvantages: Code of Honor (Pirate's) [-5]; Low TL -1 [-5]; Social Stigma (Uneducated) [-5]; and -20 points chosen from among Alcoholism [-15]; Bad Temper [-10*]; Berserk [-10*]; Bloodlust [-10*]; Bully [-10*]; Compulsive Behavior (Carousing) [-5*]; Greed [-15*]; Impulsiveness [-10*]; Innumerate [-5]; Intolerance (Civilized People) [-5]; Language (Native Tongue): Spoken (native) /Written (None) [-3]; Lecherousness [-15*]; Mundane Background [-10]; No Sense of Humor [-10]; Overconfidence [-5*]; Sense of Duty (Clan or Tribe) [-5]; Stubbornness [-5]; or additional levels of Low TL [-5/level].

Primary Skills: Survival (any) (A) Per+2 [8]-13. Pick *one* of the following 12-point packages: Axe/Mace,

Broadsword, or Spear, all (A) DX+2 [8]-13, and Shield (E) DX+2 [4]-13; Bow (A) DX+2 [8]-13 and Knife (E) DX+2 [4]-13; Thrown Weapon (Disc) (E) DX+2 [4]-13 and Shortsword (A) DX+2 [8]-13; Thrown Weapon (Harpoon) (E) DX+3 [8]-14 and Axe/Mace (A) DX+1 [4]-12; Thrown Weapon (Stick) (E) DX+2 [4]-13 and Spear (A) DX+2 [8]-13; Two-Handed Axe/Mace (A) DX+3 [12]-14; or Two-Handed Sword (A) DX+3 [12]-14.

Secondary Skills: Pick one of the following packages:

Desert: Navigation (Land) (A) IQ+2 [8]-11; Riding (Camel or Horse) (A) DX [2]-11; Stealth (A) DX [2]-11.

Plains: Navigation (Land) (A) IQ+1 [4]-10; Stealth (A) DX [2]-11. Tracking (A) Per [2]-11; and *one* of Riding (Horse) (A) DX+1 [4]-12, Running (A) HT+1 [4]-13, or Teamster (A) IQ+1 [4]-10.

Seafaring: Meteorology (A) IQ+1 [4]-10; Navigation (Sea) (A) IQ+1 [4]-10; Seamanship (E) IQ+1 [2]-10; Swimming (E) HT+1 [2]-13.

Woodland: Camouflage (E) IQ+1 [2]-10; Climbing (A) DX [2]-11; Stealth (A) DX [2]-11; Tracking (A) Per [2]-11; Traps (A) IQ+1 [4]-10.

Background Skills: Brawling (E) DX [1]-11 and *two* of Carousing (E) HT [1]-12, Intimidation (A) Will-1 [1]-8, or Sex Appeal (A) HT-1 [1]-11.

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

Upgrade: The barbarian heroes of sword and sorcery are often built on far more than 100 points. Such a hero might have ST 15 and HT 13, letting him inflict much more damage and making him harder to kill.

Bard

75 points

Bards range from wandering minstrels who perform in taverns to divinely inspired singers in royal courts or great temples. Legend and fantasy often show them as specially privileged. This template can also be used to create combat-ready adventurers who sing and tell tales when the battles are over; for such an adventurer, use most of the unspent points on weapon skills. Light infantry weapons such as bows are traditional for bards.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 11 [20]; IQ 12 [40]; HT 11 [10].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 10 [-10]; Per 12 [0]; FP 11 [0]; Basic Speed 5.5 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Charisma 1 [5]; Musical Ability 2 [10] *or* Voice [10]; and 15 points chosen from among Appearance (Attractive) [4] or (Handsome) [12]; Bard [5/level]; Channeling (the Muses or other gods of poetry) [10]; Cultural Adaptability [10]; Eidetic Memory [5] *or* Photographic Memory [10]; Language Talent [10]; Legal Immunity (Bardic Immunity) [10]; Status 1 [5]; or additional levels of Charisma [5/level].

Disadvantages: -30 points chosen from among Alcoholism [-15]; Bully [-10*]; Chummy [-5/-10]; Compulsive Behavior (Carousing) [-5*]; Impulsiveness [-10*]; Jealousy [-10]; Lecherousness [-15*]; or Post-Combat Shakes [-5*].

Primary Skills: Literature (H) IQ [4]-12; Poetry (A) IQ [2]-12; Singing (E) HT+3 [2]-14†.

Secondary Skills: Musical Instrument (H) IQ-1 [2]-11. Either Hidden Lore (any) (A) IQ [2]-12 or Expert Skill (Bardic Lore) (H) IQ-1 [2]-11.

Background Skills: *One* of Savoir-Faire (High Society) (E) IQ [1]-12, Carousing (E) HT [1]-11, or Public Speaking (A) IQ [1]-12‡. *Two* of Area Knowledge, Current Affairs, or Games (Riddles), all (E) IQ [1]-12; Connoisseur (Literature, Music, or Wine), Heraldry, or Propaganda, all (A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Observation (A) Per-1 [1]-11; Sex Appeal (A) HT-1 [1]-10; or Diplomacy or Religious Ritual, both (H) IQ [1]-10.

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

† +2 from either Musical Ability or Voice.

‡ +1 from Charisma.

Customization: Blindness is too big a disadvantage to fit this template, and too limiting for adventurers, but it's traditional for bards; GMs may want to have a blind bard NPC. Some legendary bards acquired "the tongue that cannot lie" as a supernatural "gift"; treat this as Truthfulness (6) [-10].

Job Description: Wandering Bard

Many bards live on the road, singing and carrying news. They may perform at taverns or in royal courts, depending on their skill. In typical fantasy cultures, they have a measure of prestige, but little real power.

Prerequisites: Literature 12+; Musical Instrument 11+; Singing 12+.

Job Roll: Best prerequisite skill.

Monthly Pay: $1,200. Adjusted for margin of success or failure.

Wealth Level: Comfortable. Supports Status 1.

Job Description: Court Bard

A few highly regarded bards live in the households of kings or great nobles, providing regular entertainment for their courts.

Prerequisites: Literature 13+; Musical Instrument 12+; Singing 14+.

Job Roll: Savoir-Faire (High Society). On critical failure, lost court position and must go back on the road.

Monthly Pay: $6,750.

Wealth Level: Wealthy. Supports Status 2.

Battle Wizard

125 points

A rare breed. Battle wizards can master the intellectual intricacies of magic, but also keep alive – and concentrate on casting spells – amid the chaos of a battle. Having a high enough skill level to reduce the energy cost of spells has a big payoff for them; high IQ and Magery give them this ability with all Hard spells.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 14 [80]; HT 11 [10].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 14 [0]; Per 14 [0]; FP 11 [0]; Basic Speed 5.25 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Magery 3 [35]; Military Rank 2 [10]; Status 1 [0]*; and 15 points chosen from Absolute Direction [5] *or* 3D Spatial Sense [10]; Ally (Bodyguard) [Varies]; Charisma [5/level]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Eidetic Memory [5] *or* Photographic Memory [10]; Fit [5] *or* Very Fit [15]; Language (Accented/Native) [5]; Single-Minded [5]; Versatile [5], Wealth (Comfortable) [10]; +1 to Will [5]; or additional Military Rank [5/level].

Disadvantages: Duty (12 or less) [-10]; and -40 points chosen from among Bad Temper [-10†], Bloodlust [-10†], Callous [-5], Code of Honor (Soldier's) [-10], Fanaticism [-15], Greed [-15†], Impulsiveness [-10†], Overconfidence [-5†], Post-Combat Shakes [-5†], Pyromania [-5†], Selfish [-5†], Sense of Duty [-2 to -10], or Workaholic [-5].

Primary Skills: Thaumatology (VH) IQ [1]-14‡.

Secondary Skills: Navigation (any) (A) IQ-1 [1]-13. Either Hiking (A) HT+1 [2]-12 or Riding (A) DX+1 [2]-11. *One* of Innate Attack (Beam or Projectile) (E) DX+2 [4]-12 or Broadsword, Shortsword, or Staff, all (A) DX+1 [4]-11.

Background Skills: Games (Magical Challenges) (E) IQ [1]-14; Savoir-Faire (Military) IQ [1]-14. *One* of Administration or Leadership, both (A) IQ-1 [1]-13; or Engineer

(Military) or Tactics, both (H) IQ-2 [1]-12. *One* of Astronomy (Observational), Hidden Lore (any), Occultism, or Research, all (A) IQ [2]-14; Cryptography, Mathematics (any), Military Science, Naturalist, or Theology (any), all (H) IQ-1 [2]-13; Dreaming or Meditation, both (H) Will-1 [2]-13; or Alchemy (VH) IQ-2 [2]-12.

Spells (all (H) IQ+1 [1]-15‡, except as noted): Lend Energy; Recover Energy; and *one* of the following packages:

Bodyguard: Armor; Great Haste; Haste; Lend Vitality; Magelock; Scryguard; Sense Foes; Shield; and either Aura *and* Detect Magic, Apportation *and* Deflect Missile, Extinguish Fire *and* Ignite Fire, or Sense Emotion *and* Truthsayer.

Kineticist: Apportation; Armor; Deflect Missile (H) IQ+2 [2]-16‡; Flight; Haste; Levitation; Lighten Burden; Quick March; Shield.

Pyrurge: Continual Light; Create Fire; Deflect Energy; Explosive Fireball; Extinguish Fire; Fireball (H) IQ+1 [2]-16; Ignite Fire; Light; Shape Fire.

* Free from Military Rank 2.

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

‡ +3 for Magery.

Job Description

An army's traveling spellcaster is a well-paid technical specialist, but not usually in the chain of command. In a world where magic is common, he still earns above average pay, partly reflecting the risks he takes.

Prerequisites: (IQ+Magery) 17+.

Job Roll: Best spell. On critical failure, suffers 2d of injury.

Monthly Pay: $1,350.

Wealth Level: Comfortable. Supports Status 1.

Enchanter

125 points

The enchanter specializes in creating magical objects. The wizard is more often an Ally or Patron for adventurers than a member of the party. He may travel in search of rare magical materials or information, but might also recruit other people for such jobs. On the other hand, his knowledge of a wide range of commonly used spells can make him unexpectedly formidable.

In some campaigns, GMs will want to allow enchanters as NPCs only.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 14 [80]; HT 10 [0].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 14 [0]; Per 14 [0]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 5 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Magery 2 [25]; Single-Minded [5]; and 20 points chosen from among Ally (Apprentice or Familiar) [Varies], Contact (Business Agent) [Varies], High Manual Dexterity [5/level], Language (Accented/Native) [5], Lightning Calculator [2] *or* Intuitive Mathematician [5], Patron (Wealthy Buyer) [Varies], Signature Gear (Enchanted Items) [1/level], Tenure [5], Versatile [5], Wealth (Comfortable) [10] or (Wealthy) [20], or Wild Talent (Focused: Spells at IQ+Magery, -20%) [16].

Disadvantages: A total of -40 points chosen from among Absent-Mindedness [-15]; Code of Honor (Professional) [-5]; Combat Paralysis [-15]; Curious [-5*]; Greed [-15*]; Loner [-5*]; Miserliness [-10*]; Wealth (Struggling) [-10]; Workaholic [-5].

Primary Skills: Either Ritual Magic or Thaumatology (VH) IQ+1 [4]-15†.

Secondary Skills: Merchant (A) IQ-1 [1]-13. *Three* of Animal Handling, Fortune-Telling, Hidden Lore, Research, or Teaching, all (A) IQ-1 [1]-13; Archaeology, Artist, Astronomy, Jeweler, Mathematics (Applied), Religious Ritual, or Symbol Drawing, all (H) IQ-2 [1]-12; or Alchemy or Herb Lore, both (VH) IQ-3 [1]-11.

Background Skills: Accounting (H) IQ-2 [1]-12; Hazardous Materials (A) IQ-1 [1]-13; Occultism (A) IQ-1 [1]-13; Savoir-Faire (High Society or Magical) (E) IQ [1]-14.

Spells (all (H) IQ [1]-14†, except as noted): Analyze Magic; Apportation; Detect Magic; Enchant (VH) IQ+1 [4]-15; Identify Spell; Ignite Fire; Lend Energy; Light; Purify Air; Recover Energy; Seek Earth; Seek Water; Sense Foes; Sound; and *one* of the following packages:

Armor Maker: Deflect (H) IQ+1 [2]-15; Fortify (H) IQ+1 [2]-15; raise one of these two spells to IQ+2 [4]-16.

Magical Device Maker: Staff (H) IQ+1 [2]-15; raise Enchant to IQ+2 [8]-16.

Weapon Maker: Either Accuracy (H) IQ+1 [2]-15 and four Air spells (H) IQ [1]-14, or Puissance (H) IQ+1 [2]-15 and four Earth spells (H) IQ [1]-14.

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

† +2 from Magery.

Customization: A true "lab rat" enchanter can take Magery 2 (One College Only: Enchantment, -40%) [17] and spend the points saved on higher skill with one or more spells.

Job Description

When possible, an enchanter will work to order, preparing something that has a buyer waiting. Lacking such a buyer, an enchanter will usually make the most marketable device he knows how to create.

Prerequisites: Enchant 15+

Job Roll: Best spell. On critical failure, lose 3× base monthly pay.

Monthly Pay: $1,200. Adjusted for margin of success or failure.

Wealth Level: Comfortable. Supports Status 1.

Hedge Wizard

75 points

Not every wizard is a mighty wonder-worker or an intellectual giant. In a magical setting, some mages are only talented enough to learn a few basic spells. Some specializations require specific advantages; for example, a healer needs either Empathy or Magery 1.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 12 [40]; HT 10 [0].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 12 [0]; Per 12 [0]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 5 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Magery 0 [5]; Social Regard 1 (Feared) [5]; and 15 points chosen from among Allies (Familiar) [Varies], Animal Empathy [5], Empathy [15]; Magery 1 [10], Plant Empathy [5], Spirit Empathy [10], or Unusual Background [Varies].

Disadvantages: Wealth (Struggling) [-10]; and -15 points chosen from Bully [-10*], Code of Honor (Professional) [-5], Loner [-5*], Pacifism (Reluctant Killer) [-5] or (Cannot Harm Innocents) [-10], or Sense of Duty (Village) [-5].

Primary Skills: Occultism (A) IQ+1 [4]-13.

Secondary Skills: Teaching (A) IQ [2]-12. *Three* of First Aid or Gardening, both (E) IQ+1 [2]-13; Hidden Lore, Meteorology, Navigation (any), or Professional Skill (Midwife), all (A) IQ [2]-12; or Bardic Lore, Diagnosis, Naturalist, or Pharmacy (Herbal), all (H) IQ-1 [2]-11.

Background Skills: Area Knowledge (Village or Town) (E) IQ [1]-12; Hazardous Materials (A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Staff (A) DX-1 [1]-9.

Spells: One of the following lists:

Generalist: Extinguish Fire (H) IQ [4]-12; Ignite Fire (H) IQ-1 [2]-11; Light (H) IQ-1 [2]-11; Purify Water (H) IQ-1 [2]-11; Seek Plant (H) IQ-1 [2]-11; Seek Water (H) IQ [4]-12; Sense Foes (H) IQ-1 [2]-11; Test Food (H) IQ-1 [2]-11.

Healer: Awaken (H) IQ-1 [2]-11; Identify Plant (H) IQ-1 [2]-11; Lend Energy (H) IQ [4]-12; Lend Vitality (H) IQ-1 [2]-11; Minor Healing (H) IQ-1 [2]-11; Seek Plant (H) IQ-1 [2]-11; Stop Bleeding (H) IQ [4]-12; Test Food (H) IQ-1 [2]-11.

Weatherworker: Create Air (H) IQ-1 [2]-11; Predict Weather (H) IQ+2 [12]-14; Purify Air (H) IQ-1 [2]-11; Shape Air (H) IQ-1 [2]-11; Walk on Air (H) IQ-1 [2]-11.

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

Job Description

People in your village come to you when they've been injured in a fight or in farming accidents.

Prerequisites: Magery 0; Minor Healing at 11+.

Job Roll: Minor Healing. On critical failure, make Fright Check at -6.

Monthly Pay: $360. Adjusted for margin of success or failure.

Wealth Level: Struggling. Supports Status -1.

Holy Man

75 points

The holy man isn't necessarily an ordained priest; the gods make their own choices of who they should favor. The mark of the holy man is his possession of supernatural powers and his ability to inspire others to worship his god.

Holy men often have taken vows of poverty.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 12 [40]; HT 11 [10].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 14 [10]; Per 12 [0]; FP 11 [0]; Basic Speed 5.25 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Charisma 2 [10]; *one* of Blessed [10], Channeling [10], Medium [10], or Power Investiture 1 [10]; and 15 points chosen from among Allies (Disciples) [Varies], Animal Empathy [5], Clerical Investment [5], Devotion [5/level], Empathy [15] *or* Sensitive [5], Hard to Kill [2/level], Higher Purpose [5], Language (Scriptural; Native) [6], Plant Empathy [5], Reawakened [10], Religious Rank [5/level], Spirit Empathy [10], True Faith [15], Voice [10], or additional levels of Charisma [5/level] or Power Investiture [10/level].

Disadvantages: -40 points chosen from among Charitable [-15*]; Disciplines of Faith [-5 to -15]; Fanaticism [-15]; Honesty [-10*]; Pacifism [-5 to -30]; Selfless [-5*]; Sense of Duty [-10 to -20]; Social Stigma (Excommunicated) [-5]; or Vow [-5 to -15].

Primary Skills: Public Speaking (A) IQ+2 [2]-14†; Teaching (A) IQ+1 [4]-13.

Secondary Skills: Religious Ritual (H) IQ [4]-12. Theology (H) IQ [4]-12. *One* 4-point package selected from Detect Lies (H) Per [4]-12, Hidden Lore (Spirit Lore) (A) IQ+1 [4]-13, Mental Strength (E) Will+2 [4]-16, Persuade (H) Will-1 [2]-13 *and* Sway Emotions (H) Will-1 [2]-13, or two divinely granted spells (H) IQ [2]-12‡.

Background Skills: *One* of Singing (E) HT [1]-11; Dancing (A) DX-1 [1]-9; Administration, Architecture, Poetry, or Writing, all (A) IQ-1 [1]-11; or Musical Instrument (H) IQ-2 [1]-10. *One* of Thanatology (H) IQ-2 [1]-10 or Dreaming, Exorcism, or Meditation, all (H) Will-2 [1]-12.

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

† +2 from Charisma +2.

‡ +1 from Power Investiture 1, which is a precondition for using such spells.

Job Description

Hindu sages, Buddhist monks, and mendicant friars in medieval Europe all fit this pattern, wandering from place to place teaching and meditating, with no more possessions than they can carry. Ascetics live by begging and keep only what they need to survive.

Prerequisites: Religious Ritual 12+

Job Roll: Best spell. On critical failure, suffer crisis of faith and lose divinely granted powers; to regain them, roll once per month vs. (Will - number of months since crisis).

Monthly Pay: $120. Adjusted for margin of success or failure.

Wealth Level: Poor. Supports Status -2.

Knight

75 points

A knight is an aristocratic warrior, able to afford the costliest battle gear and the time to practice its use. The standard medieval version is a heavy cavalryman. This template defines a heroic knight who actually lives by the chivalric standards of honor.

Attributes: ST 11 [10]; DX 11 [20]; IQ 10 [0]; HT 11 [10].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 11 [0]; Will 10 [0]; Per 10 [0]; FP 11 [0]; Basic Speed 5.5 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Fit [5]; Status 2 [5]*; Wealth (Very Wealthy) [30] or Wealth (Wealthy) [20] *and* Signature Gear 10 [10]; and 15 points chosen from among Charisma [5/level], Combat Reflexes [15], Fearlessness [2/level], Higher Purpose [5], Independent Income [1/level], Legal Enforcement Powers [Varies], or increase Fit [5] to Very Fit [15].

Disadvantages: Code of Honor (Chivalry) [-15]; and -25 points chosen from among Compulsive Behavior (Carousing or Generosity) [-5†], Debt [-1/level], Disciplines of Faith (Monasticism) [-10], Duty [-2 to -15], Fanaticism [-15], Intolerance (Commoners or Unbelievers) [-5], Overconfidence [-5†], Selfish [-5†], Sense of Duty (Vassals) [-5] or (The weak) [-10], Stubbornness [-5], or Vow [-5 to -15].

Primary Skills: Lance (A) DX+1 [4]-12; Riding (Horse) (A) DX+1 [4]-12; Shield (E) DX+1 [2]-12.

Secondary Skills: Either Axe/Mace or Broadsword, both (A) DX [2]-11; Savoir-Faire (E) IQ+1 [2]-11.

Background Skills: Heraldry (A) IQ [2]-10; Leadership (A) IQ [2]-10. *Two* of Brawling or Jumping, both (E) DX [1]-11; Carousing or Singing, both (E) HT [1]-11; Games (Tournament Rules) (E) IQ [1]-10; Dancing (A) DX-1 [1]-10; Falconry (A) IQ-1 [1]-9; Tracking (A) Per-1 [1]-9; or Religious Ritual or Tactics, both (H) IQ-2 [1]-8.

* +1 Status from Wealth.

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

Customization: Other combinations of expensive combat gear and aristocratic codes of honor are possible in non-European-based settings. Examples are the jaguar knights of Mesoamerica (Hiking, Broadsword, and Spear Thrower), the samurai of feudal Japan (Bow, Broadsword, Shortsword, and Two-Handed Sword), and mecha operators in anime-based fantasy (Driving (Mecha) or Suit (Battlesuit), Jumping, and an appropriate weapon skill).

Upgrades: Several paths can create a more powerful aristocratic warrior. The simplest is to enhance his combat skills or the underlying physical attributes. Alternatively, he may be a leader of other knights, with Military Rank and such skills as Leadership, Tactics, and possibly Strategy. He may be a high-ranking aristocrat, with extensive landholdings (increased Wealth and Independent Income) and a great title (increased Status), along with enhanced Savoir-Faire and other courtly skills such as Diplomacy. Finally, he may be a priest or monk, with such advantages as Blessed, Higher Purpose, or True Faith.

Job Description: Knight Errant

A knight errant has neither his own lands nor a place in a greater nobleman's household. He travels about, seeking a war to fight in or a quest to undertake. At best, he may be a saintly hero; at worst, he may be an armed robber – but his sense of honor won't let him lower himself to physical labor. In a Japanese setting, a *ronin* (a masterless samurai) plays a similar role.

Prerequisites: Status 2+, Lance 12+, and Riding 12+

Job Roll: Worst prerequisite. On critical failure, suffer 3d of injury.

Monthly Pay: $3,000. Adjusted for margin of success or failure.

Wealth Level: Wealthy. Supports Status 2.

Merchant

75 points

Merchants come in many varieties. This template fits somewhere in between the fast-talking man at a little stall in the marketplace and the merchant prince whose house is a castle in all but name. This merchant is rich enough to engage in long-distance trade, but not rich enough to hire other people to journey for him – the kind most likely to have adventures, or to create them for other people.

Earnings from his trade venture are not represented by monthly job rolls. The merchant has *no* earnings while he's traveling, but only when he stops to sell his goods, at the end of the journey or along the way. At that point, determine what his goods sell for and what, if anything, he can buy to carry back.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 12 [40]; HT 11 [10].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 12 [0]; Per 12 [0]; FP 11 [0]; Basic Speed 5.25 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Reputation 1 (Keeps his bargains; All tradesmen; All the time) [2]; Status 1 [0]*; Wealth (Very Wealthy) [30]; and 20 points chosen from among Absolute Direction [5], Allies (Caravan Guards, Sailors, or Junior Partner) [Varies], Business Acumen [10/level], Charisma [5/level], Contacts (Bankers, Guildmasters, Innkeepers, or Foreign Merchants) [Varies], Language (Native/Accented) [5], Language Talent [10], Lightning Calculator [2], additional levels of Status [5/level], or improving Wealth (Very Wealthy) [30] to (Filthy Rich) [50].

Disadvantages: Code of Honor (Professional) [-5] and -35 points chosen from among Bad Temper [-10†], Bully [-10†], Debt [-1/level], Gluttony [-5†], Greed [-15†], Jealousy [-10], Lecherousness [-15†], Miserliness [-10†], Odious Personal Habit (Ostentatious display of wealth) [-5], Overweight [-1] *or* Fat [-3], Selfish [-5†], or Workaholic [-5].

Primary Skills: Area Knowledge (Trade Route) (E) IQ+1 [2]-13; Merchant (A) IQ+1 [4]-13.

Secondary Skills: Accounting (H) IQ-1 [2]-11. *One* of Hiking (A) HT [2]-11; Riding (any) (A) DX [2]-10; or Shiphandling (Ship) (H) IQ-1 [2]-11.

Background Skills: Leadership (A) IQ-1 [1]-11. *Two* of Crossbow, Guns (any), Knife, or Thrown Spear, all (E) DX [1]-10; Current Affairs (Business), Gesture, Savoir-Faire (High Society, Military, or Servant), or Seamanship, all (E) IQ [1]-12; Scrounging (E) Per [1]-12; Carousing (E) HT [1]-11; Bow or Staff, both (A) DX-1 [1]-9; Administration, Connoisseur (Art or Wine), Fast-Talk, Freight Handling, Meteorology, Navigation, Packing, Politics, Public Speaking, Smuggling, or Streetwise, all (A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Sling (H) DX-2 [1]-8; Diplomacy, Finance, Law, or Veterinary, all (H) IQ-2 [1]-10; or Detect Lies (H) Per-2 [1]-10.

* +1 Status from Wealth.

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

Upgrade: A merchant specializing in enchanted objects could have Magery 1 (One College Only: College of Knowledge, -40%) [11] and the spells Analyze Magic, Detect Magic, and Identify Spell.

Peasant Adventurer

75 points

Not content with life on the farm, you've left home to look for a more interesting life. Better pay wouldn't hurt, but money's not your main motivation; you never seem to stay ahead despite occasional windfalls. You aren't an outright bandit or rebel, though you may think you're as good a man as any aristocrat. You remain a simple soul, with the virtues and vices of common men – on a bigger scale than usual.

Attributes: ST 12 [20]; DX 11 [20]; IQ 10 [0]; HT 12 [20].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-1/1d+2; BL 29 lbs.; HP 12 [0]; Will 10 [0]; Per 11 [5]; FP 12 [0]; Basic Speed 5.75 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Fit [5] and 15 points chosen from Alcohol Tolerance [1], Animal Empathy [5], Animal Friend [5/level], Charisma [5/level], Combat Reflexes [15], Green Thumb [5/level], Hard to Kill [2/level], High Pain Threshold [10], Luck [15], Outdoorsman [5/level], Rapid Healing [5] *or* Very Rapid Healing [15], Temperature Tolerance [1/level], or increasing Fit [5] to Very Fit [15].

Disadvantages: Language (Actual native language; Native/None) [-3]; Wealth (Struggling) [-10]; and -30 points chosen from among Alcoholism [-15], Berserk [-10*], Chummy [-5 or -10], Compulsive Behavior (Carousing or Generosity) [-5*], Delusion (All men are equal) [-5], Gluttony [-5*], Ham-Fisted [-5 or -10], Impulsiveness [-10*], Intolerance [-5 or -10], Laziness [-10], Lecherousness [-15*], Overconfidence [-5*], Pacifism (Cannot Harm Innocents) [-10], Sense of Duty (Village) [-5] or (Poor People) [-10], or Stubbornness [-5].

Primary Skills: Brawling (E) DX+2 [4]-13; Knife (E) DX+2 [4]-13. *One* of Axe/Mace, Spear, Staff, or Two-Handed Axe/Mace, all (A) DX+2 [8]-13.

Secondary Skills: Hiking (A) HT [2]-12; Scrounging (E) Per [1]-11; Stealth (A) DX [2]-11. Either Farming (A) IQ+1 [4]-11 or Boating (Sailboat or Unpowered) (A) DX [2]-11 *and* Fishing (E) Per+1 [2]-13. *One* of Thrown Weapon (Axe/Mace) (E) DX+2 [4]-13, Bow (A) DX+1 [4]-12, or Sling (H) DX [4]-11.

Background Skills: *One* of Games (E) IQ [1]-10; Carousing (E) HT [1]-12; or Dancing or Sports, both (A) DX-1 [1]-10. *One* of Carpentry, Leatherworking, or Masonry, all (E) IQ [1]-10; or Teamster (A) IQ-1 [1]-9. *One* of Meteorology (A) IQ [2]-10; Tracking (A) Per [2]-11; or Naturalist (H) IQ-1 [2]-9.

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

Customization: Nothing says a woman can't walk off the farm and go adventuring (as in Elizabeth Moon's *Sheepfarmer's Daughter*). In a historically realistic campaign, such a woman might have the Goodwife advantage instead of Animal Friend or Green Thumb – and it could come in handy in the army. On the other hand, she might have left home swearing never to cook another pot of porridge.

Scholar

75 points

Scholars most often appear as NPCs, giving cryptic advice to bands of adventurers who come to consult them. But nothing prevents a scholar from picking up a few combat skills and going out to find his own answers. This template provides a start in that direction by including a few less sedate skills picked up during the scholar's student days.

Attribute: ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 14 [80]; HT 10 [0].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 9 [0]; Will 14 [0]; Per 10 [-20]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 5 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Language (Accented/Native) [5] and 20 points chosen from among Eidetic Memory [5] *or* Photographic Memory [10], Language Talent [10], Less Sleep [2/level], Sage [10/level], Single-Minded [5], Status [5/level], or Wealth (Comfortable) [10].

Disadvantages: Code of Honor (Professional) [-5] and -30 points chosen from among Absent-Mindedness [-15], Bad Sight (Near-sighted) [-25], Bad Temper [-10*], Bully [-10*], Combat Paralysis [-15], Curious [-5*], Disciplines of Faith (Monasticism) [-10], Duty (Teaching; Nonhazardous) [-5 or -10], Indecisive [-10*], Jealousy [-10], Lame (Crippled Legs) [-10], Loner [-5*], Odious Personal Habit (Lecturing) [-5], Pacifism [-5 to -30], Selfish [-5*], Skinny [-5], Truthfulness [-5*], Unfit [-5] *or* Very Unfit [-15], or Wealth (Struggling) [-10].

Primary Skills: Research (A) IQ [2]-14. *One* of Occultism (A) IQ+4 [16]-18; Astronomy, Geography, History, Linguistics, Literature, Mathematics, Military Science, Natural Philosophy, Philosophy, Political Science, or Theology, all (H) IQ+3 [16]-17; or Thaumatology (VH) IQ+2 [16]-16.

Secondary Skills: Writing (A) IQ-1 [1]-13. *One* of Administration, Public Speaking, or Teaching, all (A) IQ-1 [1]-13. *Two* additional fields of knowledge, from those listed as primary skills, at (A) IQ-1 [1]-13, (H) IQ-2 [1]-12, or (VH) IQ-3 [1]-11.

Background Skills: *Two* of Brawling (E) DX+1 [2]-11; Games or Savoir-Faire (High Society), both (E) IQ+1 [2]-15; Scrounging (E) Per+1 [2]-11; or Carousing or Singing, both (E) HT+1 [2]-11.

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

Slayer

125 points

Most warriors specialize in fighting a single race or similar races. The slayer specializes in defeating foes with extraordinary abilities: gigantic monsters, undead, evil sorcerers, or the like.

Attributes: ST 11 [10]; DX 12 [40]; IQ 12 [40]; HT 11 [10].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 11 [0]; Will 12 [0]; Per 12 [0]; FP 11 [0]; Basic Speed 5.75 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Fit [5]; Higher Purpose [5]; *one* of Combat Reflexes [15], Danger Sense [15], or Peripheral Vision [15]; and 15 points chosen from among Ambidexterity [5], Blessed (Heroic Feats) [10], Fearlessness [2/level], Hard to Kill [2/level], Night Vision [1/level], Signature Gear [1/level], Single-Minded [5], True Faith [15], or improving Fit [5] to Very Fit [15].

Disadvantages: Pacifism (Cannot Harm Innocents) [-10] and -30 points from Bloodlust [-10*], Callous [-5], Compulsive Behavior (Generosity) [-5*], Enemy (Specific Monster) [Varies], Fanaticism [-15], Greed [-15*], Loner [-5*], Nightmares [-5*], No Sense of Humor [-10], Obsession [-10*], Overconfidence [-5*], Sense of Duty (Victims of monsters) [-5], Stubbornness [5], or Weirdness Magnet [-15].

Primary Skills: *One* of Hidden Lore (any) or Occultism, both (A) IQ+2 [8]-14; Biology (Zoology), Thanatology, or Theology, all (H) IQ+1 [8]-13; or Weird Science (VH) IQ [8]-12. *One* of Architecture, Interrogation, Research, or Streetwise, all (A) IQ+1 [4]-13; or Observation or Tracking, both (A) Per+1 [4]-13. *One* of Crossbow, Knife, Liquid Projector (Flamethrower), or Thrown Weapon (Harpoon), all (E) DX+2 [4]-14; Bow or Polearm, both (A) DX+1 [4]-13; or Net (H) DX [4]-12.

Secondary Skills: *One* of Camouflage (E) IQ+1 [2]-13; Stealth (A) DX [2]-12; or Disguise (Animal) or Shadowing, both (A) IQ [2]-12. *One* of Forced Entry (E) DX [2]-13; Armoury, Explosives, or Traps, all (A) IQ [2]-12; or Poisons (H) IQ-1 [2]-11. *One* of Acting, Fast-Talk, Leadership, or Teaching, all (A) IQ [2]-12; or Mind Block (A) Will [2]-12.

Background Skills: *Three* of Brawling, Fast-Draw (Arrow or Knife), or Knot-Tying, all (E) DX [1]-12; First Aid (E) IQ [1]-12; Disguise (A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Intimidation (A) Will-1 [1]-11; Running (A) HT-1 [1]-10; or Law or Tactics, both (H) IQ-2 [1]-10.

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

Customization: Exorcists have a lot in common with monster slayers, but their goal is to drive out the demon or spirit instead of kill the person whose body it's possessing. Replace the primary weapon skill with Exorcism and substitute Religious Ritual for one of the secondary skills.

Spellcaster

75 points

This intermediate-level mage is not as limited as the hedge wizard, but lacks the extraordinary gifts of the battle wizard or enchanter. He has enough combat skills to give him a chance of surviving a melee, but his main specialty is some category of useful spells.

Attributes: ST 9 [-10]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 13 [60]; HT 11 [10].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d-1; BL 16 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 13 [0]; Per 10 [-15]; FP 13 [6]; Basic Speed 5.25 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Magery 1 [15] and *two* of Eidetic Memory [5], Language (Accented/Native) [5], Single-Minded [5], Status 1 [5], Versatile [5], or +1 to Will [5].

Disadvantages: -30 points chosen from among Absent-Mindedness [-15], Bad Sight [-25], Bad Temper [-10*], Curious [-5*], Duty [-2 to -15], Gluttony [-5*], Obsession [-5* or -10*], Secret [-5 to -30], Sense of Duty [-2 to -15], or Shyness [-5 to -20].

Primary Skills: Thaumatology (VH) IQ [4]-13†.

Secondary Skills: *Three* of Games (Magical Challenges) (E) IQ [1]-13; Hidden Lore (any), Occultism, or Research, all (A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Astronomy, Cryptography, Expert Skill (any), Mathematics (any), Naturalist, or Theology (any), all (H) IQ-2 [1]-11; Dreaming or Meditation, both (H) Will-2 [1]-11; or Alchemy (VH) IQ-3 [1]-10.

Background Skills: Savoir-Faire (High Society or Magical) (E) IQ [1]-13. *One* of Knife (E) DX+1 [2]-11; or Riding (any), Short-sword, or Staff, all (A) DX [2]-10.

Spells (all (H) IQ [1]-12†, except as noted): Detect Magic; Lend Energy; and *one* of the following packages:

Elementalist: Create Air; Create Fire; Create Water; Ignite Fire; Purify Air; Purify Water; Seek Earth; Seek Water; Shape Air; Shape Earth; Shape Fire.

Mentalist: Daze; Fear; Foolishness; Forgetfulness; Hide Thoughts; Mind-Reading; Mind-Sending; Sense Foes; Sense Emotion; Sleep; Truthsayer.

Illusionist: Blur; Complex Illusion; Continual Light; Darkness; Hide; Illusion Disguise; Illusion Shell; Light; Simple Illusion; Silence; Sound.

Choose two spells for advanced study and raise their level to (H) IQ+2 [4]-14.

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

† +1 for Magery.

Upgrade: The most economical way to produce an exceptionally skilled mage is to raise IQ to 14 and Magery to Magery 3; this raises his spells to level 15, reducing their energy cost by 1 point. Spend the other 10 points on additional spells or miscellaneous adventuring skills.

Job Description

In a world where magic is common, ordinary mages earn about as much as skilled craftsmen. If magic is rare, the pay scale will be higher – or magic may not be a recognized profession at all.

Prerequisites: Magery 0.

Job Roll: Best spell. On critical failure, gain -1 Reputation in your community for endangering the public with your spells.

Monthly Pay: $700. Adjusted for margin of success or failure.

Wealth Level: Comfortable. Supports Status 1.

Alternative Wizards

Chapter 7 lists many variant forms of magic. To adapt these templates to a campaign that uses such nonstandard magic, total the points in Magery, magic-related skills, and spells, and use the same total to purchase variant magical abilities with comparable effects. GMs should work out suitable templates when adopting variant magic systems.

Thief

75 points

Thieves live by taking other people's property, not by force of arms but by stealth. If the thief has to fight, the job has already gone wrong. This template emphasizes stealth and concealment. Potential victims may provide safeguards for their valuables, so thieves also have some knowledge of getting past walls, locks, and traps.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 12 [40]; IQ 11 [20]; HT 10 [0].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 11 [0]; Per 12 [5]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 5.5 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: 20 points chosen from Absolute Direction [5], Acute Hearing [2/level], Contact or Contact Group (Fences) [Varies], Danger Sense [15], High Manual Dexterity [5/level], Night Vision [1/level], Perfect Balance [15], or Wealth (Comfortable) [10].

Disadvantages: Secret (Imprisonment or Exile) [-20] and -20 points chosen from among Greed [-15*], Overconfidence [-5*], Pacifism (Cannot Kill) [-15], Trademark [-5 to -15], or Wealth (Struggling) [-10].

Primary Skills: Observation *or* Search, both (A) Per+1 [4]-13; and one of the following skill sets:

Burglar: Climbing (A) DX+2 [8]-14; either Forced Entry (E) DX+2 [4]-14 or Lockpicking (A) DX+1 [4]-13.

Cutpurse/Pickpocket: Shadowing (A) IQ+1 [4]-12; either Pickpocket (A) DX+1 [8]-13 or Knife (E) DX+3 [8]-15.

Shoplifter: Filch (A) DX+2 [8]-14; Holdout (A) IQ+1 [4]-12.

Secondary Skills: Fast-Talk (A) IQ [2]-11; Streetwise (A) IQ [2]-11; either Running (A) HT+2 [8]-12 or Stealth (A) DX+2 [8]-14.

Background Skills: *One* of Savoir-Faire (High Society or Servant) IQ [1]-11; Architecture, Connoisseur, Merchant, or Traps, all (A) IQ-1 [1]-10; Urban Survival (A) Per-1 [1]-11; or Jeweler (H) IQ-2 [1]-9. *One* of Brawling or Knife, both (E) DX [1]-12.

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

Upgrade: Many fictional thieves have a more glamorous image: they steal jewels and works of art, they have the social graces to move in high society while casing their targets, and they spend the loot on maintaining that lifestyle. This kind of thief can fit well into the right fantasy campaign. Give him Comfortable or better Wealth, a few levels of Status, a *very* reliable Contact to buy his loot – and much higher skills in burglary (the modus operandi of high-class thieves) and social interaction, possibly supported by improved DX or IQ.

Job Description: Street Thief

Pickpockets, cutpurses, and shoplifters make a somewhat precarious living, at the mercy of their fences. Getting caught can mean anything from a fine to painful death.

Prerequisites: One of Filch-13, Knife-13, or Pickpocket-13; Streetwise-11.

Job Roll: Worst prerequisite. On critical failure, arrested and tried according to local law.

Monthly Pay: $300. Adjusted for margin of success or failure.

Wealth Level: Struggling. Supports Status -1.

Job Description: Art or Jewel Thief

The elite of the profession specialize in taking the property of the wealthy. They have to have the skill to get past guards, traps, and alarms, the knowledge to recognize what's valuable, and the connections to sell it without being identified. Their earnings still fluctuate, and if caught, they usually face the harshest penalties . . . or, in some settings, a new career in espionage.

Prerequisites: Stealth 14+; Forced Entry, Lockpicking, or Traps 14+; Connoisseur 11+.

Job Roll: Worst prerequisite. On critical failure, arrested and tried according to local law; reaction roll at trial is at -2 due to notoriety.

Monthly Pay: $1,350.

Wealth Level: Comfortable. Supports Status 1.

Burglar wants a good job, plenty of Excitement and reasonable Reward, that's how it is usually read. You can say Expert Treasure-hunter instead of Burglar if you like. Some of them do. It's all the same to us.

– J.R.R. Tolkien, ***The Hobbit***

True King

125 points

Many cultures believe that the rightful ruler of a land has supernatural gifts. These may be conferred by coronation, anointment, or other ceremonies, or descend on him when the previous king dies. Specific abilities vary – this template includes some common examples. It's designed for a destined king who has not yet claimed his throne. Reigning true kings have much higher point costs and aren't as likely to become adventurers.

Attributes: ST 11 [10]; DX 11 [20]; IQ 11 [20]; HT 11 [10].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 11 [0]; Will 12 [5]; Per 11 [0]; FP 11 [0]; Basic Speed 5.5 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Charisma 1 [5]; Independent Income 5 [5]; Status 2 [5]*; Wealth (Very Wealthy) [30]; and 20 points chosen from among Appearance [4/12/16], Blessed (The King's Two Bodies; see p. 128) [10], Destiny [Varies], Power Investiture [10/level], additional Charisma [5/level], or additional Status [5/level].

Disadvantages: Code of Honor (Chivalry) [-15]; Sense of Duty (His Country) [-10]; and -25 points chosen from among Berserk [-10†], Chronic Pain [Varies], Dependency (Native soil; Yearly, Seasonal, or Monthly) [-1, -3, or -10], Destiny [Varies], Disciplines of Faith (Ritualism) [-5], Fanaticism [-15], Honesty [-10†], Overconfidence [-5†], Stubbornness [-5], Weirdness Magnet [-15], Workaholic [-5], or reduce Wealth (Very Wealthy) [30] to (Wealthy) [20].

Primary Skills: Area Knowledge (E) IQ+2 [4]; Law (H) IQ+1 [8]-12; Leadership (A) IQ+3 [8]-14‡.

Secondary Skills: Riding (A) DX+1 [4]-12; Shield (E) DX+1 [2]-12; Tactics (H) IQ [4]-11. *One* of Axe/Mace, Broadsword, Shortsword, or Spear, all (A) DX+2 [8]-12. Either 4 points in additional weapon skills, or any two of the following spells at (H) IQ [2]-11**, gained through Power Investiture: Bless Plants, Command, Cure Disease, Deathtouch, Haste, Major Healing, Mind-Sending, Seeker, Sense Foes, or Truthsayer.

Background Skills: Savoir-Faire (E) IQ [1]-11 and *one* of Bardic Lore, History, or Military Science, all (H) IQ [2]-10.

* +1 Status free from Wealth.

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

‡ Includes +1 from Charisma +1. 12.

** Includes +1 from Power Investiture 1.

Village Sage

75 points

You may be your small community's priest, healer, or soothsayer, or you may have just lived a long time and seen a lot. Your native intelligence has grown into sound judgment; even people who think you're "unworldly" seek out your advice. Village sages are usually middle-aged or older, but this isn't a requirement; some young people are wise.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 11 [20]; IQ 13 [60]; HT 10 [0].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 13 [0]; Per 13 [0]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 5.25 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: A total of 20 points chosen from among Absolute Direction [5], Animal Empathy [5], Blessed [10], Clerical Investment [5], Eidetic Memory [5] *or* Photographic Memory [10], Goodwife (p. 132) [5/level], Healer [10/level], Longevity [2], Oracle [15], Plant Empathy [5], or Social Regard (Venerated) [5/level].

Disadvantages: Sense of Duty (Village) [-5]; Wealth (Struggling) [-10]; and -25 points chosen from among Bad Sight (Nearsighted) [-25], Charitable [-15*], Hard of Hearing [-10], Lame (Crippled Legs) [-10], Odious Personal Habit (Talks in riddles or allusions) [-5], Pacifism (Cannot Kill) [-15], or -1 to ST or HT [-10].

Primary Skills: Area Knowledge (Village or Town) (E) IQ+2 [4]-15. *One* of Fortune-Telling (A) IQ+1 [4]-14; Tracking (A) Per+1 [4]-14; or Pharmacy (Herbal), Religious Ritual, or Veterinary, all (H) IQ [4]-13.

Secondary Skills: Observation (A) Per [2]-13. *One* of Body Language or Hidden Lore, both (A) Per [2]-13; Mimicry (Animal Sounds or Bird Calls) (H) IQ-1 [2]-12; Dreaming, Exorcism, or Meditation, all (H) Will-1 [2]-12; or Herb Lore (VH) IQ-2 [2]-11.

Background Skills: *Three* of Astronomy (Observational), Heraldry, Meteorology, or Occultism, all (A) IQ-1 [1]-12; or Diagnosis, History, Law, Naturalist, Psychology, Theology, or Xenology, all (H) IQ-2 [1]-11.

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

Job Description

You heal work injuries, treat sick children, or soften difficult birth. You're mostly paid in kind, and not always promptly.

Prerequisites: Pharmacy or Veterinary 12+.

Job Roll: Prerequisite skill.

Monthly Pay: $350. Adjusted for margin of success or failure.

Wealth Level: Struggling. Supports Status -1.

She bent down and turned around and gave me a wink;

She said, "I'm going to make it up right here in the sink."

It smelled like turpentine; it looked like Indian ink.

I held my nose, I closed my eyes – I took a drink.

– Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller, "Love Potion Number Nine"

Wardancer

75 points

Wardancers are an analog of Asian martial artists in the style of more traditional fantasy: specialists in lightly armed or unarmed hand-to-hand combat, relying on speed and coordination more than strength. They could be found in cultures modeled on the Near East, or among elves, or in any other culture that needs an exotic flavor. Their official role is as performers and entertainers, but their combat skills are real.

Attributes: ST 9 [-10]; DX 14 [80]; IQ 10 [0]; HT 10 [0].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d-1; BL 20 lbs.; HP 9 [0]; Will 10 [0]; Per 10 [0]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 6 [0]; Basic Move 6 [0].

Advantages: Appearance (Attractive) [4]; Fit [5]; Lifting ST +1 [3]; and 15 points chosen from among Allure [5/level], Ambidexterity [5], Charisma [5/level], Combat Reflexes [15], Perfect Balance [15]; Visualization [10], or increasing Fit [5] to Very Fit [15].

Disadvantages: A total of -35 points chosen from among Code of Honor (Professional) [-5], Dwarfism [-15], Jealousy [-10], Overconfidence [-5*], Pacifism (Cannot Harm Innocents) [-10], Post-Combat Shakes [-5*], or Workaholic [-5].

Why Are These People Together?

A warrior born to a noble family, a cutpurse off the city streets, a mage pulled away from his books – unlikely companions, especially in a society as class-bound as most historical ones were. But such odd companions are the heroes of many fantasy adventures, in fiction, in film, and in games. You can simply accept them as a given, but what if you want a reason for them to be together?

One approach is to say that their world has a recognized status of "professional adventurer." The younger sons of noble warriors, the mages with an urge to wander, and the rogues who aren't too far outside the law can seek their fortunes or work for patrons who need their talents.

A common catastrophe could also bring a group together. If barbarians or evil wizards invade their native land, or a plague or natural disaster devastates their home city, people who normally have nothing to do with each other may cooperate to survive. Just the threat of such a disaster may cause a team to form for self-preservation. Imposing a common quest on them is a similar option.

If answers such as this aren't satisfying, don't allow such mixed parties. Specify that player characters belong to a king's court, to the household of a country noble or rich merchant, to a criminal gang, or to a magical academy. Send out a military force or a diplomatic mission that includes them, or have them all be criminals and tempt them with unearned wealth. Then require that all the character designs fit their special group.

The Pre-Session

One way to produce a more cohesive set of adventurers is to get the players to work together when developing them. Sit everyone down in the same place, and ask them to agree on basic character concepts before anyone begins actual character design. If some concepts overlap, encourage them to set the characters apart in some way.

GMs can take a very active role in directing this process. For a formal organization, provide a list of roles, with each one's duties and the skills needed to perform them. Or define a common purpose or background and ask the players to develop characters who fit.

It's also possible to enlist the players to do this job. All their characters have to be together for some reason? Ask *them* to come up with the reason. If they say they're all scholars looking for rare manuscripts, or criminals who had to get out of town in a hurry, or children at an unpleasant summer camp – take this into account in deciding how to get them into the first adventure.

It's also helpful to come up with relationships between characters. If the players have two characters each, GMs can apply this effectively by making one of them a minor character who's attached to another player's major character. Aristocrat and bodyguard, or sorcerer and apprentice, or master and servant – all help make a set of adventurers more cohesive.

Primary Skills: Dancing (A) DX [2]-14; Judo (H) DX-1 [2]-13; Jumping (E) DX [1]-14.

Secondary Skills: Acrobatics (H) DX-2 [1]-12; Stealth (A) DX-1 [1]-13. *One* of Knife (E) DX [1]-14 or Cloak, Saber, Smallsword, or Staff, all (A) DX-1 [1]-13.

Background Skills: Body Language (A) Per [2]-10; Gesture (E) IQ [1]-10; Group Performance (Choreography) (A) IQ+2 [0]-12†. *One* of Sewing (E) DX+1 [2]-15; Makeup (E) IQ+1 [2]-11; Erotic Art or Stage Combat, both (A) DX [2]-14; Connoisseur (Music), or Performance, both (A) IQ [2]-10; Carousing or Sex Appeal, both (A) HT [2]-10; or Musical Instrument (Drums or Finger Cymbals) IQ-1 [2]-9.

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

† Free from default to Dancing-2.

Upgrade: In some campaigns, wardancers may be Trained By A Master, enabling them to learn skills for which this is a prerequisite.

Job Description

Wardancers earn their living as performers. How much they make depends on how well they perform.

Prerequisites: Dancing 12+

Job Roll: Dancing. On critical failure, suffer 1d of injury.

Monthly Pay: $1,200. Adjusted for margin of success or failure.

Wealth Level: Comfortable. Supports Status 1.

Advantages, Disadvantages, and Skills

Given the comprehensive treatment in the ***GURPS Basic Set***, there's little need for new advantages, disadvantages, or skills in ***GURPS Fantasy***. However, some standard traits can be interpreted in specific ways that fit the needs of a fantasy campaign. And it's also possible to modify them to fit a specific campaign with the aid of enhancements, limitations, and techniques.

Appearance

In a fantasy world with multiple sapient races, Appearance can be a racial trait, as well as a personal one.

If a level of Appearance is taken at the standard point cost, its reaction modifiers can apply *either* to your own race and races that closely resemble it, *or* to the dominant race in your world and races that closely resemble it. If they apply to both, treat this as the Universal enhancement to Appearance level (+25%).

Example: Orcs have Unattractive appearance (-1 reaction modifier). This affects humans and races that resemble humans, such as elves. Orcs don't find other orcs exceptionally unattractive.

Advantages

Absolute Direction

see p. B34

In underground exploration, basic Absolute Direction lets you track your position along the length of a tunnel and the branches and forks you have taken, in addition to telling you which way is north (or the equivalent). 3D Spatial Sense gives you a mental map of where each tunnel is in relation to the other tunnels. Roll vs. IQ or Engineer (Mining) to estimate the directions and distances of other tunnels you might reach by digging. If you belong to a race with the Tunneling advantage, you can roll vs. Per for the same purpose.

Acute Senses

see p. B35

In a setting where mana exists, anyone with Magery can have Acute Mana Sense. This gives +1/level to rolls to sense magic, but none of the other benefits of levels of Magery. Mana-dependent lifeforms should have it, particularly in low-mana environments.

Allies

see pp. B36-38

In addition to animals and spirits, some wizards have supernatural allies in the form of self-aware magical objects, or spirits inhabiting magical objects (often called *fetishes*; see p. 26). They may also give or sell such objects to other adventurers. Often these can talk; legends include talking harps, mirrors, swords, and the like. Others may be unable to speak but will have minds accessible to telepathic communication. An object that is bought as an ally should be carried along on adventures.

Blessed

see pp. B40-41

An alternative form of Blessed is possible:

Armor of Faith: Bought as Luck (Defensive, -20%; Pact, -5%) [11]. The standard Pact is a minor Vow.

Another version is applicable to true kings (p. 125) and reflects their special bond with their lands:

The King's Two Bodies: Similar to Special Rapport (see p. B88), but with a country. You are aware of the condition of the land you rule, regardless of distance and without an IQ roll. Anything that injures the land injures you, and vice versa. This works by analogy and metaphor: if the king is crippled, the army can't fight; if the queen is barren, the crops will fail. Magic or holy ritual that heals you can heal the land. You are not specifically aware of any individuals within the land. *10 points*.

Contacts

see pp. B44-45

Self-aware magical objects that are kept in a secure place are bought as Contacts instead of Allies.

Eidetic Memory

see p. B51

The first level of Eidetic Memory is a learnable advantage (see *Learnable Advantages* on p. B294). In historical fantasy settings, bards, loremasters, and wizards may cultivate this ability. See Chapter 9, *Roma Arcana*, for one example.

Eidetic Memory at this level is not instantaneous. Memorization of a text requires enough time to recite or read it aloud; memorization of an image requires enough time to sketch it.

Insubstantiality

see pp. B62-63

Several additional enhancements and limitations can define the forms of Insubstantiality that occur in fantasy:

Difficult Materialization: Materialization costs you 1 FP/minute instead of 1 FP/second. -20%.

Illusory Form: When you dematerialize, you don't become wholly intangible. Your body is made out of sensory impressions such as sights and sounds. Attacks can harm you in the same way and with the same limits as for Shadow Form (p. B83): half damage for physical attacks, full damage for energy attacks, and damage increased 50% for light attacks. -15%.

Projection: When you become insubstantial, as a spirit or psionic entity, your body remains behind. It has no consciousness until you return to it. You can move at twice your basic Move score, as if you were flying. Normally you start out where your physical body is, but if you have the ability to perceive a distant place, you can materialize there, and if you can see some immaterial realm such as the spirit world, you can enter it. Your consciousness remains linked to your body by a "silver cord"; you won't

notice physical sensations, but if anything threatens the linkage between your body and your immaterial form, you'll be drawn back instantly. This includes both attempts at mental or spiritual possession of your body, and any physical injury that requires a HT roll to survive. -50%.

No Vertical Move: Despite being an insubstantial entity, you cannot disregard gravity. You must move across a horizontal surface, or a sloping surface whose slope would not require Climbing rolls. You still weigh nothing, so you don't leave footprints, and you can walk on surfaces that would not support a solid human body, such as the surface of a body of water. -10%.

Invisibility

see p. B63

An astrally projected body (see *Insubstantiality,* above) is often invisible. This is represented by the limitation Substantial Only (-10%), the enhancement Switchable (+10%), and a special limitation:

Only in Spirit Form: You must become insubstantial to become invisible. -10%.

Jumper

see pp. B64-65

World-jumpers may visit parallel worlds. They can also visit other planes that aren't "parallel worlds" in the usual science-fictional sense, in game settings where such worlds exist – for example, the various sorts of magical worlds discussed on pp. 39-45.

Magery

see pp. B66-67

In addition to the previously defined limitations on Magery, a GM may allow any of the following options. Note these do not affect Magery 0, which always costs 5 points.

Ceremonial Magery

You don't have the option of quick casting. Casting spells must always be ceremonial. This takes 10 times as long as normal and has all the other benefits and restrictions of ceremonial magic. -40%.

Ceremonial Magery often combines with Solitary Ceremonial Casting (p. 130) for a net -30% limitation.

Divided Magery

Instead of a single total amount of Fatigue applicable to all spells, you have a separate amount of Fatigue for each college. The sum of these amounts is your total Fatigue. You can only spend each college's Fatigue on its own spells. Your level of Magery is taken into account in determining your skill in spells from any college in which you have assigned Fatigue points; it does not affect your skill with spells in other colleges, except that it always applies to Recover Energy. If you expend Fatigue on nonmagical actions, you can choose which college's Fatigue to spend. When you regain Fatigue, you can choose which college's Fatigue comes back first. -40%.

Hyperdivided Magery works the same way, but has Fatigue points assigned to single spells instead of single colleges. -80%.

Impermanent Magery

Some treatments of magic define it as incapable of permanently changing the material world (see *Glamour*, p. 20). This doesn't put any spells off limits. Instead, spells that would normally cause a permanent change fail to do so. They don't have to be maintained, but the subject continues to register as magical as long as the spell is in effect, the spell can be dispelled, and any benefits it grants are mana-dependent. This is ordinarily a -10% limitation. If some nonmagical means of dispelling the effects is available, such as prayer or the touch of iron, it becomes a -20% limitation. For more details, see *Faerie Glamour* (p. 168).

One-College Magery

In a setting with a different system of magical colleges, paths, or the like (see *Alternate Colleges*, p. 160), One-College Magery may need a different value as a limitation. The fewer colleges, the less restrictive it is. Appropriate limitations are -10% for two colleges, -20% for three to six, -30% for seven to 14, -40% for 15 to 30, or -60% for more than 30.

One-Spell Magery

A more drastic restriction than One-College Magery. Your Magery applies only to a single spell. This can be generalized to Hyperdivided Magery, with fatigue pools assigned to single spells instead of single colleges. -80%.

To create a mage who knows a few specific spells (see *Fixed Magic*, p. 161, for one example), reduce the limitation by 5% per spell after the first. For example, a mage with Three-Spell Magery would have a -70% limitation.

Preparation Required

In contrast to Ceremonial Magery, which increases the time needed to cast a spell, Preparation Required means that a mage must spend more time getting ready beforehand, but does the actual casting at normal speed. There are several ways to interpret this. Choose the one that best fits your concept.

The preparation can represent studying up on the specific spells you want to use. See *Modular Abilities*.

The preparation can represent assigning Fatigue to the colleges or single spells you expect to use. See *Restructurable Magery*.

The preparation can represent the performance of a complex ritual, lasting minutes or hours, during the first part of casting the spell. Then you can put the spell aside for later use. When actually using the spell, it only requires a Concentrate maneuver. You can only have one spell prepared at a time.

Restructurable Magery

Restructurable Magery is a further extension of Divided Magery; it permits the reassignment of Fatigue capacity among colleges. This requires an extended period of concentration, long enough to be impractical in a hand-to-hand fight. The value of the limitation depends on how long the reassignment takes: -8% for 1-minute reassignment, -12% for 10-minute reassignment, -20% for 1-hour reassignment, and -24% for 8-hour reassignment.

For Hyperdivided Magery, the limitations are -16% for 1-minute reassignment, -24% for 10-minute reassignment, -40% for 1-hour reassignment, and -48% for 8-hour reassignment. This form of Restructurable Magery can help create a mage who starts out an adventure by reading specific spells, and then can cast those spells until he exhausts each spell's Fatigue pool.

Solitary Ceremonial Casting

Normally, ceremonial spellcasting requires at least two participants. (Enchantment is an exception; it can be done alone.) This advantage permits a mage to cast spells ceremonially by himself. +10%.

Modular Abilities

see p. B71

In a setting where magic involves interaction with spirits, a shaman or sorcerer may gain the use of spells from spirits that are bound to him by some obligation, or that have Slave Mentality. This is a new type of Modular Abilities:

Spirit Trapping: You have the ability to carry one or more spirits about with you, and to access certain of their abilities. If a spirit knows a spell, you can tap its knowledge to cast the spell. If it has purely factual knowledge, you can treat it as a reference work, gaining some number of added points in the knowledge skill. You cannot converse with your spirits, even if they are intelligent enough for conversation; you can only issue orders (including commands to provide information). You can gain the services of new spirits by visiting or communicating with the spirit plane or by visiting a physical location where spirits manifest themselves. *Cost per spirit: 6 points base + 4 points per point of abilities.*

If your spirits are bound into physical objects (see *Fetishes and Familiars*, p. 26), and you must create or acquire a new object to gain a new spell, this is reduced to *5 points base + 3 points per point of abilities.*

Night Vision

see p. B71

As an advantage, Night Vision allows sight under low-light conditions *as well as* under normal illumination. If you can see at night *better than* by day, because normal sunlight dazzles you, this is a 0-point feature, found for example in orcs and owls. Specify how many levels of Night Vision you have, as usual. At that lighting level, you can see normally. You are at -1 to Vision rolls and visually guided tasks for each level by which your environment is either dimmer or brighter. You still can't see in total darkness.

Behind the Curtain: Cost of Divided and Restructurable Magery

Divided Magery with all Fatigue assigned to a single college is the same as One-College Magery. Since One-College Magery is normally a -40% limitation, so is Divided Magery. The benefit of being able to cast spells from more than one college and the restriction of not having your entire Fatigue available for any college balance each other, making the choice of more or fewer colleges an option that does not affect cost. The same reasoning applies to One-Spell Magery and Hyperdivided Magery.

Restructurable Magery's cost is determined as follows. First, buy Divided or Hyperdivided Magery. For example, Divided Magery is a -40% limitation on levels of Magery. But then *not* having the limitation is effectively an enhancement. For example, not having Divided Magery is a +40% enhancement. Buy this enhancement with some level of Preparation Required. For example, if it takes 8 hours to restructure Fatigue points, this is a -60% limitation. Taking -60% of the base +40% gives -24%. So where Divided Magery is -40%, making it Restructurable in 8 hours reduces it to -24. The same Preparation Required percentages can be applied to the basic limitations for dividing Magery into any number of colleges or into single spells.

Example: Orcs have Night Vision 6 as a feature. At -6 illumination (roughly a moonlit night), they can see perfectly. At either -3 or -9 they make Vision rolls at -3; under full daylight they make them at -6. In total darkness, they're blind.

Patron

see pp. B72-74

In addition to gods, spirits can serve as patrons. Define them as powerful individuals, with base cost 10-20 points.

Rank

see p. B29

In some fantasy settings, mages organize into groups with internal ranks. Sometimes these are just a formality and can be treated as Courtesy Rank costing 1 point/level. In a setting where large groups of mages commonly work together in ceremonial spellcasting, formal chains of command are important and Magical Rank should cost 5 points/level. In a civilization ruled by mages, Magical Rank may translate directly into Status and should cost 10 points/level.

Supernatural beings may have their own hierarchies and ranks. The angels and devils of medieval Catholic beliefs and the celestial bureaucracy of Confucianism offer examples. In campaigns set in the material world, these chains of command seldom matter. But if PCs visit heaven or hell or appeal to a greater power to send aid, Celestial or Infernal Rank makes a real difference. Either type should cost 5 points/level.

Rapier Wit

see p. B79

Ancient Celtic cultures, among others, credited bards with the ability to inflict varied curses on anyone who earns their displeasure. To allow a greater variety of curses, Rapier Wit can be purchased with any of the special modifiers for Affliction. Recovery takes place as if the target was mentally stunned, whether the modifiers include stunning or not.

Security Clearance

see pp. B82-83

In many historical societies and historical fantasy settings, security

clearance in the modern sense hasn't even been considered. But local organizations may have their own secrets and rules on who keeps them. Treat this as half-value Security Clearance. A great nobleman's confidential secretary or personal priest, an inquisitor, or a trusted servant of a secretive magical guild might have this advantage.

See Invisible

see p. B83

The ability to see spirits is a form of See Invisible.

Shadow Form

see p. B83

GMs can base this advantage on types of images other than shadows. The limits on any kind of visible manifestation are movement, manipulation, attack, and defense. For ease, keep these the same as a shadow, unless explicitly modified by an enhancement or limitation. Some options for modification are as follows:

Illusionary Form: You look like a picture or projected image, with color and visual detail. Your gestures and facial expressions are visible, and if you "speak," your lips can be read. +25%.

Luminous Form: You look like a spot or area of projected light on a surface. If the surface has pictures or written words, you can illuminate them. Your light is not bright enough to dazzle anyone; buy that as an Affliction. +0%.

Touch: You still can't physically manipulate solid objects, but you can touch them, creating a ghostly sense of warmth, cold, or pressure. Living beings can feel you brush over or past them with a Touch roll. +0% if always in effect; +5% if switchable.

Reflection: You can only manifest as an image in a mirror or other reflecting surface (such as a body of water). You can move only as far as the surface extends. If you have this limitation, you can buy the ability to "jump" to a different reflecting surface somewhere else as Teleport. -25%.

If any variation of Shadow Form is always on, it becomes a limitation in the usual way.

Shapeshifting

see pp. B83-85

A fantasy setting requires new special limitations to define certain types of shapeshifters:

Cannot Memorize Forms: Morphs only. Once you shift out of an alternate form, you can only assume it again by recopying it from a source of the same species. -50%.

Linked Changes: Weres only. You and another were are mystically bound together; when one of you changes shape, the other must do so also. This may take either of two forms: synchronized (either both or neither of you is in your base form) or opposed (when one of you is in his base form, the other is in his alternate form). The forms don't need to be the same species; a man who changes into a wolf might be linked to a woman who changes into a hawk, or to a wolf that changes into a man. -25%.

Only When Insubstantial: You can only change shape when you're in immaterial form – for example, as a spirit, or as a projected astral body. This has several variants. If you have to become immaterial to change shape, but can retain the changed shape when material: -5%. If you automatically revert to your base form when you become material: -10%.

Required Intermediate Form: Weres only. Normally, a were with two or more Alternate Forms can change from any form to any other directly. This limitation restricts that freedom. If an Alternate Form cannot change back to the base form directly, this is a -5% limitation. If an Alternate Form can only be reached from other forms, this is a limitation of -10% divided by the total number of other forms it can't be reached from.

Examples: A shapeshifter can become either a wolf or a bat, but has to assume human form in between; each form has one -5% limitation (-10% divided by two other forms). A shapeshifter can go from man to wolfman, and from wolfman to wolf, or the reverse; the wolf form has a -5% limitation for not being able to become human directly, and a -5% limitation for not being accessible from the human form, for a total of -10%.

Skinbound: Weres only. You assume your alternate form by putting on the skin of a creature of that form, which is absorbed into your body in the process; or you take off the skin of your base form, which must be kept safe if you are to change back. Buy either version as a set of gadget limitations; divide the total value of the limitations by 2, since they only apply in one shape. The skin can be either an organic part of your body, which you are magically able to separate from yourself, or a magically created device.

Signature Gear

see p. B85

In some settings, it's possible to acquire magical objects as Signature Gear.

If magical objects can be purchased, base their point value as Signature Gear on the cost of their enchantments. This possibility is common in low fantasy campaigns.

If a market for magical items hasn't been established, base their point value as Signature Gear on the energy cost to enchant them. Usually this reflects a setting where enchanted items are rare and unique, as in many high fantasy campaigns. In such a setting, one character point trades for 25 energy points of enchantment. However, the same approach can also apply to a campaign where adventurers have so many enchanted items that they need servants to carry them. In such a setting, the GM should emphasize cinematic adventure over economic calculation. A reasonable ratio for this kind of campaign is 1,000 energy points for 1 character point.

Some enchanted objects are effectively characters – golems, for example. Buy them as Allies, not as Signature Gear.

Regardless of how an enchanted item's character point value is determined, characters must pay points for it as Signature Gear when they are first created. Once the character is in play, he can only acquire further enchanted items through actions in play. In a high fantasy setting where enchanted objects aren't put up for sale, the GM could require that a character have skill in enchantment or has the Unusual Background "Has enchanter friend," typically worth 5 points.

Single-Minded

see p. B85

Being Single-Minded does not help with complex tasks that *require* divided attention. In particular, it doesn't aid spellcasting or enchantment. It's still useful to mages who are doing thaumatological research or to alchemists who are making a single potion or preparation.

Talent

see pp. B89-91

In fantasy settings, several additional skill groups have associated Talents:

Allure: Dancing, Erotic Art, Make-up, Sex Appeal, Singing. *5 points/level.*

Bard: Heraldry, Literature, Musical Influence, Poetry, Public Speaking, Singing. *5 points/level.*

Devotion: Autohypnosis, Exorcism, Meditation, Religious Ritual. *5 points/level.*

Goodwife: Cooking, Diagnosis, Gardening, Housekeeping, Sewing. *5 points/level.*

Mariner: Boating, Crewman, Freight Handling, Knot-Tying, Meteorology, Navigation, Shiphandling. *10 points/level.*

Master Builder: Architecture, Carpentry, Engineer, Forced Entry, Masonry. *5 points/level.*

Sage: Archaeology, Expert Skill, Geography, Heraldry, Hidden Lore, History, Law, Literature, Occultism, Philosophy, Research, Theology. *10 points/level.*

New Perks

Named Possession 🤝📌*:* You own a possession that has been ritually named (see *Named Objects*, p. 26). By itself, this perk grants only the potential for gaining magical abilities; any abilities it actually possesses are bought as enchantments using the rules for Signature Gear (p. 131). The perk is still needed as well, because a named object, unlike an ordinary enchanted object, can gain new abilities in the future.

Weapon Bond 🤝*:* You own a weapon that is uniquely suited to you. Its quality may be no better than normal, but when you use it, you are at +1 to effective skill. This is not a mystical attunement, but a physical matter of balance, fit to your hand, and the like. If the weapon is lost or destroyed, the bond doesn't transfer to a new weapon, but a character can acquire a new Weapon Bond in play.

You can have a bond to a weapon of Fine or Very Fine quality, or even to one of Cheap quality. The price paid for the weapon reflects the quality but not your special bond with it.

Ally or Asset?

A medieval knight's main skill is mounted combat; he rides a horse of a special heavy breed, trained for battle. Such a horse can be a character and bought as an Ally during the creation of the knight. On the other hand, it also has a price – so it could be starting wealth or Signature Gear. Which way is best? The same question arises for other tame animals and for inanimate objects such as vehicles.

An animal that's used purely for transportation, carrying a rider or baggage or hauling a vehicle, is normally bought out of starting wealth. Such transportation is cheap, and adventurers probably can afford it. A mount trained for the battlefield, especially a knight's warhorse, will be much more expensive. An adventurer whose character concept turns on mounted combat might acquire his warhorse as Signature Gear. The same is true of any animal that's an unusually fine specimen of its breed. All these animals are just animate equipment, though they may be very expensive equipment. If their owner puts more value on a beast, having a personal bond with it, and especially if the animal is loyal or has extraordinary qualities, buy it as an Ally. An animal of a species that isn't normally tamed or trained, and that can't be bought in the market, must be an Ally.

Disadvantages

Addiction

see p. B122

The ancient Greeks believed that a mortal could fall victim to *nympholepsy*, or addiction to the love of a nymph (see the Nymph template on p. 213). Similar warnings have been given against many other supernatural beings, including faeries, vampires, succubi and other demons, and even Lilith herself (p. 54). Nympholepsy is usually legal, but could be illegal if religious or magical authorities try to banish such supernatural lovers. It's normally cheap (indeed free, since most supernatural beings don't care about material wealth) but incapacitating or hallucinogenic. *-10 points if legal; -15 points if illegal.*

A savage place! as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath the waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon lover.

– Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Kubla Khan"

Code of Honor

see p. B127

Code of Honor (Highwayman's): This resembles the Gentleman's Code of Honor, but permits robbery, usually only of those with different political or religious beliefs. Victims deserve courteous treatment, which may include returning goods to those who turn out to be on the same side as the highwayman. *-5 points.*

Not all highwaymen have this Code of Honor; many are rude, even to ladies, or are willing to rob anyone with money or portable assets.

Dependency

see pp. B130-131

Many magical creatures have a Dependency on mana. In a fantasy campaign, this is usually Very Common (-5 points).

Spirits, and other supernatural beings, are often bound to a specific place. The base value of the Dependency reflects the size of the place. An entire physical realm, such as the land or the oceans or the underworld, is Very Common (-5 points). An

environment, such as desert or jungle, or a continent or country is Common (-10 points). A small physical region, such as an island, mountain, or river, or a political region such as a county or large city, is Occasional (-20 points); as a rule of thumb, any area that can be crossed in a day counts. A single site, such as a specific tree or building, is Rare (-30 points).

Dread

see pp. B132-133

Some vampires, lycanthropes, and other undead suffer the effects of Dread only when a crucifix is actually shown to them; they can't sense a concealed one. A new limitation represents this:

Insensitive. You show the usual response to Dread when you actually seen the object you dread, but you can't sense it if it's hidden under clothing or inside a container. -50%.

Dread with the Insensitive limitation does not depend on the wielder of the object having True Faith.

Sense of Duty

see p. B153

A supernatural being may have a duty, not to a single species or member of a species, but to all the living things in a certain place, or even to the place itself; the dryad of a sacred grove may feel a duty to guard and protect that grove. If this applies to all the life in the area, it's worth -10 points for a small area or -15 for a large one; if it only applies to some species (for example, it might exclude sapient beings), reduce this to -5 and -10.

Social Stigma

see pp. B155-156

Certain creatures, such as rats, roaches, and spiders, have a distinctive kind of social stigma (see *Wugs,* p. 59):

Vermin: You are regarded, not as dangerous, but as creepy and disgusting: -2 on all reaction rolls. People will be reluctant to touch you and will be disturbed if you touch them unexpectedly. No one will object if they try to kill you. *-15 points.*

Certain monsters, and even some characters, have another distinctive social stigma:

Dead: You were once a human being or a member of another sapient race. Now your life has ended. Either you're visibly not living, or your death is on record and can be verified if anyone checks your identity. You have no legal right to own property; your heirs can take possession of your worldly goods. If you attempt social interaction with the living, they react to you at -4; those who encounter you unexpectedly must make Fright Checks. *-20 points.*

New Meta-Traits

The following combinations of existing advantages and disadvantages can be useful in creating fantasy races or characters, in addition to those listed on pp. B262-263. They are listed on character sheets as single advantages or disadvantages, to save space.

Corporeal Undead Traits

The corporeal undead are the material remains of the dead, reanimated by some means, usually supernatural. Most corporeal undead have either Unhealing (Partial) or Unhealing (Total); choose one for the racial template. Enhanced ST and HP are also common racial traits, and many corporeal undead have Disturbing Voice or are Mute. Several meta-traits are possible, depending on the condition of the body:

Intact Undead: The dead person recently died and has not decayed significantly. Doesn't Breathe [20]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Immunity to Metabolic Hazards [30]; Injury Tolerance (No Blood, Unliving) [25]; Temperature Tolerance 10 [10]; Unaging [15]. Supernatural Features (No Body Heat, Pallor) [-15]. Features: Sterile. Some intact corpses have the Feature "Will become a rotting corpse," but others are mystically preserved. *95 points.*

Rotting Undead: The dead person's body had time to decay before revival, or (in some versions) decayed after revival. Doesn't Breathe [20]; Doesn't Eat or Drink [10]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Immunity to Metabolic Hazards [30]; Injury Tolerance (No Blood, Unliving) [25]; Temperature Tolerance 10 [10]; Unaging [15]. Appearance (Monstrous; Universal, +25%) [-25]; Bad Smell [-10]; No Sense of Smell/Taste [-5]; Sexless [-1]; Social Stigma (Dead) [-20]. Features: Sterile, Will become a skeleton. *59 points.*

Skeletal Undead: The dead person's flesh has mostly or entirely rotted away; only the bones and teeth remain, held together by scraps of dried tendons or unseen magic. He's light and fast-moving, but somewhat breakable. Basic Speed+1 [20]; Doesn't Breathe [20]; Doesn't Eat or Drink [10]; DR 2 [10]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Immunity to Metabolic Hazards [30]; Injury Tolerance (No Blood, No Brain, No Eyes, No Vitals, Unliving) [40]; Temperature Tolerance 10 [10]; Unaging [15]; Vacuum Support [5]. Appearance (Monstrous; Universal, +25%) [- 25]; Fragile (Brittle) [-15]; No Sense of Smell/Taste [-5]; Skinny [-5]; Social Stigma (Dead) [-20]; Vulnerability (Crushing Attacks, ×2) [-30]; Cannot Float [-1]; Sexless [-1]. Features: Skull has only 2 total DR, Sterile. *68 points.*

Magical Afflictions

Both in folklore and in fiction, magery and other supernatural talents such as shamanism and prophecy often link to more visible traits – sometimes harmful and sometimes just noticeable. Players may wish to follow this concept in creating characters. Suitable traits for a gifted character include Addiction to a hallucinogen, Chronic Pain (migraines), Epilepsy, Klutz, Nightmares (especially for soothsayers), Voices, Weirdness Magnet, and Distinctive Features (red hair is popular in Celtic-influenced settings). Blindness is traditional for bards. Magically gifted people may also assume the role of the opposite sex, openly (see *Berdaches,* p. 57) or in secret, or prefer same-sex relationships. Whether this is a disadvantage depends on the attitudes held by their cultures.

Mummified Undead: Whether by artificial preservation or exposure to a dry natural environment, the dead person dried out instead of rotting. The resulting dried tissues catch fire easily, the major vulnerability of this type of corporeal undead. Doesn't Breathe [20]; Doesn't Eat or Drink [10]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Immunity to Metabolic Hazards [30]; Injury Tolerance (No Blood, No Brains, No Vitals, Unliving) [35]; Temperature Tolerance 10 [10]; Unaging [15]. Appearance (Monstrous; Universal, +25%) [-25]; Fragile (Combustible) [-5]; Social Stigma (Dead) [-20]. Features: Sterile. *80 points.*

Spirit Traits

In a fantasy setting, spirits may be nearly everywhere. Every living thing, or even every stream and boulder, may have its own spirit; every spell may require the aid of a spirit. But most spirits are completely imperceptible, except to other spirits and specially gifted mortals. A spirit of this kind would have the following meta-trait:

Unmanifested Spirit: You are a completely immaterial entity. You can perceive the physical world, but you can't affect it in any way, and you're undetectable to normal physical senses. Your continued existence does not depend on anything physical, and you are immune to physical harm. Doesn't Breathe [20]; Doesn't Eat or Drink [10]; Doesn't Sleep [20]; Immunity to Metabolic Hazards [30]; Insubstantiality (Always On, -50%) [40]; Invisibility (Substantial Only, -10%) [36]; Unaging [15]; and Mute (Substantial Only, -10%) [-22]. *149 points.*

Note: This meta-trait is nearly the same as Astral Entity (p. B263), except that the spirit also cannot speak to material beings.

To create a spirit that *can* interact with the material world in various ways, take Unmanifested Spirit *and* one or more additional meta-traits from the following sets.

Speech

To create a spirit that can talk to mortals, take one of the following meta-traits:

Every living thing, or even every stream and boulder, may have its own spirit; every spell may require the aid of a spirit.

Difficult Speech: You can talk to physical beings while in your spirit form, but it takes a substantial effort: 1 FP/minute of speech. *21 points.*

Not Mute: You can talk to physical beings freely while in your spirit form. *22 points.*

Note: The Astral Entity meta-trait amounts to Unmanifested Spirit [149] and Not Mute [22].

Visibility

To create a spirit that can show itself to mortals, take one of the following traits:

Apparition: You can become visible, but with great effort; each second of visibility costs 1 FP. Invisibility (Usually On, +5%; Substantial Only, -10%) [38] *replaces* Invisibility (Substantial Only, -10%) [36]. *2 points.*

Phantasm: You can become visible when you like, as long as you like. Invisibility (Switchable, +10%; Substantial Only, -10%) [40] *replaces* Invisibility (Substantial Only, -10%) [36]. *4 points.*

Materialization

To create a spirit that can have assume a physical body, take one of the following meta-traits:

Materialization: You can form a physical body for yourself, for a limited time. This has two versions. In the (1 FP/second) version, Insubstantiality (Usually On, -40%) [48] *replaces* Insubstantiality (Always On, -50%) [40], Invisibility (Substantial Only, -10%; Only in Spirit Form, -10%) [32] *replaces* Invisibility (Substantial Only, -10%) [36], and Mute (Substantial Only, -10%; Only in Spirit Form, -10%) [-20] *replaces* Mute (Substantial Only, -10%) [-22]. *6 points*. In the (1 FP/minute) version, Insubstantiality (Difficult Materialization, -20%) [64] is the replacement for Insubstantiality (Always On, -50%) [40]; the other two replacements are the same. *22 points.*

If you have either of these meta-traits, the cost of Difficult Speech drops to 19 points, and the cost of Not Mute to 20 points. The costs of Apparition and Phantasm stay the same.

Other Abilities

Some spirits have other powers that enable them to affect the physical world: possessing the bodies of mortals, manipulating physical objects, casting spells, or using magical or other powers. A spirit that can temporarily possess a mortal simply has Possession (Spiritual, -20%) [80]. This does not need definition as a meta-trait; it already *is* a single trait. For the other two abilities, use the following meta-traits:

Magical Spirit: You are capable of affecting the physical world through magic, psionics, or spiritual powers. Insubstantiality (Affects Substantial, +100%; Always On, -50%) [120] *replaces* Insubstantiality (Always On, -50%) [40]. *80 points.*

Poltergeist: You can move small physical objects around while immaterial. To do this you must also have Magical Spirit. Buy as Telekinesis (Melee Attack, reach C, 1, -20%) [4/level].

Skills

Area Knowledge

see pp. B176-177

Characters may have Area Knowledge of one or more magical realms. Boundaries often have only a vague or undefined "extent" in any physical sense, so classify realms by the number of beings inhabiting them. Mount Olympus would be comparable to a city; the Christian Hell would be comparable to a planet – usually the largest "area" a fantasy campaign will contain.

In general, inhabitants of the material world have no Area Knowledge default for magical realms. If the magical realm is "close to" the material world and shares its

major geographical features, an Area Knowledge roll will provide knowledge of those purely physical features. In a setting with occasional traffic between different planes or magical realms, people in the material world will have Area Knowledge of the entire system. This knowledge is comparable to that of an interplanetary state, with knowledge of each plane being comparable to that of a planet. In a Scandinavian fantasy setting, for example, characters might have Area Knowledge of the Nine Worlds.

If the material world has magical features, such as varying mana levels, Area Knowledge will include them for anyone with Magery 0.

Combat Art or Sport

see p. B184

In a decadent empire, especially one with an introverted imperial court (see *Imperial Capitals*, p. 96), aristocrats may study highly formalized combat techniques for executing impressive formal drills, stylized duels, or practicing meditative rituals, but not for staying alive on the battlefield. This can fit a low fantasy campaign, with an aristocratic hero learning to survive on the frontier, or a light fantasy campaign, where a clash of styles leads to entertaining mishaps.

Criminology/TL

see p. B186

In a setting where black magic, curses, human sacrifice, or the like are common, Criminology has a separate required specialization dealing with them: Criminology (Occult). Occult and conventional criminology default to each other at -4. A conventional criminologist who fails his occult Criminology roll while investigating a magical crime – but who would have succeeded at a conventional Criminology roll – will recognize that he needs to call in a specialist, and vice versa for an occult Criminologist.

Current Affairs/TL

see pp. B186-187

In many fantasy settings, news travels slowly. Apply the -1 penalty per *week* instead of per day. Knowledge obtained from a Current Affairs roll will be much less current. The standard news medium is local gossip; visits from traveling bards are the equivalent of subscribing to a news service.

Within a city, especially a large city, apply the usual -1 per day for news of civic events.

Enthrallment

see pp. B191-192

At the GM's option, Dancing or Erotic Art may substitute for Public Speaking as prerequisites for the Enthrallment skills.

Expert Skill

see pp. B193-194

In nonliterate societies, a new expert skill is needed:

Bardic Lore: Knowledge of poems not for their literary value, but for the information they contain. Study Literature teaches the good stories and persuasive love songs. Substitutes for Research in a nonliterate society. Can substitute for Diagnosis, Geography (Regional), History, Law, Naturalist, Occultism, or Theology.

Fortune-Telling

see p. B196

In a setting with working magic, some forms of fortune-telling may provide real knowledge of the future, distant events, or hidden truths. This creates an entirely different skill than the psychologically based readings of nonmagical settings, though it uses the same techniques, such as astrology or feng shui; see Soothsaying (p. 150).

Games

see p. B197

In a chivalric setting, tournaments count as sporting events, and learning their rules counts as a specialization of Games skill.

If dueling is either legal or customary, knowledge of its rules is also a specialization of Games skill. Usually not identical to the rules for purely sporting events, the two skills default to each other at -3.

In a milieu where wizards fight magical duels, knowing the rules for such contests is a possible specialization of this skill. It does not grant any expertise with casting spells.

Hazardous Materials/TL

see p. B199

Fantasy settings, especially dark fantasy settings, have some very unusual hazardous materials. In such a world, anyone with this skill has a chance to recognize spoiled potions, alchemical waste, magically contaminated or accursed objects, carcasses of unnatural monsters, and the like. This ordinarily depends on the physical senses, but Magery 0 allows detection of purely supernatural "wrongness."

Linguistics

see p. B205

In a fantasy setting, Linguistics may have a new required specialization: Linguistics (Animal). It confers the same benefits for animal languages that the usual form of Linguistics confers for human languages. This skill is only available with GM permission. Mimicry-12, specialized in Animal Sounds or Bird Calls, or an appropriate form of the Mimicry advantage, is a prerequisite.

Pharmacy/TL

see p. B213

Paracelsus experimented with the medicinal use of inorganic substances such as arsenic and mercury during the Renaissance (TL4), and the roots of his work go back to medieval alchemy. A GM can define this as an early form of Pharmacy (Synthetic).

Riding

see p. B217

Riding horses became widespread at TL2, but the stirrup was not in common use until TL3. Riding with and without stirrups are different familiarities within the skill of Riding: Horse (see p. B217). They default to each other at -3 . . . the usual -2 and an extra -1 from what amounts to a TL difference. Stirrupless riders cannot use the Lance skill. For more information, see p. 220 in *Roma Arcana*.

Savoir-Faire

see p. B218

If mages frequently spend time with other mages, this skill has an additional specialization:

Magical: You can judge another mage's rank in magical society, and know what degree of deference he should receive and how to show it. If mages fight magical duels, you know the social protocol of such a duel. Relative standing is based on Magical Rank (p. 130), if it exists; otherwise, on IQ+Magery.

Thrown Weapon

see p. B226

In fantasy settings, another specialization may be available:

Disc: A flat, circular missile, thrown with a spinning motion, such as the Roman discus or the Indian chakram.

New Techniques

Chariot Archery

Hard

Default: Bow-6.
Prerequisites: Bow; cannot exceed Bow skill.

This technique lets you use a bow *effectively* while riding in a chariot or other wheeled vehicle. The modifiers for firing while moving (p. B397) can never reduce your Bow skill below your Chariot Archery level. (Other penalties apply normally.) For instance, if you had Bow-13 and Chariot Archery-11, the penalties for archery from a moving vehicle would never reduce your skill below 11, before other modifiers.

Hang From Saddle

Hard

Default: Riding-3.
Prerequisite: Riding; cannot exceed Riding skill -1.

This is the trick riding feat of hanging sideways from one side of a mount, so that most of the body is not exposed to fire from the other side (p. B397). This is always slightly more difficult than riding while upright and facing forward.

No-Hands Riding

Hard

Default: Riding-3.
Prerequisite: Riding; cannot exceed Riding skill level.

This skill controls a horse or other suitable mount without reins, bridle, or bit, communicating with it through posture shifts and knee pressure. It substitutes for Riding skill for this type of riding.

Purse Cutting

Hard

Default: Knife-5.
Prerequisite: Knife.

Learned by thieves, this technique involves grasping a purse or other small item in one hand and cutting through its strings or cord with the other. If successfully executed, it leaves the purse in the thief's possession. The GM makes a Per roll for the victim. If the Purse Cutting roll's margin of success is greater than that for the Per roll, the victim remains unaware of the theft.

Sharp Turn

Hard

Default: Teamster-1.
Prerequisite: Teamster; cannot exceed Teamster skill level.

Charioteers use this technique to avoid the penalty for 120° turns. At top speed, a chariot has a turning radius of 2 yards; that is, a charioteer can execute a 60° turn after moving 2 yards. A sharp turn increases this to a 120° turn (or a 60° turn after a yard). Making a sharp turn requires a roll vs. Teamster-1 (see *Pushing the Envelope*, p. B395). After learning this technique, a charioteer can make such turns without penalty.

Shoot Backward

Hard

Default: Bow-4.
Prerequisites: Riding and Bow; cannot exceed Bow skill level.

This skill allows shooting at a target to the rear while twisting in the saddle of a mount. It does not aid in controlling the mount; roll vs. Riding-1 for that.

Shoot Over Mount

Hard

Default: Bow-4.
Prerequisites: Riding and Bow; cannot exceed Bow skill level.

This skill allows shooting over (or under) a mount while bending or hanging over one side, to hit a foe on the far side. It does not aid in controlling the mount; roll vs. Riding-3 or Hang from Saddle (above) for that.

Skills and Size Modifiers

Making arms or armor for members of larger or smaller races is a challenge for an armorer; the fit, balance, and other qualities need adjustment in ways that may not be obvious. Effective Armoury skill is at -1 per point of difference in SM between the two races. A man making a sword for a halfling (SM -2) would roll against Armoury-2, and so would a halfling making a sword for a man! The same applies to various other crafts and design skills: Architecture, Sewing, and even Cooking. Experience in working for such customers can overcome this difficulty; treat each new SM as a new Familiarity.

Using weapons designed for members of larger or smaller races is also harder: -2 to weapons skill per point of difference in SM. If the penalty is -10 or greater, the weapon is simply not usable. This is in addition to any problems with required ST. The same applies to using tools or other gear. These penalties reflect sheer difference in physical size and cannot be bought off (except by changing size).

Wealth and Status

In most fantasy campaigns, economic transactions aren't the main focus. Money is simply an important limit on what equipment adventurers can have (see *Equipment*, p. 140), a payoff for their adventures, and the price of a visit to the local tavern. In a campaign whose characters are actively involved in the life of a community, instead of just passing through, their wealth and income mainly reflect their social position and maintain their status. The rules in this section fit that approach.

Currency and Prices

In ***GURPS***, the standard unit of currency is always written "$." This doesn't mean that people in a campaign world actually quote prices in dollars. The dollar may equal any actual coin, weight of precious metal or other commodity the GM determines.

Most fantasy settings have gold and silver coinage. ***GURPS*** offers two standard treatments of such coinage.

In a realistic historical economy, a pound of silver is worth $1,000. A typical system of coinage uses silver pennies, smaller than an American dime and worth $4, and brass or copper farthings, worth $1. If pockets haven't been invented, people may carry coins in their mouths. Gold averages 20 times as valuable as silver, but most people never see gold coins. A lord or king can become famous as a "ring-giver" for rewarding his followers with gold rings.

In some fantasy settings, precious metal seems much more common. Kings hand out purses filled with gold, and treasures contain vast amounts of it – a dragon may use his hoard as a bed. In such a world, the purchasing power of gold and silver is much lower. The $ represents an ounce of silver, and a one-ounce gold piece is worth $20.

Depending on how important historical flavor is to the campaign, GMs can quote prices in $, silver pieces, pennies, or the historical or invented name for some commonly used coin. GMs who want a *lot* of flavor can use historical ratios, such as the medieval 240 pennies = 20 shillings = 1 pound (still used in Great Britain until the late 20th century) or Roman coinage (p. 221).

Status and Cost of Living

In ***GURPS***, cost of living defines Status. GMs may understand this in two different ways. In one approach, a person is *born* into a Status, and that gives him the obligation to maintain a certain standard of living. If his income isn't sufficient, he can borrow money (acquiring a Debt), sell his possessions, put on a show of wealth he doesn't have (acquiring a Secret) or be disgraced (acquiring a bad Reputation), but he won't lose his Status. In the other, a person spends money on the cost of living for a Status and *acquires* that Status. If he doesn't spend enough, his Status drops. In most civilizations, the two approaches coexist, but before the Industrial Revolution, the first was more common, especially in rural areas.

Historical fantasy settings often have a triangular pattern of wealth. Most people are peasants, with a Status -1 standard of living. Smaller numbers of people are at Status 0 or higher. Status 0 is still "average," but that average includes a few incredibly rich people and many poor ones. Being Status 0 makes adventurers better off than most people.

A higher-TL society may have a diamond pattern of wealth. Most people are average citizens, with a Status 0 standard of living. Roughly equal numbers of people have lower and higher Status. Being Status 0 puts adventurers on the same level as most other people. In some fantasy societies, magic can improve most people's fortunes enough to produce this pattern of wealth; see *Magic and Technology* (p. 64).

The majority of a peasant farmer's "income" is food he grows on his own farm and eats himself. Out of $300 cost of living, from $150 to $250 is food. From 50% to 80% of this is starch: wheat, rice, maize, or another grain, or potatoes, yams, or another root. Vegetables, fruits, and dairy products add a little flavor and nutrition; meat is a luxury. What's left over pays for fuel, clothing, rent, taxes, tithes, and occasional entertainment or emergencies. People at higher Status eat a more varied diet and have more to spend on things other than food. People at lower Status wear shabby clothes and sometimes go hungry.

Life in the Big City

Transportation is expensive at TL1-4. (Magic may provide cheaper transportation; if it does, the resulting society will look more like the modern world.) Getting food from the farm to the city raises its cost substantially; doubled prices are not uncommon. Since food constitutes the biggest part of cost of living, city people have a higher cost of living.

The simplest way to define this is as higher Status; the average city dweller is Status 0 instead of Status -1. This doesn't mean he eats any better than the Status -1 peasant. He may eat worse. But he eats inside city walls. He may have a larger choice of occupations, or work that is more interesting; he certainly has a larger selection of things to buy and sell, and surroundings that are more interesting.

Supporting a Family

In societies at TL1-4, nearly everyone marries. Those who don't are mostly slaves, bitterly poor free men, or people with religious vows. In the country, the cost of living for Status -1 includes supporting a wife and children. A man with less is usually considered too poor to marry. In the city, because of the high price of food, a man needs to be Status 0 to support a wife and children; Status -1 men can marry only if their wives continue to work.

A man without a wife has lower living expenses. As a rough average, he may need only half as much to support himself. But he isn't really getting the same quality of life. Running a household demands heavy work, or constant supervision of servants. Men aren't trained to do this, and working men are too busy. An unmarried man eats poorer food and has no one to care for him if he falls ill. Supporting a wife is costly, but it brings a higher standard of living.

Income

In terms of game mechanics, ***GURPS*** has three basic sources of income: work; investment income and grants; and profits from sales.

Jobs

Jobs can be defined in various ways. Small farmers and tribal hunters produce things mainly for their own use, performing whatever tasks this requires. Craftsmen and professionals provide for other people's needs and receive payment from the people they serve. Servants and officials work for a specific person, organization, or community and receive payment for the time they make available. In all three sorts of job, the income from the job depends on meeting some set of requirements.

In ***GURPS***, several features define each job: the skills or other qualifications that must be met to have the job; the success roll that determines how well the job is performed; the monthly earnings from the job; and the Wealth level of the job. On a salaried job, income is unaffected by ordinary success or failure; on a freelance job, each point of success or failure increases or decreases income by 10%.

In a campaign, most jobs use occupational templates, and most templates have job descriptions attached; see the templates earlier in this chapter for examples. Non-adventuring jobs don't require such detailed description. However, some adventurers may hold such jobs when not adventuring, and other people around them certainly have these jobs. Here is a short list of jobs of this type for a typical historical fantasy setting. (The income levels are for TL3 settings; adjust them up or down for TL1, 2, or 4.)

Armorer

The job of armorer can serve as a model for most highly skilled artisan jobs with specialized clienteles. Armorers specialize in one kind of weapon or armor (see p. B178). The Jeweler skill enables them to decorate their wares for rich buyers.

Prerequisites: Armoury 14+; Jeweler 11+.

Job Roll: Armoury. On critical failure, gain -1 Reputation for low-quality work.

Monthly Pay: $1,000. Adjusted for margin of success or failure.

Wealth Level: Comfortable. Supports Status 1.

Beggar

Beggars get "paid" by persuading other people to give them money, using such methods as displaying a physical disadvantage or telling a story of hardship – or, sometimes, selling information. City beggars usually have favorite locations on the streets; country beggars often roam from village to village.

Prerequisites: Status -2 or lower.

Job Roll: Streeetwise. On critical failure, beaten severely, suffering 2d hits.

Monthly Pay: $150. Adjusted for margin of success or failure.

Wealth Level: Poor. Supports Status -2.

Barmaid

Barmaids fetch drinks for tavern customers, clean empty tables, and sometimes work in the kitchen, but their real job is influencing the customers to spend more and come back. Much of their income is in tips.

Prerequisites: Savoir-Faire (Servant) 11+ *or* Sex Appeal 11+.

Job Roll: Prerequisite skill. On critical failure, job is lost.

Monthly Pay: $360. Adjusted for margin of success or failure.

Wealth Level: Struggling. Supports Status -1.

Courtier

A courtier spends most of his time in court, attending his king, queen, or emperor. His earnings come from the estate the ruler has granted him, but he doesn't actually live at his estate. Losing the ruler's favor could mean losing his land and all the income it produces.

Prerequisites: Savoir-Faire 14+; Status 3+.

Job Roll: Savoir-Faire. On critical failure, lose favor of ruler; Status decreases by 1 and must leave court.

Monthly Pay: $13,500.

Wealth Level: Very Wealthy. Supports Status 3.

Farmer

Small farmers' lives fall in between rich landowners with large estates and poor laborers with no land. They often raise one main crop for the market, but grow other crops and keep a few animals for their own needs. Their work schedule depends on the growing season; during harvest, they work to the point of exhaustion and still may not accomplish everything. If their crops fail, they go hungry.

Prerequisites: Farming 12+; HT 10+.

Job Roll: Agronomy. On critical failure, one of two things happens: (1) Crops fail because of blight, drought, or infestation with vermin, reducing income (1d × 10)% for six months; (2) one draft animal (ox, donkey, or horse) dies and must be replaced.

Monthly Pay: $300. Adjusted for margin of success or failure.

Wealth Level: Struggling. Supports Status -1.

Fisherman

A coastal salt-water fisherman rows or sails out to sea every morning and brings his catch in every evening. He sells most of it, or his wife does.

Prerequisites: Boating 12+; Fishing 12+; HT 10+.

Job Roll: Worse of Boating or Fishing. On critical failure, boat is lost in a storm and needs replacement.

Monthly Pay: $300. Adjusted for margin of success or failure.

Wealth Level: Struggling. Supports Status -1.

Lackey

An unmarried gentleman, or a married one away from his family, needs someone to do housework. That's the lackey's job. Laziness, harmless incompetence, crude jokes, and giving way to fear when his master has to be brave are a lackey's fringe benefits. This is a salaried job, in theory, but the pay can be irregular.

Prerequisites: Savoir-Faire (Servant) 12+.

Job Roll: Savoir-Faire (Servant). On critical failure, beaten, suffering 1d hits.

Monthly Pay: $350.

Wealth Level: Struggling. Supports Status -1.

Mercenary

Warriors of many sorts could end up in a "free company," fighting for pay. They have no fixed loyalties, but travel from war to war, serving whichever side pays the most. Honorable mercenaries will not betray their contracts or their companions. Several occupational templates could fit a character for this role: archer, barbarian, knight errant, slayer, or even battle wizard.

Prerequisites: Any weapon skill 12+; HT 10+.

Job Roll: Weapon skill. On critical failure, injured for 2d hits.

Monthly Pay: $700. Adjusted for margin of success or failure.

Wealth Level: Average. Supports Status 0.

Priest

A priest's job is to serve his god and lead his community in worship. He isn't supposed to be openly commercial about it. Most priestly incomes take the form of regular salaries. A priest who's paid a fee for each ceremony, or who depends on inspiring worshippers to generosity, may have earnings influenced by his margin of success or failure.

Prerequisites: Religious Ritual 12+; Theology 11+.

Job Roll: Religious Ritual. On critical failure, removed from position for blasphemy, heresy, or impiety.

Monthly Pay: $1,500.

Wealth Level: Comfortable. Supports Status 1.

Smith

This job can serve as a model for most artisan jobs. In medieval and later societies, a smith makes much of his money shoeing horses, but his skills also cover metalworking in general.

Prerequisites: Smith 12+; ST 12+.

Job Roll: Smith. On critical failure, injured on job, suffering 1d hits as burns (from hot metal) or crushing damage (from being kicked by a horse).

Monthly Pay: $600. Adjusted for margin of success or failure.

Wealth Level: Average. Supports Status 0.

Tavernkeeper

The tavernkeeper pours the drinks that the barmaid serves. Most of his customers are probably regulars, but he has to know how to deal with strangers as well. Innkeepers do a similar job, but have Comfortable wealth and rooms and stable stalls to rent.

Prerequisites: Bartender 12+; Psychology 11+.

Job Roll: Worse prerequisite skill. On critical failure, tavern damaged by major brawl; lose 2× monthly income from costs of repair, lost sales during repairs, and fines to legal authorities.

Monthly Pay: $650. Adjusted for margin of success or failure.

Wealth Level: Average. Supports Status 0.

Independent Income

In ***GURPS***, Independent Income includes any source of regular income other than working. In a fantasy setting, owning land, getting an allowance from one's family, owning a house with rooms to rent, and living in a city that gives its citizens free food all count as Independent Income. Some require the recipient to spend a few hours a month collecting the income. This isn't considered a job, as long as the time involved is modest, and as long as no job rolls are required.

In most TL1-4 civilizations, owning land, especially farmland, is more respectable than any other form of wealth. It may be the only form of wealth that counts toward Status.

Feudal societies typically share these attitudes, but the ruler grants land in exchange for military service. Instead of living at the royal court, getting paid in money, and buying what the land produces, the feudal lord lives on the king's land and gets a share of what it yields. As long as the ruler is strong enough to take the land back and give it to someone else, the ruler has Independent Income, which he assigns to his followers to reward their service. If the lords can stay on the land in defiance of the king, the lords have Independent Income. Similar arrangements may apply to courtiers (feudal lords who actually live at court) or priests whose churches have land or investment income.

Sales and Profits

Adventurers may come into possession of valuable objects during their adventures. The previous owners may be long dead, or the adventurers may kill them during the adventure. If they're still alive, the adventurers will have to break the loot up so that it can't be identified, or sell it to a fence who can do so.

Salable items can be personal possessions. A character who has lost his job, or whose investments have failed, may need to sell what he owns to pay his expenses. This can be a dramatic scene, as a samurai sells his sword or a wealthy aristocrat parts with his art collection.

A merchant may buy valuable objects, take them someplace far away where they're rare, and sell them for a higher price. On some trade routes, he may buy different trade goods for the return trip. If that's not an option, he can just take the money back – but he needs to earn twice as much profit from his merchandise to make the trip worthwhile.

To determine the outcome of a sale, make a reaction roll for the buyer or an influence roll for the seller.

Peddlers, storekeepers, and other small traders usually make many sales every month. Petty thieves may visit their fences every few days with new loot. Treat this kind of sale as a freelance job with a monthly job roll, instead of rolling for each transaction. If the sale comes after a long and dangerous journey, a carefully planned theft, or a dungeon crawl – anything that could be treated as an adventure – then a reaction or influence roll determines the proceeds of a sale.

EQUIPMENT

As a rule, characters can spend no more than 20% of their starting wealth on adventuring gear ($200 for characters with average wealth in a typical medieval fantasy setting). The rest must be spent on land, shelter, furniture, heavy equipment, and other bulky items. An exception may be made for anyone whose starting wealth is Poor, or for a wanderer with no fixed home, such as a bard or knight errant.

To start adventurers off better equipped, use the "points for cash" or "points for equipment" option. The GM may permit the exchange of one character point for cash or equipment equivalent to 10% of the standard starting wealth for the campaign ($100 in a medieval fantasy campaign), as specified on p. B26.

A suggested limit on the number of character points used in this way is 30 points total.

What equipment is available is the GM's decision. For an average fantasy campaign, use the lists for the appropriate TL in the ***Basic Set***. Alternatively, the GM may devise a new list for a specific fantasy setting.

Melee Weapon Table

TL	Weapon	Damage	Reach	Parry	Cost	Weight	ST	Notes
POLEARM (DX-5, Spear-4, Staff-4, or Two-Handed Axe/Mace-4)								
1	Gaff	thr-1 cut	2,3*	0U	$100	7	10†	[1]
3	Fire Lance	1d-1 burn	3-5	-1U	$50	5	9†	[2, 3]
SPEAR (DX-5, Polearm-4, or Staff-2)								
2	Trident	thr+3 (0.5) imp	1	0U	$40	5	10	–
	two-handed	thr+4 (0.5) imp	1,2*	0	–	–	10†	–

Exotic Weapons

Ancient and medieval civilizations created some unusual weapons. Not all were practical, but they can add color to a historical fantasy campaign.

[1] Primarily used by seamen; a large hook that can catch hold of an enemy vessel, a large fish, or a human foe and pull it closer – or climb up it, if it's too heavy to move. A Quick Contest of ST determines which of two animate opponents is pulled toward the other. The hook also inflicts 1 point/second of cutting damage while pulling the target resisted by DR; when this equals the target's HP or crippling damage for a limb, it has cut through the target, freeing it to flee or fall.

[2] A rocket tied to the end of a pole, with the exhaust used as a weapon; divide damage by 4 for each additional 2 yards of range.

[3] Some fire lances have pieces of iron embedded in the powder; these are not effective missiles but add 2 pi to damage at the normal reach.

Muscle-Powered Ranged Weapons Table

TL	Weapon	Damage	Acc	Range	Weight	RoF	Shots	Cost	ST	Bulk	Notes
CROSSBOW (DX-4)											
2	Repeating crossbow	thr+2 imp	4	× 15/× 20	10.6/0.6	1	10(20)	$500	9	-5	[1]
SPEAR THROWER (DX-5 or Thrown Weapon (Spear)-4)											
0	Woomera	–	–	–	2	1	1(1)	$40	–	–	[2]
	w. Spear	sw+3 imp	2	×1.5/×2	4	–	–	$40	7	-6	
THROWN WEAPON (DISC) (DX-4)											
2	Discus	thr+2 cr	2	× 4/× 6	2	1	1	$50	–	-3	
2	Chakram	thr+1 cut	1	× 1.5/× 2.5	2	1	1	$50	–	-2	

[1] The repeating crossbow has a magazine for its bolts; it requires cocking between shots (2 seconds) but does not need reloading until the magazine is empty.

[2] The woomera is a true spear thrower, larger than the atlatl, which is a dart or javelin thrower. It requires *two* hands to ready, but only *one* hand to attack.

Vehicles

These few sample vehicles are useful in historical fantasy settings. Many have historical prototypes; others come from fiction, legend, or speculation about unrealized technological possibilities. Some are labeled as TL(*n*+1), if their designs include "fantastic" elements such as ultra-light materials or extremely sophisticated, quasi-living structures. Such vehicles are the work of low-tech Gadgeteers, such as Daedalus, or of races of brilliant artisans, such as the dwarves.

See the ***Basic Set*** for several more vehicles appropriate to historical fantasy settings: the chariot (TL1), the wagon (TL3), the coach (TL4), the canoe (TL0), the penteconter (TL2), and the cog (TL3).

Land Vehicles

The table of land vehicles includes some "vehicles" that have no steering mechanisms, and often no interior occupants. The palanquin is "steered" by the men who are carrying it; the carroballista and oxcart by the draft animals pulling them, under the control of their driver, who walks alongside.

Carroballista: The first version of field artillery, used by the Roman legions: a large scorpion (damage 6d+2 see p. B268) mounted on a wheeled base. Two mules pulled it. There is space in the body for 60 bolts.

Oxcart: The standard farm vehicle from TL1 through TL5 (though after TL3 it was supplemented by the horse-drawn wagon). A yoke of oxen pull it, and the teamster walks alongside guiding the oxen; there is no seat in the cart. A fully loaded cart travels at 2 mph for no more than five hours/day.

Palanquin: A luxury vehicle for the rich, carried about on the shoulders of four strong men, usually slaves.

Land Vehicles

TL	Vehicle	ST/HP	Hnd/SR	HT	Move	LWt.	Load	SM	Occ.	DR	Range	Cost	Locations	Notes
LIFTING														
1	Palanquin	28†	0/1	12c	2/2	0.145t	0.1t	+1	0+1	1	F	$160	4D	[1]
TEAMSTER														
1	Oxcart	33†	-3/3	12c	2/2*	0.6t	0.3t	+1	0	1	F	$250	2D, O, 2W	[1]
2	Carroballista	30†	-3/2	10c	1/4*	0.25t	0.05t	+1	0	4	F	$7,000	2D, 3W	[1]

Water Vehicles

TL	Vehicle	ST/HP	Hnd/SR	HT	Move	LWt.	Load	SM	Occ.
BOATING/TL (SAILBOAT)									
2	Fishing boat (10')	100†	0/2	12c	0.2/4	3.2t	2.2t	+2	2
3+1	Elven sailboat (12')	125†	+2/1	12c	1.5/8	1.9t	1.2t	+2	3
BOATING/TL (UNPOWERED)									
1+1	Elven riverboat (12')	70†	+2/1	13c	0.05/3	0.425t	0.3t	+2	2
3	Rowboat (15')	90†	0/3	12c	0.1/3	1.65t	0.95t	+2	6+1
SHIPHANDLING/TL (SHIP)									
1	Eicoseres (50')	130†	-3/2	11c	0.05/4	5t	2.8t	+6	22
2	Liburnian (60')	180†	-4/3	11c	0.1/4	13t	7t	+6	60
2	Trireme (120')	290†	-3/3	12c	0.1/5	27t	21t	+8	186+14
3	Crusader ship (118')	450	-4/4	11c	0.1/5	600t	510t	+8	72+50
3	Dhow (90')	325†	-3/2	11c	0.2/7	128t	94t	+8	12
3	Drakkar (150')	330†	-3/3	12c	0.2/5	60t	24t	+8	70+70
3+1	Elven sailing ship (90')	340†	-2/4	13c	0.5/9	42t	27t	+7	14
4	Pirate ship (75')	370†	-3/4	12c	0.03/3	64t	14t	+7	43
4	Spanish galleon (150')	680†	-3/5	12c	0.2/7	930t	620t	+8	80+120

[1] Draft animals are men for the palanquin, oxen for the oxcart, and mules for the carroballista.

Water Vehicles

Most boats and ships in this table have historical prototypes:

Crusader Ship: The ship that carried many crusaders to the Holy Land and brought supplies to their kingdoms. A galley, rowed by slaves seated side by side on its benches.

Dhow: The classic Indian Ocean merchantman in which Arabian mariners such as Sinbad made their voyages. The design was distinctive, with minimal framing members, hull planks held together edge to edge by sewing, and a very large sail area. Dhows could not carry enough crew to make more than minor sail adjustments and did not attempt to tack; instead, they followed the monsoon winds from west to east and then from east to west.

Drakkar: A large version of the classic Viking longships that terrorized Europe for centuries.

Eicoseres: A smaller cousin of the penteconter, designed to carry not goods or soldiers but transport messages and important passengers. A galley with a single row of oars on each side.

Fishing Boat: A small sailing craft suitable for fishing on the open sea, or for a variety of other tasks.

Liburnian: A craft typical of the Roman Empire's fleet, assigned to patrolling the Rhine or the Danube. It has a scorpion on a platform at the bow and carries a squad of marines. Propulsion is usually by two rows of oarsmen on each side.

Pirate Ship: A small sailing craft, fit to operate in the Caribbean during the Age of Sail. It carries six 9-lb. cannon at each side and a 3-lb. swivel gun mounted on the stern rail.

Rowboat: An oared watercraft, useful for getting about on a river or in a harbor. Larger seagoing ships will carry one or more of these for use in running errands. Their use as lifeboats historically came much later.

Spanish Galleon: An early 16th-century version of the classic Age of Sail warship, based on the ships of the Spanish Armada. Each side has two 24-lb. guns, two 18-lb. guns, five 10-lb. guns, and five 7-lb. guns.

Trireme: The standard warship of ancient Greece, with three rows of oarsmen on each side able to propel it at high speed, and a ram at the prow to shear off other ships' oars or even damage their hulls. Not designed for long sea voyages; typically put up on the shore every night.

In addition, three craft of elven make are listed; these have advanced sail and hull designs and superior lightness of construction.

Elven Riverboat: A two-man boat suited to paddling up or down a river.

Elven Sailboat: A sailing craft with an advanced rig that has multiple triangular sails and room for a crew of three.

Elven Sailing Ship: A moderately large sailing ship with superb handling and a very large area of sail.

[1] Propelled by paddling, with two paddlers.

[2] Using oars, with six rowers, three per side.

[3] Using oars, with 20 rowers. Under sail, Range –, Move 0.2/7 in fair wind.

[4] Using oars, with 48 rowers in two rows. Under sail, Range –, Move 0.5/6 in fair wind.

[5] Using oars, with 170 rowers in three rows. Under sail, Range –, Move 0.3/6 in fair wind. Has a bronze ram (+1/die collision damage).

[6] Using a single square-rigged sail. With all oars manned (15 oars on each side, two men per oar), Range F, Move 0.04/1.

[7] Using a single, very large lateen sail.

[8] Using a single square-rigged sail. With all oars manned (30 men on each side), Range F, Move 0.25/3.

[9] Using sails, in an advanced Bermuda and jib rig. Armed with a scorpion (see p. B268) mounted on a platform at the bow.

Air Vehicles

TL	Vehicle	ST/HP
PILOTING/TL (GLIDER)		
2	Glider	20†
PILOTING/TL (LIGHT AIRPLANE)		
4+1	Ornithopter	40
PILOTING/TL (LIGHTER-THAN-AIR)		
1	Hot Air Balloon	27†
PILOTING/TL (LOW-G WINGS)		
1+1	Winged Harness	12†

DR	Range	Cost	Locations	Draft	Notes
2	–	$1,200	M, O	2'	
4	–	$8,100	M, O	1.25'	
1	F	$6,300	O	1'	[1]
2	F	$1,500	O	1'	[2]
3	F	$5,900	M, O	3'	[3]
5	F	$13,400	M, O	2'	[4]
10/5	F	$56,700	M, O, Su	3'	[5]
5	–	$106,000	M, O, Su	7'	[6]
2	–	$27,000	M, O	5'	[7]
10	–	$67,000	M, O	4'	[8]
10	–	$108,000	2M,O, Su	4'	[9]
10/5	–	$110,000	M, O, Su	4'	[10]
15	–	$630,000	3M, 2Su	9'	[11]

[1] Must descend 1/8 yard/turn (Enhanced Move 3) to maintain speed. For calculation of turning radius, Basic Move is 10.

[2] Can use thermal updrafts to ascend.

[3] Powered by a clockwork engine made of high-strength spring steel. Also has a ground move on unpowered small wheels, with thrust from flapping its wings: Move 1/5, Hnd 0/1.

[4] A hot air balloon loses lift as it cools; this low-tech version carries no burner or fuel, but must land and reinflate after each day's flight.

[5] Despite the name of the skill, the winged harness is designed for use in 1 G.

[10] Using sails, in a gaffsail and jib rig. Carries six 9-pound cannon per side (see *Vehicular Weapons*, p. 144).

[11] Using sails, in a full-rigged configuration. Armed with two 24-lb. guns, two 18-lb. guns, five 10-lb. guns, and five 7-lb. guns on each side; typically carries 12 rounds of ammunition per gun (a total of 24 broadsides).

Air Vehicles

These aircraft are not historical, but some might have been.

Glider: A very early glider, effectively a manned kite. To launch it, several strong men raise it above their heads, run toward a cliff edge or parapet, and heave.

Hot Air Balloon: Theoretically capable of being made by a late Stone Age empire, this balloon has a leather bag inflated with the smoke from a large fire. Once released from its moorings, it drafts on the wind until the pilots are ready to descend and be retrieved.

Ornithopter: A creation of fantasy, this is an airplane with flapping wings that generate both lift and thrust. Power comes from a clockwork engine made of high-quality spring steel.

Winged Harness: The means Daedalus and Icarus used to escape their captivity in Crete: a pair of artificial wings strapped to the flier's shoulders and powered by his muscles.

Petards

The petard is a TL3-4 device for breaking down doors. It's simply a pot of black powder that can be spiked against a door or hooked over a protrusion; once it's in place, the engineer lights the fuse, jumps down, and gets behind cover as quickly as possible. A typical petard would weigh 8 lbs., cost $16, and cause 6d × 8 exp damage.

For 'tis the sport to have the engineer
Hoist with his own petard.

– *William Shakespeare,* ***Hamlet***

Hnd/SR	HT	Move	LWt.	Load	SM	Occ.	DR	Range	Cost	Locations	Stal	Notes
0/2	10c	5/20	0.16t	0.1t	+4	1	1	–	$850	Wi	5	[1, 2]
0/2	9c	1/17	0.65t	0.1t	+4	1	1	17	$33,500	3W,Wi	5	[3]
–/3	11	0/0	0.35t	0.2t	+9	1+1	0/1	12	$75	Go	0	[4]
-1/1	10c	1/5	0.115t	0.1t	+4	1	1	F	$2,500	O, Wi	5	[5]

Vehicular Weapons

Vehicles may carry a variety of weapons heavier than one man can transport. Three main groups are prevalent: catapults (mechanical artillery), pyrotechnic weapons, and guns. (See also *Exotic Weapons*, p. 141, for the fire lance, another pyrotechnic weapon.)

Catapults

TL	Weapon	Damage	Acc	Range	Weight
ARTILLERY (CATAPULT) (IQ-5, or other Artillery at -4)					
2	Onager	18d cr	2	270/330	4,500/15
3	Trebuchet	63d+63 cr	1	370/460	45,000/60
3	Trebuchet	123d+123 cr	1	590/740	180,000/120
GUNNER (CATAPULT) (DX-4, or other Gunner at -4)					
2	Scorpion	5d imp	3	415/520	110/0.9
2	Scorpion	6d+2 imp	6	430/540	200/1.6

Pyrotechnics

TL	Weapon	Damage	Acc	Range	Weight
GUNNER (ROCKET) (DX-4, or other Gunner at -4)					
3	Rocket (2”)	4d+2 cr	9	150/250	0/4
–	–	6d exp	–	–	–
–	–	spcl.	–	–	–
3	Rocket (4”)	9d cr	9	150/2,000	0/32
–	–	6d × 8 exp	–	–	–
–	–	spcl.	–	–	–
LIQUID PROJECTOR (FLAMETHROWER) (DX-4, or other Liquid Projector at -4)					
3	Fire Siphon	1d burn	5	15/22	670/120

[1] Releases an intense burst of light that illuminates a radius of 190 yards for the 2” rocket or 760 yards for the 4” rocket.

Bombards and Cannon

TL	Weapon	Damage	Acc	Range	Weight
ARTILLERY (CANNON) (IQ-5, or other Artillery at -4)					
3	Bombard, 9”	6d ×4(0.25) pi++	1	400/1,500	4,600/41
3	Bombard, 18”	6d ×8(0.5) pi++	1	560/2,100	36,000/330
3	Bombard, 36”	6d ×17(0.25) pi++	1	800/3,000	290,000/2,600
GUNNER (CANNON) (IQ-5, or other Artillery at -4)					
4	Ship’s Gun, 7 lb.	13d× pi++	2	260/980	2,750/9.3
–	*with Chainshot*	17d(0.5) cut	1	130/490	–
–	*with Grapeshot*	2d-1 pi++	2	43/160	–
4	Ship’s Gun, 9 lb.	6d×3 pi++	2	270/1,000	3,580/12
–	*with Chainshot*	6d×3 (0.5) cut	1	140/500	–
–	*with Grapeshot*	2d pi++	2	45/170	–
4	Ship’s Gun, 10 lb.	6d×3 pi++	2	280/1,000	3,890/13.3
–	*with Chainshot*	6d×3(0.5) cut	1	140/500	–
–	*with Grapeshot*	2d pi++	2	47/170	–
4	Ship’s Gun, 18 lb.	6d×4 pi++	2	300/1,100	7,030/24
–	*with Chainshot*	6d×4(0.5) cut	1	150/550	–
–	*with Grapeshot*	2d+1 pi++	2	50/180	–
4	Ship’s Gun, 24 lb.	6d×4 pi++	2	320/1200	9,540/32
–	*with Chainshot*	6d×4(0.5) cut	1	160/600	–
–	*with Grapeshot*	2d+2 pi++	2	53/200	–
4	Swivel Gun, 3 lb.	10d+2 pi++	1	190/700	315/2.7
–	*with Grapeshot*	1d	–	32/120	315/2.7

[1] A breechloading gun made of wrought iron, with a fixed mount. Fires stone shot. Requires a crew of two.

[2] A breechloading gun made of wrought iron, with a fixed mount. Fires stone shot. Requires a crew of six.

[3] A breechloading gun made of wrought iron, with a fixed mount. Fires stone shot. Requires a crew of 42.

[4] A muzzle-loading gun made of cast iron, with a carriage. Requires a crew of six.

[5] A muzzle-loading gun made of cast iron, with a carriage. Requires a crew of eight.

RoF	*Shots*	*ST*	*Bulk*	*Rcl*	*Cost*	*LC*
1	1(60)	M	-10	–	$14,000	1
1	1(240)	M	-10	–	$95,000	1
1	1(360)	M	-10	–	$360,000	1
1	1(30)	45M†	-10	–	$5,000	2
1	1(35)	65M†	-10	–	$5,200	2

RoF	*Shots*	*ST*	*Bulk*	*Rcl*	*Cost*	*LC*	*Notes*
1	1	–	-10	–	$4	1	
–	–	–	–	–	$5	0	
–	–	–	–	–	$5	1	[1]
1	1	–	-10	–	$32	0	
–	–	–	–	–	$40	0	
–	–	–	–	–	$40	1	[1]
Jet	40	M	-10	–	$2,800	0	

RoF	*Shots*	*ST*	*Bulk*	*Rcl*	*Cost*	*LC*	*Notes*
1	1(40)	M	M	3	$22,000	0	[1]
1	1(90)	M	M	3	$180,000	0	[2]
1	1(120)	M	M	3	$1,400,000	0	[3]
1	1(30)	M	M	3	$8,500	1	[4]
–	–	–	–	–	–	–	
1×16	1×16(30)	–	–	–	–	–	–
1	1(30)	M	M	3	$11,000	1	[5]
–	–	–	–	–	–	–	
1×18	1×18(30)	–	–	–	–	–	–
1	1(30)	M	M	3	$12,000	1	[5]
–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
1×18	1×18(30)	–	–	–	–	–	–
1	1(30)	M	M	3	$22,000	1	[6]
–	–	–	–	–	–	–	
1×22	1×22(30)	–	–	–	–	–	–
1	1(40)	M	M	3	$29,000	1	[7]
–	–	–	–	–	–	–	
1×25	1×25(30)	–	–	–	–	–	–
1	1(30)	50M†	-7	-3/-10	$2,880	1	[8]
1×12	1×12(30)	–	–	–	–	–	–

[6] A muzzle-loading gun made of cast iron, with a carriage. Requires a crew of 13.

[7] A muzzle-loading gun made of cast iron, with a carriage. Requires a crew of 17.

[8] A muzzle-loading gun made of bronze, mounted on a ship's rail. Requires a crew of three. The larger recoil figure is for firing it as a hand-held weapon.

Chapter Seven

Magical Arts

But if you wind up all scorched
You only have yourself to blame;
I don't recommend you push them
When their hands are full of flame.
– Echo's Children,
"Bin There, Dun That"

Sister Katharine stepped through the door into the back corridor, half-lit through high windows by the late afternoon sun. The third annex, Brother Frederick had said. She counted archways and stepped through the third.

They were there waiting for her: Brother Frederick and his two friends – and, she saw, Sister Johanna and Brother Urban as well. She let out a breath she hadn't known she was holding.

Brother Timotheus said, "Good, we're all here. Let's seal the room."

With the rest, Katharine fixed her mind on the thought, "No one is here. Nothing is happening. There is no need to come in." Backed by six minds and six wills, the thought grew stronger, until it was almost tangible. It wrapped itself around the alcove, cloaking them and what they meant to do.

Speaking to all of them, Brother Timotheus said, "Sister Katharine has seen fit to criticize Brother Frederick's training of the new brothers and sisters. Asked for an apology, she has refused to give it." His eyes turned on her. "Sister, having had time to think, and the counsel of your next friends, do you now wish to apologize?"

With only the briefest hesitation, she said, "I cannot apologize, for it is not I who am in the wrong."

"Then will you back your words with the integrity of your mind?"

"I will," she said. "Will Brother Frederick do the same?"

Brother Frederick smiled. "I will," he said. "And you'll regret your interference, Sister."

Timotheus said, "Then let it begin. Sister Katharine, you are the one challenged; you must speak first."

She stepped forward to face Frederick, looking into his eyes. The other four encircled them.

"I meet you, mind to mind," she said.

"I meet you, mind to mind," he answered.

She whispered the next words, and was not sure if he whispered back or echoed her in his thoughts, now audible to her. "What is in our minds is all we know."

They finished the ritual in a single shared thought, "What is in our minds is real."

In her mind, Katharine balanced herself, as Frederick's mindform writhed and changed, and a great cat with human eyes leaped at her, snarling.

GURPS offers many different ways to represent magic in terms of game mechanics. However, the point of involving magic is to tell a certain type of story. Before thinking about the game mechanics of magic, think about what purpose it serves. Why have it in the campaign? What job is it doing there that couldn't be done without including it? In short, why run a fantasy campaign in the first place? The answers suggest what sort of magic will best suit the needs of a campaign.

Uses of Magic

To start with, who can use magic? In some fantasy – and many fantasy games – it's a specialized ability, available only to a privileged few, because it's shrouded in secrecy or it's a rare inborn talent. In other settings, most people know certain forms of magic. These may be the same as the magic taught by mages, but with a narrower range of spells or a lower level of skill. On the other hand, there may be entirely different styles of magic, related to what professional mages do as First Aid is related to Physician, or Brawling to Karate – the magic of common folk.

There are three broad categories of magical arts, which fit into character concepts in three different ways. *Low magic* is magic that anybody might pick up, without systematic formal study, and use in everyday life or emergencies. *High magic* is the magic of powerful wizards, who can learn a variety of spells, cast them on a moment's notice, and have devoted their whole lives to gaining supernatural powers. In between is *formulaic magic*, also learned by full-time specialists through formal study, but not designed for a life of adventure, because it takes time and requires special preparations. If formulaic mages go on adventures, they need protection, or need to learn to protect themselves by nonmagical methods, just like computer hackers or globetrotting archaeologists.

Low magical abilities are effectively advantages. Formulaic magic abilities are effectively technical skills. High magic abilities are effectively superpowers.

This section surveys various types of magical arts, noting which ones fall into which larger category. It offers brief rules for a few of these. For arts that need more elaborate rules, refer to later sections.

Low Magic

Low magic is the magical equivalent of home remedies. In a magical world, even people who haven't studied magic and don't call themselves wizards or magicians may have picked up one or two simple tricks, by natural talent or advanced study of a nonmagical skill. Such abilities can often be used quickly, with no elaborate preparations, but they typically give the user a small edge rather than a dramatic victory. Fantasy worlds where only low magic exists don't have mages as an occupation or character type.

Fantasy worlds don't have to include low magic at all. Letting it exist has the effect of making magic less arcane, more a part of everyday life. This affects the way other forms of magic are perceived; people who can do one or two magical things themselves won't regard a sorcerer as an initiate of some mysterious realm, though they'll still respect his skills and knowledge.

One way to use low magic is as a feature of exotic cultures. In the dominant culture, supernatural abilities may be unknown, rare and largely forgotten, or even deliberately suppressed; but in other cultures, most people still have some unusual talents. In a campaign set during the European expansion, the "exotic cultures" can be the civilizations of Asia, or tribal peoples anywhere; in a traditional genre fantasy setting, they may be elves or goblins.

Craft Magic

In cultures that believe in magic, most professions require students or apprentices to learn special rituals. The smith may chant over his iron; the courtesan may bathe in herb-scented water. In a magical world, these may actually tap magical energies. For a way to present this, see *Talents as Magic* (p. 160).

A god may favor a holy man with superior skills in the god's domain. If these skills come from the god sharing his secret knowledge, treat this simply as a Talent. If they come from the god's supernaturally aiding the holy man, either use the *Talents as Magic* rules, or buy the Talent with a Pact limitation. At the GM's discretion, divinely granted Talent up to +4 may combine with natural Talent up to +4, letting some holy men go beyond the limits of mortal talent.

At the GM's option, using rare and costly materials to make an object may count as a sacrifice, granting additional bonuses to effective skill based on the rules for sacrifices (p. 165). These can exceed the normal limits on Talent bonuses. The material must actually be used up; crushing rubies to powder would count, but studding a sword's hilt with them would not.

Highly skilled people might learn esoteric skills that go beyond the normal limits of human abilities. The various martial arts skills with Trained By A Master as a prerequisite are examples (see *Chi as Magic*, p. 157); so are the Enthrallment skills of bards.

GMs may also allow various professions access to actual spells relevant to their duties. For example, a smith might cast Ignite Fire. For a way to present this, see *Mysteries of the Trade* (p. 162).

Oaths

Formally giving one's word may have magically potent effects. These aren't a Vow, because they're independent of the promiser's will. Treat them as a Destiny acquired during play. The point value is always negative and is determined by how much it could cost to carry out the intended action. An oath has two parties, whose acquired Destinies have equal values.

Swearing an oath is a ceremony and requires a roll against Law or Religious Ritual. If the roll fails, the wording of the oath was defective and doesn't commit the parties to anything. In some settings, an oath may only gain supernatural power in a high-sanctity environment; in others, calling the gods to witness it is sufficient.

What happens if one of the parties tries to break the oath? In settings with very powerful magic, breaking an oath may actually be impossible. The oath may change the course of events to fulfill its terms, or act as a mental compulsion. People who die with oaths unfulfilled may be unable to rest, turning into ghosts or corporeal undead.

Alternatively, an oathbreaker may be magically punished. In some cases, he gains a disadvantage whose point value is twice that of the acquired Destiny. In effect, the negative points for both his Destiny and that of the other party (who is released from his own obligations) appear on his character sheet in a new form.

Single Spells

Another form of low magic is the ability to use a single spell, not learned by studying magic, but instinctive, or learned under stress, or picked up informally as a knack – in any case, bought as an advantage instead of as a skill. See *Fixed Magic*.

True Faith

True Faith is effectively a low magic version of priestly magic. Anyone can have it, priest or layman. It requires no rituals, skills, or special training, and it grants only very specialized benefits. The worshipper's belief in the god is so strong and constant that the god is always present in the worshipper's spirit, and anything that fears the god is driven away by its presence.

At the GM's option, True Faith may grant the ability to bless others. Such blessings usually have a protective effect, which lasts until it is first actually used and then is lost. Examples of suitable effects are a single use of Armor of Faith (p. 128) or protection from the next demonic attack resulting from critical failure in spellcasting (see p. B236).

Man Proposes, God Disposes

A worshipper may want to make a request of a god or other supernatural being. In a world where gods exist, they may answer such requests. If the worshipper has a special relationship with the god, represented by an advantage such as Contact or Patron, follow the rules for the advantage to determine the result. If not, treat it as an NPC reaction. Most worshippers' appeals are either requests for aid or requests for information.

What level of success is required depends on how active the god is. In a world where miracles are rare, only an Excellent reaction will bring aid or information. In a world where they're common, a Very Good reaction is sufficient. A Good reaction is sufficient only in a world where gods and mortals interact all the time. However, where common divine favors are, divine punishments are equally common.

Reaction roll modifiers may apply:

+1 if from a worshipper with Clerical Investment

+2 if from the highest ranked priest in an organized group of worshippers (not cumulative with above)

+3 if from a worshipper with True Faith (not cumulative with above two)

+1 if in contact with a holy relic

-3 if on cursed ground (unless it is cursed because of pollution and the prayer is for vengeance on the polluters!)

-2 if on unconsecrated ground (sanctity Normal or lower; see p. 101)

-1 if made in a temporarily consecrated site (see page 149)

It's not a good idea for mortals to attempt influence rolls against gods; gods usually have much stronger Will and are often Indomitable.

Similar methods work for negotiation with spirits or with demons. With demons, the usual situation is either a commercial transaction or potential combat. A much wider variety of transactions is possible with spirits. Tests of loyalty are not appropriate for gods, who don't become servants, or for demons, who never give more than an outward imitation of loyalty. For other spirits, they may be suitable.

Formulaic Magic

Formulaic magic is the magic of many legends and stories, based on secret knowledge and elaborate rituals. Formulaic mages are professionals, but not usually professional adventurers. Their magic isn't quick or portable. The wizardly foes of pulp fantasy swordsmen were often of this type, able to fill their home bases with mystical traps or conjure up mighty forces to send against the hero, but not at their best in face-to-face combat.

In many campaigns, adventurers go to formulaic mages for help or information. In some, adventurers have to guard formulaic mages whose special skills are needed in the field. If a formulaic mage does become an adventurer, he usually relies on mundane combat skills, rather than magic, when the fighting starts. Think of an adventure hero who's an archaeologist, engineer, or surgeon – his profession may be useful in its own right, but it's not how he survives "in the field."

The boundary between formulaic magic and high magic isn't sharp. The biggest single issue is how long it takes to work magic. Magic that needs an hour or more to perform, such as communing with a god (see the Blessed advantage on p. B40) or quick and dirty enchantment, is definitely formulaic magic. In terms of ***GURPS*** mechanics, any magical ability that has some level of Preparation Required, or takes as long as if it did (a minute or more), counts as formulaic magic. Magic that takes no longer than a single Concentrate maneuver is definitely high magic; it's fast and convenient enough to use in combat.

Ceremonial magic, taking a minimum of 10 seconds, is usually formulaic magic, not only because of the time, but because of other inconveniences such as needing two or more casters.

Several specific types of supernatural abilities are normally carried out as formulaic magic.

Enchanting

A mage can have One-College Magery limited to the College of Enchanting (and the spell Recover Energy). If he learns spells in other colleges, he cannot cast them, but he can use them as prerequisites for the spell Enchant. If he casts Enchant, he can place any of these spells in an enchanted object and use that object to cast the spell. (In creating the object, he's not casting the spell it contains, but using his knowledge of the spell as a resource while casting Enchant.) Producing the enchanted object takes a minimum of one hour and counts as formulaic magic.

The spell Temporary Enchantment (p. 23) provides a less expensive way for a mage limited to enchantment to cast spells. For example, a ring enchanted with Deflect Missile would normally cost 200 energy points. A ring that can cast Deflect Missile *once* costs only 30 energy points.

Prayer

Players may approach supernatural entities as a worshipper. The result of such an appeal depends on the supplicant. Is he a holy man, a priest, or an ordinary worshipper?

A holy man has an established relationship with a god. Often the god will actually be his Patron, and his prayers count as requests for a Patron's aid. Most divine Patrons practice Minimal Intervention and require adoption of a Pact in return for their aid.

A priest is a specialist in making requests for divine aid in the customary form, using the skill of Religious Ritual. Whether the god actually does anything is determined by a reaction roll (see *Man Proposes, God Disposes*, p. 148). Using Religious Ritual doesn't count as an influence roll; it just gets the god's attention. Priests can make sacrifices to improve the god's reaction to a request (see *Sacrificial Magic*, p. 165).

Any worshipper can appeal to a god for help. If he has the skill of Religious Ritual, or if he has True Faith, he can gain the god's ear anywhere. But even without this, he can go to a high-sanctity place and make his appeal.

Sacred Places

Some places naturally have high or very high sanctity (see *Sanctity*, p. 101). A priest with the skill of Religious Ritual can raise the sanctity level of a place, in relation to the god the priest worships. An ordinary worshipper can't do this, even if he knows Religious Ritual; it's a prerogative of Clerical Investment. Temporarily consecrating a place requires an hour of prayer and ceremonial purification followed by a Religious Ritual roll. The resulting high sanctity lasts for a full day.

For the benefits of high sanctity, see *Prayer* (above) and *Miracles* (p. 151).

Mana levels can't be affected in the same way. They depend on the flow of supernatural energy through the natural environment. Some characters have the ability to affect mana levels as an advantage. Rituals such as "raising the cone of power," which don't require special gifts to perform, should be treated as part of the normal process of ceremonial spellcasting; don't make a separate roll for them.

Shamanism

Shamans, like priests, enter into relationships with supernatural beings. However, a shaman's relationship is a contract or bargain between equals, not a submission to a higher power. Typically, shamans deal more with spirits than with gods. Spirits are more comparable to human beings in power, and safer bargaining partners. A shaman negotiates either on his own behalf or as an agent for someone lacking shamanistic skills.

The simplest way for a shaman to contact spirits is through the skill of Religious Ritual. The shaman chants and speaks requests, and the spirit may choose to manifest itself. However, shamans have more direct ways to interact with spirits:

Detect (Spirits; Vague, -50%) [5] lets a shaman know that spirits are present.

Medium [10] lets him know that they're present and speaking with him.

Detect (Spirits) [10] lets him know that they're present, in what numbers, and in what directions. On an IQ roll, he can analyze what kind of spirits they are.

See Invisible (Spirits) [15] lets him see them, *if* something opaque doesn't block his line of sight.

Detect (Spirits; Precise, +50%) [15] gives him everything in Detect (Spirits), plus the ability to judge the distance to the spirits.

Insubstantiality (Projection, -50%) [40] lets him step out of his body, physically interact with spirits, and enter the spirit plane, if a path is available. If he also has Invisibility (Only in Spirit Form, -10%; Substantial Only, -10%) [32], he's invisible when in astral form.

Shamans acquire these abilities as Spirit Powers (p. 159); in some settings, shamans may be *required* to have Spirit Powers. Such abilities may require entering a trance (see *Trance Magic*, p. 151).

A shaman who has established communication with spirits can attempt to gain benefits from them. Treat these attempts as social interactions, represented by reaction rolls (see *Man Proposes, God Disposes*, p. 148). However, a shaman may acquire a lasting relationship with a spirit. If the spirit is present in the material world, in a materialized or possessed body, treat it as an Ally; a failed frequency of appearance roll often means its powers didn't work. If the spirit will come to the shaman when called, treat it as a Summonable Ally, with a failed roll meaning it didn't manifest itself. Spirits that the shaman has to contact at a shrine or in the spirit world itself are Contacts; for defining Contact Groups, each kind of spirits in each particular region counts as one group. More powerful spirits who remain in the spirit world are usually Patrons.

Some shamans are also capable of Spirit Trapping (p. 130). This can grant them the use of spells, or access to arcane knowledge.

Soothsaying

Many cultures have magical procedures for foretelling the future or learning concealed truths, often practiced by people who claim no other magical abilities. These fall into four broad types.

Prophecy is the ability to foretell the future or perceive distant or hidden events while in a trance. The prophets of the Old Testament and the Oracle of Delphi had such abilities. The advantage Blessed or Very Blessed represents this ability. See also *Psionics as Magic* (p. 158).

Spontaneous divination is completely unstructured; the soothsayer looks about for a significant event and then interprets it according to what spontaneously comes into his mind. The advantage Oracle represents this practice. Usually signs are natural events, but dreams can play the same role. Opening a Bible and picking out a verse at random is comparable.

Omens are striking natural or accidental events that are signs of other events: lightning striking a person or building, or the birth of deformed animals. In some cases, the gods send them as warnings; in others, they are shadows cast by forthcoming events. No dice roll is needed to notice them; they draw attention to themselves. Interpreting them still requires a dice roll. An oracle can do this with a roll vs. IQ. In some settings, anyone can attempt to interpret an omen with a roll vs. IQ; at the GM's option, this may have a penalty of -1 to -5, depending on how unusual the omen is. Temples or scholars may have kept archives of past omens and what they meant. Finding a similar omen in such an archive requires a Research roll.

Divinatory arts are systematic techniques for predicting the future or uncovering hidden truths. They use the Fortune-Telling skill, but in a fantasy setting, the skill can actually work. If so, don't apply skill modifiers based on the assumption that what the fortune-teller is doing is psychologically manipulating the subject; use the same long-distance modifiers as for information spells (p. B241). Supernaturally gifted diviners can buy up to four levels of Skill Bonus to Fortune-Telling with Preparation Required. At the GM's option, specific divinatory arts can come from skills other than Fortune-Telling, such as Esoteric Medicine, and can grant Skill Bonuses to those other skills.

GMs may allow the practice of a divinatory art with simple or complex rituals that take shorter or longer. The diviner can gain different bonuses to skill depending on how long he prepares for its use. For example, a medical diviner might have Skill Bonus (+2 Esoteric Medicine; Preparation Required: 1 minute, -20%) [3], but (+3 Esoteric Medicine; Preparation Required, 1 hour, -50%) or (+4 Esoteric Medicine; Preparation Required, 8 hours, -60%) would have the same point cost. If a quick divination doesn't work, the GM can allow a further attempt – the skill bonus and the preparation time increasing on each successive try.

All things are filled full of signs, and it is a wise man who can learn about one thing from another.

– *Plotinus,* ***Enneads***

Naming the Arts

Traditionally, magical arts have names derived from Greek or Latin. To make up a name for a new magical art in this tradition, consult a list of Greek or Latin word roots, choose a root that describes some aspect of the art, and give it a suitable suffix.

A *-mancy* is usually a magical art that grants knowledge or perception: geomancy is divination by the shape of the earth, from *gaia* (earth).

A *-spicy* or *-scopy* is more narrowly a magical art that grants perception: extispicy is divination by entrails, from *exta* (entrails). Use *-scopy* with Greek roots, *-spicy* with Latin.

An *-urgy* is usually a magical art that actively changes the world: theurgy is calling on divine powers to do magical, from *theos* (god).

Names of magical arts sometimes break these rules. For example, necromancy was originally divination by calling on the spirits of the dead, as in Saul's visit to the witch of Endor. It was equivalent to 19th-century spiritualism. However, over the centuries, the meaning expanded to include active magic that affected the dead, or used them to affect the living, or more generally any sort of evil or gruesome magic.

She lifted them out of their hiding place, the New Aquarius and the ninety-first edition of the Speculum Astronomi, written in the bastard Latin that had been the magi's first language; then the fussy, much-abused Star-Follower's Handbook, and her copy of the Hegemonic Navy's Topoi. One was missing.

– Melissa Scott,
Five-Twelfths of Heaven

Trance Magic

Supernatural abilities such as Channeling and Medium can have Preparation Required (p. B114). This represents the trance, through meditation or ritual, required before using these abilities. Other supernatural abilities can have the same requirement. In particular, "psychic" supernatural abilities (see *Psionics as Magic*, p. 158) often require entering a trance.

Some supernatural advantages, such as Blessed or Very Blessed, only work in a trance. Don't apply the Preparation Required limitation to such abilities.

High Magic

High magic is the kind of spellcasting found in many roleplaying games. Spellcasters can use it quickly, like low magic. But like formulaic magic, it can be learned through study, adding new skills to the mage's repertoire (or even inventing them), and can produce very potent results. This combination of speed, power, and versatility makes mages very effective in combat.

Any spell cast with a Concentrate maneuver, whether based on Magery or on Power Investiture, counts as high magic. Casting spells ceremonially counts as high magic if done unassisted; the ×10 multiplier for casting time is no more restrictive than the limitation Takes Extra Time.

Normally, if a mage needs an elaborate procedure to prepare a spell for use, the spell needs Preparation Required and counts as formulaic magic. But if the procedure isn't tied to a specific spell, and is necessary to activate or maintain magical abilities in general, a mage may choose which spell to cast on the spot. A spell chosen this way can be high magic, and the maintenance process does not need Preparation Required but Pact.

Sorcerers may also buy spells as Modular Abilities. The advance preparation is picking a set of spells to carry around during an adventure. Only those spells are available, but they work normally.

Miracles

A god may grant his worshippers the power to work miracles in his name. Power Investiture can represent this when coupled with a limited list of spells. Power Investiture permanently grants the worshipper the use of the god's power. While subject to the same kind of conditions a Pact would represent, this doesn't get the Pact limitation; the conditions are inherent.

A god's temple is a high-sanctity location for the god. On its grounds, any priest who has learned one of the god's spells can cast that spell, if it serves the god's purposes. Neither Magery nor Power Investiture is required for this. This also works on temporarily consecrated ground (see *Sacred Places*, p. 149), but the consecration ritual counts as formulaic magic.

Meditative Magic

In some traditions, mages or holy men go through regular spiritual exercises such as yoga. By these exercises, they accumulate spiritual power that they use to perform amazing feats. The design of Meditative Magic (p. 161) represents this process.

Thaumaturgy and Sorcery

Mana-based magic, or thaumaturgy, based on applying the principles of thaumatology, is a form of high magic. The same is true of sorcery, based on applying the principles of ritual magic. The impersonal magical forces, in one case, or the controlled spirits, in the other, stand ready for the mage's commands, which require only a Concentrate maneuver and a spell roll.

Historical Magic

Portrayals of magic in fantasy reflect actual beliefs about the supernatural in past and present human cultures – though often the reflection is distorted. Knowing what real magical practitioners thought they were doing can help make fantasy magic seem more authentic.

Tribal societies usually believe in a variety of spirits, and many have specialists in dealing with them – shamans – even if they have no other occupational specialists. Shamans often have magical afflictions (p. 133). They practice a variety of arts, from divination and healing to cursing their enemies, and are often associated with mythic trickster figures. Shamanistic traditions could have influenced a number of religions, including Shinto and Taoism.

Priests typically exist in somewhat settled societies, such as Neolithic farmers. Their main role is leading their communities in worship. Where a shaman might perform curing rituals in private, a priest would lead a public prayer for the sick man's recovery. In tribal societies, each village may have its own cult, whereas civilized societies have central temples in the cities or even multiple temples to the same god or gods across a wide area.

Another class of religious practitioners is visionary religious poets such as the bards of Celtic lands, the *vates* of Rome, the prophets of Israel, or the rishis of India. Often they operate outside the temple cults like shamans.

The emergence of market economies and occupational specialization leads to the development of professional magic. Diviners, healers, and exorcists will perform their special tasks for a fee. Systematic methods emerge for divination (see *Soothsaying*, p. 150).

The large-scale, multiethnic empires of the Iron Age developed universalistic religions such as Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam, founded on philosophical or theological ideas and aimed at widespread conversions. Christianity and Islam both tended to condemn any method of gaining supernatural powers other than prayer. This led to stories about wicked magicians who served evil powers.

During the same period, alchemical theorists produced lists of elements: earth, water, air, and fire in the West, earth, water, fire, metal, and wood in East Asia. Their speculations influenced both magical thinking and medicine, as in the Western theory of the four humors (black bile, phlegm, blood, and yellow bile) or Chinese ideas about chi. The zodiacal signs in Western astrology are grouped under earth, water, air, and fire, and the four suits of cards (both Tarot and standard playing cards) have elemental correspondences as well.

The full emergence of natural science with heliocentric astronomy in the Renaissance undermined the appeal of magic by explaining natural events without appealing to supernatural causes. But the communities of scientists and magicians overlapped for a long time; Isaac Newton did more work on alchemy than on physics, for example. And science itself became a source of new magical ideas. Theories such as animal magnetism, physiognomy, and phrenology survived in the magical community after scientists rejected them, side by side with older theories such as astrology. New speculations arose on the fringes of scientific theory, such as the 19th-century search for lost continents and ancestral human races or various 20th-century ideas based on quantum mechanics. And attempts were made at scientific investigation of the paranormal, such as cryptozoology, parapsychology, and ufology. All these ingredients contributed to what is now called "New Age" thinking.

Even more recently, some practitioners of magic have developed approaches called "chaos magic" or "postmodern magic." Their details vary a great deal from magician to magician. If they have anything in common, it's the individual magician's freedom to develop an approach to magic – to adopt any tradition, to borrow from diverse traditions, or to try entirely new approaches. Where many older systems held that the magician's power came from the authority of a tradition, chaos magic suggests that the tradition's authority comes from the magician's power.

The Structure of Magic

The standard ***GURPS*** magic system is designed to make wizards interesting, varied, and powerful . . . but not too powerful. If magic couldn't do anything, it wouldn't be interesting; but if it could do everything, *that* wouldn't be interesting, either. The standard system limits magic in specific ways, in several dimensions. Alternate magic systems may create different limits in different ways, but they need to address the same concerns.

Levels of Power

This limits the effects of magical spells. Information spells answer a limited number of questions, attack spells do a measured amount of damage, healing spells cure a measured amount of damage, and so on. Each result has an energy cost, and each mage can only use so much energy. Some spells can achieve greater or smaller effects, but achieving greater effects has a higher energy cost, using up more of the mage's resources.

These limits make it possible to challenge mages. If a mage could simply cast Omnipotence and change reality into exactly what he wanted, the result wouldn't be a game, but a private fantasy. There would never be any sense of risk or excitement. Drama comes from making choices.

Limits also make the game equally interesting for PCs who aren't mages. A mage has access to spells that help avoid almost any problem that other characters deal with through strength and skill. When the number of spells cast is limited, mages need to rely on warriors, rogues, and technicians for ordinary tasks, saving their own abilities for the problems where they make the biggest difference. In the meantime, the other adventurers can show their worth.

Standard magic treats magical capability like a battery. It holds a certain number of charges, and when those are gone, it's used up. In a very-high-mana setting, where magical energy recharges fully every turn, magical capability is more like a generator, with a certain sustainable power output. This provides a much higher level of power, because the magical energy *per turn* is the same as the *total* magical energy in other environments. If you like the generator approach, but don't want that much power, you can limit mages within the generator approach. A simple limit requires that spells be maintained every turn, instead of every minute or longer.

It's also possible to change things in the other direction. Require a much slower method of recharging the battery than using FP to cast spells. See, for example, the rules for *Meditative Magic* (pp. 161-162) and *Blood Magic* (p. 167). A mage with slow or difficult recharge can have a battery with a higher storage limit, or no limit at all. He'll have to economize on spellcasting, so that one adventure's worth of spells doesn't use more energy than he can regain in an entire campaign.

Levels of Skill and Skill Hierarchies

Using a magical spell requires a skill roll. This means there's a chance of a spell not working, which makes magic more dramatic. And since higher skill levels (which mean more reliable spellcasting) cost character points, there's a tradeoff in character design: learn a few spells really well, or learn more spells somewhat less well.

Most spells have other spells as prerequisites chosen from the same college. This encourages mage character concepts that emphasize one or two colleges in a coherent way. It also limits the range of viable character concepts. A mage wanting to know advanced spells spends points to learn all their prerequisites, which doesn't leave many points for other abilities.

Other methods favor mages with structured spell lists. One defines each college, instead of each spell, as a Very Hard skill (see *Ritual Magic*, p. B242). Spells then default to the college skill as Hard techniques. Instead of having prerequisites, they are at -1 for each prerequisite the spell would normally have. The college skills themselves default to a core skill at -6, normally either Ritual Magic (in traditions based on commanding spirits) or Thaumatology (in traditions based on impersonal manipulation of supernatural forces). The result is a three-level skill hierarchy: core skill, college or path skills, and spells as techniques. The same structure may help design other magic systems.

In the standard spell-based magic system, the skill of Thaumatology still exists, but as a research and analysis skill (see *Theoretical Magic and Spell Design*, p. 167). This differentiates scholar-mages who research spells from adventurer-mages who cast them in the field, but may not represent how the spells work.

This may not suit all campaigns or worlds. RPG wizards often advance through experience gained on adventures, which presumably represents the hard, fast lessons of combat experience and do-or-die practice. In legend and fiction, on the other hand, magic is often an intensely scholarly activity, power gained through hours of study and laboratory work – or possibly through similarly long hours of meditation. If spells are techniques limited by Thaumatology or the Ritual Magic skill, effective mages must be scholars. To produce even more scholarly wizards, GMs may require that points spent on spells, and on Thaumatology, Ritual Magic, and college skills, can only be acquired by study. Wizards can still profit from adventuring experience, but only with respect to the same nonmagical skills and other abilities as any other adventurer. GMs should note that this rule will probably make many wizards unwilling to venture out when they could be holed up at home with a good book.

Another possibility could allow access to a restricted spell list and waive prerequisites within the list. A list of 12-20 spells is a good size; a shorter list wouldn't provide room for character growth or for different characters in the same tradition, while a longer one could cover enough different options to amount to general-purpose magic. Restricted lists are standard for divinely granted magic (see *Clerical Magic*, p. B242).

Speed

Ordinary magic can take as little as one second per spell. This design supports use in combat.

Ceremonial magic is not fast enough to use in a hand-to-hand fight. However, multiplying casting time by 10, it's roughly as fast as using black powder firearms, and not much slower than using heavy crossbows. So ceremonial mages could be useful in battle situations where the enemy couldn't get at them immediately – behind a shield wall or a row of pikemen, or in a fortress, or simply on a hilltop looking down on the enemy. If the ability to cast spells were common, lines of mages might face off against each other in the style of Napoleonic warfare, hurling fireballs and lightning bolts.

Mages with short spellcasting times will also play various support roles; they may supplement or replace the engineer, medical, and signal corps. Mages with longer casting times, including specialist enchanters, will play purely support roles, as part of the technical staff of a fighting force.

Range

Of course, the range of a fireball spell (50 yards Max) is a bit short for Napoleonic or Age of Sail combat. Just going by Basic Move, an average man could cross the 50 yards in the 10 seconds a ceremonial mage would need to cast a 1d Fireball spell. This doesn't begin to compete with a musket.

A simple way to make magic useful in post-gunpowder combat would be to let ceremonial mages use the system of long-distance modifiers (p. B241) for all spells. A penalty of 0 within 200 yards and -1 within 1/2 mile would fit most battle situations up to the year 1900. Wizards need not carry ammunition, justifying their appearance in battles.

The dramatic point of range limitations is to allow contests between adventurers and their foes. Striking down an enemy who can't hit back is target practice for the attacker – and a horror story for the target. War movies focus on fighter pilots and their one-on-one duels, or on infantry combat, even though artillery or bombs kill the majority of soldiers. Casting spells at a foe within line of sight gives the foe a chance to hit back, preserving the sense of a duel. In particular, it gives nonmagical soldiers a chance to shoot back with ranged weapons, or sneak close and go hand to hand, so that mages don't entirely dominate the game.

Duration

Most magical spells remain in effect only for a limited time. In part, this reflects the idea that magic is a departure from normal reality, making it naturally unstable; time passes and the magic goes away. But it also provides a dramatic rationale. If magical changes can be permanent, then any mage can magically make himself stronger, faster, healthier, longer-lived, immune to injury, and even handsome – traits worth many character points – just by spending a few days casting permanent spells. Then mages dominate the game, and the storyline goes from drama or adventure to wish fulfillment. To avoid short-circuiting the narrative, the benefits of any version of magic need to be temporary.

How Much Detail?

How much of the casting of a spell should be shown?

In most fantasy campaigns, not very much. Ritual magic is a technical process, just like developing a photograph or fencing, and the details of any technical process are mostly dull. And magic has the added liability of not really working; any elaborate discussion of the affinity of certain herbs for the human liver or the proper wording of a prayer to Jupiter just makes this more obvious. Better to ask what the goal of the spell or enchantment is, note the circumstances, roll the dice to find out if it works, and move on.

But if the players are actually interested in the complexities of magical practice, such as finding the right way to apply the Three Laws of Magic – go ahead and discuss the question with them. It's fine to have detail, so long as it's interesting detail.

Some GMs may use a purely improvisational approach. The player tells a story about what the mage is doing, or acts out his incantations; the GM privately decides how much of a skill bonus the player's idea is worth, and takes that into account in deciding whether the spell worked. Bonuses can range from +1 to +5.

For a more systematic approach, pick one or more of the sets of modifiers listed under *Magical Lenses* (p. 163). If the mage can provide a suitable link to the target via the Three Laws of Magic, or use Symbol Drawing to enhance his own concentration, his effective skill is higher. The GM may have to rule on exactly how effective each skill booster really is.

To get more ceremonial magic into a campaign, without going into the theoretical details, simply use the rules for taking extra time with a skill (p. B346), starting from the base time to cast spells ceremonially. For example, most ceremonial spells take 10 seconds to cast, so taking five minutes would be 30 times as long, giving a +5 multiplier. The GM and player can agree that the mage is spending those five minutes on weird gestures, chants, invocations of forgotten gods, or whatever else seems to fit.

Usually, "temporary" works out to "no longer than a single combat" or "no longer than a single session of play." This avoids requiring the players to remember what spells they've cast and when they'll wear off, or take detailed notes during play.

However, some spells can have permanent effects. Healing spells are a common example; once they've taken away the damage from a wound, it doesn't come back when the spell wears off. This limits record-keeping; rather than having to note that a warrior has a 6-point leg wound of which 4 points are magically suspended for the next week, the player just erases the 4 points. It also avoids bizarre scenes such as a powerful Dispel Magic causing every magically healed wound a foe had ever suffered to reappear, all at once, tearing his body apart. Healing spells don't grant a new advantage, but return the subject to his normal physical condition. Other spells can have permanent effects if their benefits wouldn't normally cost character points or substantial amounts of wealth.

Ritualization

Casting spells requires gestures and incantations. Theoretically, these aid the mage in focusing his mind and will. As he gets more skilled, he becomes capable of purely mental magic, just as a skilled reader doesn't need to read aloud or move his lips. Dramatically, mages perform visible rituals partly for the same reason that martial artists shout out the names of their techniques – it lets the audience know that something interesting is happening – and partly because it gives the opposition a chance to confront the mage and fight back. A campaign where magic is completely concealable will involve less action and more suspense.

Systems of Magic

Every novel, and every published game setting, has a different vision of the supernatural and the magical arts. ***GURPS*** offers a standard treatment of magic that works for many adventure campaigns. But GMs may want something different, either to re-create a published setting or to express their own vision of magic. Any level of modification is possible, from minor adjustments of the standard system to building a new magic system from scratch.

Custom-Built Magic

One way to get the right magic system for a campaign is to build a new one, based on the source material or the GM's own imagination. Any system needs to take into account the issues discussed in *The Structure of Magic* (pp. 153-155). A magic system needs limits and tradeoffs to ensure that mages contribute to a campaign without totally dominating it.

Custom-building a magic system is not a trivial task. GMs who haven't used ***GURPS*** before are better advised to start with one of the standard systems.

Alternative Magic Systems

In ***GURPS***, "magic" normally refers to the system of mana-based magic in Chapter 5 of the ***Basic Set***. But other sources of special abilities exist. Cyborgs, martial artists, mutants, and psionic adepts can all transcend normal human limits. They just aren't called "magic."

But nothing says they aren't. If mana-based magic doesn't work in a campaign setting, use the rules for another set of special abilities and call them "magic." Use them straight or modified to make them more supernatural. The existing enhancements and limitations allow many such adjustments.

The Third Edition of ***GURPS*** included several concepts that the Fourth Edition has not yet explicitly covered. This section does not provide rules for these concepts, but offers short notes for GMs attempting to adapt the earlier rules, or work out new treatments.

Alchemy as Magic

The skill of Alchemy does not have Magery as a prerequisite. Anyone with the proper training can use it. The power that makes it work is the special virtues of natural substances. The alchemist learns what those virtues are and how to activate them in the laboratory. The results are magical; a roll against IQ+Magery will sense that an alchemical elixir is magical.

Alchemy grants the ability to make alchemical elixirs and perform other alchemical processes (see Chapter 28 of ***GURPS Magic***). An alchemist can recognize that a substance is an elixir by sight; make a Per-based Alchemy roll, modified by Acute Vision. If the elixir has been mixed with food or drink, he can detect its presence by smell; make a Per-based Alchemy roll, modified by Acute Smell/Taste or Discriminatory Smell. He can identify the specific elixir by laboratory analysis, which takes four hours. If the elixir is not in his reference materials, an ordinary success will tell him that it's an unknown elixir, while a critical success will give him some idea of the intended effect. He can get faster results by tasting the elixir (Acute Smell/Taste or Discriminatory Taste helps); this only takes 10 seconds, but on any failed roll he experiences the full effects of the elixir.

Internal Alchemy

It may be possible to produce alchemical effects by dosing a human subject with several different ingredients that combine within his body into an elixir, which then takes effect on him. The subject's body itself acts as the reaction vessel. Since the alchemist cannot observe the reactions directly, all rolls are at -4 to effective skill, or -2 if the alchemist has Diagnosis, Physician, or Physiology at 15 or better. Only one dose can be produced at a time, but the time required is measured in hours rather than weeks.

Internal alchemy can be used on a corpse or a reassembled body, but at an additional -6 to skill, since the body has no metabolism to aid the reactions, and the time required is weeks. Medical skills don't help with this process.

At the GM's option, internal alchemy can instead be treated as defaulting to Esoteric Medicine, without the added penalty, since working within the body is normal for this skill.

Behind the Curtain: Making Gold

The legendary goal of alchemy is making gold. GMs may choose whether this is actually possible in their campaign worlds, and if so, how well known the process is. As a guideline, the transmutation of metals should require 12 weeks and a roll against Alchemy-6. Each "dose" is one pound of gold.

Any alchemical process also requires raw materials. How much should those cost? That's where it gets tricky. Normally fantasy stories ignore economic cause and effect, but manufacturing precious metals has an economic impact too big to ignore.

Suppose that the knowledge of transmutation is closely guarded, but known to two competing alchemists or alchemical guilds. In a setting where precious metals are scarce, an alchemist making one pound of gold can trade it for $20,000 worth of goods. In the 12 weeks of labor required for making gold, he can earn $3,600 at guild rates. So he has a surplus of $16,400, less the cost of raw materials. If they cost $400, he comes out $16,000 ahead!

But remember that he has a competitor. The competitor can offer double price for those same raw materials, and still come out a long way ahead. The first alchemist can then offer triple price, and so on. Eventually the price of the raw materials will rise to $16,400. At this point, alchemists won't earn any more than guild rates from transmutation; the people who produce or import the raw materials will have gotten rich; and all the raw materials will be in the basement of the alchemists' guild, while their natural sources will be depleted.

If the materials aren't scarce and aren't going to become scarce, the limit on gold production will be the supply of alchemical labor. So every alchemist will have an incentive to train his apprentices to make gold. But as more and more gold is made, and spent, prices will rise; that is, the value of a gold coin will fall. When a pound of gold is worth $3,600, alchemists will earn guild scale by making gold. If alchemists are skilled enough to make multiple "doses" of gold, it can fall even farther, perhaps as low as the $240 a pound implied by some fantasy settings (see p. B515).

One way to avoid this change in the value of gold is to have everyone agree that "natural" gold is precious, but "artificial" gold is just a cheap imitation, suitable only for flashy decor. Mad wizards and pretentious merchants might have alchemical gold trim on all their possessions. If there's a reliable test (perhaps a magical one) for whether gold was alchemically made or not, merchants and moneychangers will routinely use it. If not, counterfeiters who make coins of alchemical gold may face harsh penalties. Or alchemy itself may be strictly licensed, or prohibited outright, to cut off the source.

Alchemic Inventions

Alchemists can invent new processes, using the standard rules for inventing (pp. B473-474), with a few adjustments. See Chapter 28 of ***GURPS Magic*** for details. An alchemist may have either version of the Gadgeteer advantage. An alchemist can also apply the Gizmo advantage to alchemical preparations.

Bardic Magic

Many fantasy stories portray poets as capable of working specialized sorts of magic, based on singing. Several approaches to such magic are

possible. In applying any of these, emphasize effects that have a reasonable association with music, language, or influence.

Bardic Advantages. A bard can have distinctive advantages that enhance his abilities as a bard. Suitable choices are Charisma, Cultural Adaptability, Eidetic Memory, Rapier Wit, and Voice.

Bardic Skills. A bard can have special skills for influencing others that go beyond normal influence rolls, as the skills of advanced martial artists may go beyond normal combat (see *Chi as Magic*, below). Suitable skills are the Enthrallment skills and Musical Influence.

Bardic Spells. A bard can cast spells, buying Magery with the Song limitation. See also *Mysteries of the Trade* (p. 162).

Invocation. In older legends, bards can call upon divine aid, often from specialized deities such as the Muses of Greek myth or the Hindu goddess Sarasvati, asking them to speak with the bard's voice. This is Channeling, with a special advantage: Based on Singing instead of Will, +20%. (This is an advantage because buying a skill costs less than buying Will.) The deity can grant the bard knowledge he does not normally have, making this comparable to soothsaying.

Chi as Magic

The force known as *chi* in China or *ki* in Japan could be the same as mana. Literally, "chi" means "breath," just as does the Latin-derived word "spirit" (see *Spirits in the Material World*, p. 30), so there's some plausibility in linking chi to spirit magic.

The focused use of chi does not involve spells or rituals. It depends on years of intensive meditative training, represented as the advantage Trained By A Master (p. B93). This training develops esoteric skills, both physical and mental, that are not otherwise available. Each allows the performance of specific feats. Each master should be capable of a few characteristic feats.

Skills with Trained By A Master as a prerequisite include Blind Fighting, Body Control, Breaking Blow, Flying Leap, Immoveable Stance, Invisibility Art, Kiai, Light Walk, Mental Strength, Power Blow, Pressure Points, Pressure Secrets, Push, Throwing Art, and Zen Archery. While acquiring these skills, chi masters may also learn Breath Control, Erotic Art, Esoteric Medicine, and Meditation.

Teachings of the Kabbalah:
The Sephiroth, the divine names.

From Manly P. Hall's *Secret Teachings of All Ages* (Philosophical Research Society, 1928), which translated it from Kircher's *Oedipus Aegyptiacus*, 1653.

GMs offering a wider variety of focused chi abilities may search martial arts legends or Hong Kong films for other feats performed by masters of chi.

Cyberspace as Magic

One of cyberpunk's basic ideas, in such key works as William Gibson's *Neuromancer* and Vernor Vinge's *True Names*, is that cyberspace can be envisioned as a magical realm, with jacking in as a variant on astral projection and programs taking the place of spirits. But it works just as well to apply the metaphor in reverse, envisioning the spirit world as a magical virtual reality.

Basic contact with the spirit world occurs through shamanistic rituals (see *Shamanism*, p. 149). The spirit world itself is a magical network comparable to the computer nets of cyberspace. Many magical traditions offer suitable models, such as the Sephiroth of the Jewish mystical school Kabbalah.

Spirits themselves compare to various sorts of software. Free-willed spirits are comparable to artificial intelligences; other spirits are comparable to computer programs or robots. Slave Mentality defines this lack of free will. Spirits may also be Reprogrammable; see *True Names* (p. 164).

Herbal Magic

The Herb Lore skill can replace Alchemy. There are only a few differences. First, Herb Lore can't identify or analyze elixirs. Second, the ingredients are cheaper; divide their cost by 5. Third, an herbalist can locate suitable ingredients in the wild at no cost by making Naturalist rolls. He may attempt two searches per day, and needs to attain three successes or one critical success.

An analog of internal alchemy can be based on Herb Lore. However, instead of using a -6 modifier, reanimating a corpse is flatly impossible for herbalists. Herb Lore is more specifically life-aspected than Alchemy is.

Not every elixir has an herbal equivalent; which ones have such equivalents is the GM's decision. Most other alchemical processes, such as transmutation of metals and preparation of the alkahest or the philosophers' stone, should not be possible to herbalists.

Herbal inventions are possible on the same basis as alchemical inventions.

Psionics as Magic

One possible variant magic system uses a modified treatment of psionics to define magical abilities. In this form of trance magic (p. 151), buy all psi powers with Preparation Required. The user must concentrate for the required amount of time to enter into a suitable trance state. The trance mage must choose a specific psi skill before starting preparations. If he is attempting related tasks, he can use other skills within the same power at -1 per added skill.

One way to interpret trance magic is to say that "magic" is a prescientific understanding of psionic abilities and a prescientific set of techniques for activating them. This approach is common in planetary romances, such as Marion Zimmer Bradley's Darkover novels. However, it's also possible to say that the various abilities are supernatural, vestiges of the godlike state from which humanity has fallen, and just happen to work as defined for psionics. The terminology of "psi" may be a scientific age's way of describing magic, a last hint at the supernatural within a mechanistic worldview. In either approach, talent for trance magic may be hereditary, and people who have it may be a special group of "witch-folk," set apart from everyone else, for better or worse – as anything from targets of an inquisition to oligarchic rulers. They may be marked by physical traits not seen in ordinary folk.

In a setting with trance magic, the skill of Psionics should not be available. However, the skill of Philosophy may represent a general theory of the mind and its powers, in Asian settings where enlightenment confers mystical powers (p. 161).

The antipsi ability may not be available in a "magical psionics" setting. People whose presence blocks mental powers may be rare or nonexistent in a world without scientific skepticism. If so, then the power modifiers for the other powers are reduced to -5%. Defenses against magical mental powers may be available within the specific groups of powers; for example, Mind Shield protects against having one's mind read.

At the GM's discretion, trance magic powers may be mana-dependent. This -10% limitation takes the place of the limitation for psionic powers.

Ritual Magic Systems

As an alternative to standard magic, GMs may define spells as techniques based on the core skill Ritual Magic instead of Thaumatology. In this approach, wizards still cast spells from the standard list. However, that list doesn't fit some approaches to

magic, either in real-world occult beliefs or in the fantasy genre. GMs may consider working up alternate lists of paths and techniques, especially for fantasy campaigns set in the modern world.

For an approach where ritual magic is primary, assume the following:

Subtle effects. Most magic doesn't have flashy, obvious effects such as fireballs or turning stones into bread. Most techniques produce outcomes that are improbable instead of impossible, and thus can be classified as "coincidence" by skeptics.

Longer duration. Magic doesn't have to be maintained once a minute. Once the ritual is complete, the effect remains in place until used up or magically countered; at a minimum, its duration will be comparable to that of an entire combat.

Slower activation. The base time for most techniques is measured in minutes, or even hours. Faster or slower casting can lower or raise effective skill, just as for most technical skills.

Shapeshifting as Magic

A morph who has Magery 0 can assume the templates of living creatures with innate magic. Without Magery 0, the morph cannot sense the presence of mana organs and thus cannot duplicate them, though he could duplicate all other features of the template. For example, he could have a panther's claws and night vision but not its magical breath (p. 49). A morph with Magery 0 *and* the Intermediate Forms advantage can form mana organs within his human body and use the magical powers of any creatures he has memorized. A morph who studies many magical creatures might have access to numerous magical powers; this might become a goal for a morph-mage.

Superpowers as Magic

The structure of psionic abilities (see pp. B254-257) can be applied to other sorts of powers, including magical powers. One way to give such powers a more magical flavor is to treat them as trance magic (p. 151), with Preparation Required in the form of meditation. The Hindu belief in *siddhis*, or superhuman powers gained in the pursuit of spiritual enlightenment, is an example of this approach to magical powers; the Roma Arcana setting offers another example, Dionysian magic (pp. 205-206). But it's also possible to have "high magic" versions of such powers that require no more than a Concentrate maneuver.

In terms of game mechanics, each power has three components:

1. A set of advantages that represent different ways the power can manifest. These are known as the power's abilities.
2. A special modifier – most often a limitation – called a power modifier. This turns any advantage to which it is applied into an ability within the associated power.
3. A Talent that makes it easier to use all of the power's abilities. If the abilities are treated as trance magic, the special modifier does not include the Preparation Required, because some advantages within a power may already include an equivalent requirement (for example, Blessed, included in Spirit Powers, automatically takes an hour). List the Preparation Required separately for the powers to which it applies.

Here are some illustrations of this concept:

Plant Mastery

At the GM's option, this talent includes the power to perceive, communicate with, and control plants by magical attunement to them.

Plant Mastery Talent: 5 points/level. You have a natural talent for Plant Mastery. You get +1 per level to use any Plant Mastery ability. You can use earned points to acquire new Plant Mastery abilities, even if you did not start with them. The following advantages can be Plant Mastery abilities: Binding (based on plants, and with the Environmental modifier), Brachiator, Chameleon (Only in Vegetation, -20%), Detect (plants, considered Common), Healing (Plants Only, -20%), Plant Empathy, Possession (of plants only, with suitable modifiers), Speak with Plants, Talent (Green Thumb), and Terrain Adaptation (plant-related terrain such as tree branches). *Power Modifier:* The advantage is a magical ability within the Plant Mastery power. Its use is mana-sensitive, but it can benefit from Plant Mastery Talent. -10%.

Spirit Powers

This is the power to perceive, communicate with, and control spirits.

Spirit Powers Talent: 5 points/level. You have a natural talent for Spirit Powers. You get +1 per level to use any Spirit Powers ability. You can use earned points to acquire new Spirit Powers abilities, even if you did not start with them. The following advantages can be Spirit Powers abilities: Blessed, Channeling, Detect (Supernatural Beings), Insubstantiality (Projection), Invisibility (Only in Spirit Form, Substantial Only, Switchable), Medium, Mindlink (with spirits), See Invisible (Spirits), and Spirit Empathy. The corresponding talent would cost 5 points/level. *Power Modifier:* The advantage is a supernatural ability within the Spirit Powers power. Its use requires observance of an elaborate system of rituals, amounting to a Pact based on Discipline of Faith (Ritualism), but it can benefit from Spirit Powers Talent. -5%.

Magic Powers

In a superhero campaign, magic itself might be a power:

Magical Powers Talent: 5 points/level. You have a natural talent for Magical Powers. You get +1 per level to use any Magical Powers ability. You can use earned points to acquire new Magical Powers abilities, even if you did not start with them. The following advantages can be Magical Powers abilities: Affliction, Damage Resistance (Magic), Detect (Magic or Supernatural Phenomena), Neutralize (Magic), and Telekinesis. The corresponding talent would cost 5 points/level. *Power Modifier:* Magical Powers. The advantage is a magical ability within the Magical Powers power. Its use is mana-sensitive, but it can benefit from Magical Powers Talent. -10%.

A more potent version might include any advantage that could be rationalized as "the effect of a magical spell." The corresponding talent would cost 10 points/level, the same as standard Magery, to which it would be roughly equivalent.

Talents as Magic

Superior ability to use a nonmagical skill can itself be an expression of magic. One straightforward portrayal of this is as a Talent with Preparation Required. By blessing the work area or having it prayed over, invoking suitable gods or saints, or using arcane trade secrets, the craftsman achieves better results. For a task that takes many days, the preparation must be repeated at the start of each day's work.

Craft magic can enchant objects. The enchantments are limited to those that enhance the nonmagical functions of the object. A sword could become sharper or better balanced, but could not gain the ability to fire lightning bolts. Use slow and sure enchantment, unless the craftsman has Quick Gadgeteering as well as Talent. Roll against the skill that would be used to make the object at -5, modified by the level of Talent applied; the craftsman must have at least +1 to skill from the Talent to attempt this. Assistants may contribute energy for enchantment if they have the same skill and have taken part in the same ritual; they need not have any skill bonus from Talent. A craftsman may gain energy from one assistant per level of his own Talent.

In some fantasy settings, as in many historical societies, starting a job out with this kind of ritual isn't something a few specialists do; it's standard practice. For example, a group of builders might pray to the Great Architect before starting each day's work. In such a setting, the GM may choose to apply a -5 skill penalty to tasks undertaken without the customary ritual, or -2 to tasks performed with a hasty or poorly focused ritual. As a guideline, less than 5% of the required work time would count as hasty ritual; less than 1% would be entirely ineffective.

Modified Magic

GMs may create a divergent magic system by starting with the standard system and changing one of its aspects. See *The Structure of Magic* (pp. 153-155) for major aspects that can be changed. Most forms of modified magic are features of a campaign world, instead of an individual mage or magical tradition within a world. Using these systems instead of standard magic has no point cost (see *Behind the Curtain: Point Costs* on p. 18).

Alternate Colleges

A GM can restructure the system of colleges according to any logical rationale. If this changes the number of colleges, the costs of certain forms of Magery will also change (p. 130). Some examples of alternate college systems are as follows:

Ethical: Classify every spell as either good (white) or evil (black). This requires a setting where ethical beliefs are objectively true, such as a Zoroastrian cosmos (see *Knowing Good and Evil*, p. 21). In some settings, mages will almost all specialize in one category or the other. In morally ambiguous settings, mages who specialize in one college may have to learn spells from the other college as prerequisites for some of its advanced spells – though they may choose or even take a Vow to never cast them.

Elemental: Every spell belongs to one of the four elemental colleges. For example, spells that affect the body are earth spells; spells of communication and movement are air spells.

Planetary: Every spell is under the jurisdiction of one of the seven planets of geocentric astronomy (the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn).

Trigram: Every spell links to one of the eight trigrams of the *I Ching*.

Color-based: Spells link to colors, producing varying numbers of colleges. Ethical colleges, where spells are either black or white, could be a form of color-based magic.

Zodiacal: Assign every spell to one of the 12 signs of the Zodiac.

Tree-based: Every spell links to one of the 18 trees of the ancient Celtic tree alphabet.

Tarot-based: Categorize every spell with one of the 22 major arcana of the Tarot, or to one of the 78 Tarot cards.

Hexagram: Every spell reflects one of the 64 hexagrams of the *I Ching*.

Partial restructuring is also possible. For example, the elemental colleges (air, earth, fire, and water) reflect European ideas about matter. A Chinese campaign could have colleges of the Chinese elements: fire, wood (plant spells applied to living or dead wood; see p. 171), earth, metal (based on stone spells, but with doubled cost), and water. Air in this system is not an element, but a subtle substance that moves within matter as breath or spirit (*chi*); spells from the College of Air can be reassigned to the other elemental colleges or the colleges of Healing and Necromancy.

Some spells have prerequisites in the form "one spell from at least 10 different colleges." If colleges divide into a smaller number, this may not be possible. For systems with 15 or more colleges, keep this requirement unchanged. For systems with fewer colleges, allow multiple spells per college. In a system with 7-14 colleges, require two spells per college instead of one (for example, "two spells in each of five different colleges"). In a system with three to six colleges, divide the required number between two colleges (for example, "five spells in each of two different colleges"). In a system with only two colleges, all the spells can be in one college (for example, "at least 10 black magic spells").

Colleges can also be added to the existing system; see, for example, *Technomagic* (p. 66).

Correspondence Magic

In a setting where magic is based on correspondences (p. 19, pp. 163-164), spellcasters may not be able to power spells with their own FP. Instead, base spellcasting on the laws of contagion, similarity, and names. Apply the bonuses to the caster's base skill. If the resulting skill level is high enough to reduce the cost to cast to zero, then casting the spell is possible; otherwise, it's not.

Working correspondence magic takes longer; multiply time required for any spell by 10. Magery 0 is still required in normal-mana settings. It doesn't represent a general perception of "magical" forces or qualities, but an intuitive sense for what corresponds to the intended subject of a spell. Time and distance effects are as discussed under *Correspondences* (p. 19). GMs wanting to make correspondence mages adventurers should let them have up to five levels of Magery, interpreted as superior insight into magical relationships. Standard and correspondence Magery shouldn't coexist.

At the GM's option, nonmages may cast spells by correspondence magic, even in a normal-mana setting. Casters must research correspondences in vast magical libraries, requiring a roll against Research or Thaumatology-2 at a penalty equal to the bonus the correspondence will provide. Each attempt to find a correspondence takes an hour. This form of correspondence magic *can* coexist with standard magic, if the GM allows the correspondence modifiers to apply to standard magic.

The mystic builds up a store of power in the supernatural realm, which he can use to perform magical feats.

Fixed Magic

Fixed magic is the ability to cast a spell without consciously knowing it. It represents, for example, the instinctive magic of certain animals in some fantasy worlds. Such abilities form a class of meta-traits. Each meta-trait has three components, as follows:

First, choose the desired spell, and list all of its prerequisites, and all of their prerequisites, back to a set of spells without prerequisites. If more than one list is possible, choose one – normally the shortest, but this isn't obligatory. There is a cost of 1 point per spell in the chain of prerequisites.

Second, identify the highest level of Magery required for the spell or any of its prerequisites. Buy that level of Magery, with the modifier *One Spell Only* (p. 129). In settings with normal or low mana, Magery 0 is the minimum; in settings with high or very high mana, it may not be required for all spells.

Third, determine the cost of learning the spell at the desired level, given the user's IQ and Magery. A campaign setting that uses fixed magic may have a standard level of ability for all spells, at the GM's discretion.

For example, an army wound dresser with IQ 11 would find it useful to be able to heal wounds. The spell Minor Healing has the prerequisite chain Lend Health, Lend Energy; two prerequisites cost 2 points. Lend Energy requires Magery 1, which costs 5 points for Magery 0 and 2 points for Magery 1 (One Spell Only, -80%). With IQ + Magery equal to 12 he would pay 4 points to learn Minor Healing-12. Total cost is 2 + 5 + 2 + 4 = 13 points. This enables him to repair 1 to 3 points of injury at an energy cost of 1 per point, just as if he had learned the spell. He can't use Lend Health or Lend Energy, and he can't improve his Minor Healing ability by further study. What he knows is a fixed pattern of actions, the magical equivalent of a reflex.

This system can be used for more than one spell. Buy the required level of Magery *once*, with a reduced limitation (p. 129); buy each spell separately at the desired level. If one fixed spell is actually in another fixed spell's prerequisite chain, count only the additional prerequisites for the second spell. But if neither spell is in the other's prerequisite chain, use the full cost for both, even if their separate prerequisite chains might include some of the same spells.

Magic Based on Other Attributes

Standard mana-based spells are IQ-based skills, aided by Magery. But magic could be based on a different attribute. Here are some choices that reflect various fictional or mythic conceptions:

HT+Magery: Magic is an overflowing of life energy. People in better health can better withstand the biological stress of casting spells. Any living thing, even a tree, may be capable of casting spells. Nonsapient life forms will do so only by instinct, and IQ 0 life forms only as their own physiological state dictates.

Per+Magery: Magic is the ability to sense the flow of mana through the world. More perceptive people can more easily sense mana. Nonsapient life forms may be able to cast spells; IQ 0 life forms such as most plants will not. This version works well with the assumption that magical energy always comes from external sources.

Will+Magery: Magic is the ability to impose one's will on reality. Usually only sapient life forms can cast spells. Advantages such as Visualization or Single-Minded may aid magic. This goes well with subjectivistic views of magic.

10+Magery: Magic is a unique entity or force in its own right. No nonmagical attributes make any difference to it. Effectively this makes Magery a "fifth attribute."

Meditative Magic

Certain mystical traditions, such as yoga or the Jewish practice of Kabbalah, aim at acquiring supernatural power through spiritual disciplines. The mystic builds up a store of power in the supernatural realm, which he can use to perform magical feats.

To acquire supernatural power, the mystic spends a full day in prayer or contemplation. He must have the skill of Meditation to do this, but no skill roll is required. For each day spent meditating, he adds one energy point to a magical energy reserve. (This is equivalent to gaining one character point through 200 hours of study and spending it on 25 points of magical Signature Gear, as discussed on p. 131.)

Less intensive procedures add to his energy reserve at a lower rate. Study of sacred books adds one energy point per two days (equivalent to self-teaching). Simply leading a good life of full commitment to a religion's ethical teachings adds one energy point per four days (equivalent to on-the-job training). A major virtuous act as defined by the rules of his faith can "acquire merit," adding 25 energy points; minor virtuous acts count as part of "living a good life." At the GM's option, an analog of intensive training (p. B293) may also be available. The mystic must completely isolate himself from his everyday life and spend every waking moment in prayer. This *does* require a daily roll against Meditation, and the mystic must have Will 12+ to undertake such a regimen. While he maintains it, he adds four energy points to his reserve per full day spent.

A spellcaster can use the resulting energy reserve to cast spells or work enchantments. Energy points can accumulate without limit, but once spent, they are gone. Followers of such paths don't normally expend their reserves casually.

Most mystics are adherents of a religion and practice a Discipline of Faith. Neither Power Investiture nor Magery is required. A student who does not practice a Discipline of Faith is limited to accumulating energy at half rate by studying sacred books. If he is a member of the religion he studies, he can gain energy at quarter speed when not studying by obeying its commandments. Being a student of a religion's spiritual practices without belonging to the religion should be treated as an Unusual Background, typically worth 10 points.

Point Debt

As an extension of the meditative magic rules, GMs may let meditative practitioners spend energy points exceeding what they have accumulated, and then work off the points by further meditation. Keep this deficit-financing version of magic under control by immediately converting an accumulated point debt that reaches 125 into a -5-point disadvantage; this represents the twisting of the practitioner's soul by the performance of high-powered magic. Further meditation can cleanse the practitioner's soul of the taint, but it must be continuous and uninterrupted, and for each -5-point disadvantage, the practitioner will be left with a quirk that can never be removed.

The GM's creativity determines the form of the taint. Often it may be emblematic of the kinds of magic that brought the practitioner to this condition. In some campaigns, it may take the form of Addiction to magic itself.

At the GM's option, a practitioner who lacks the Meditation skill may also use point debt. This represents a mage who cannot recover from the twisting of his soul and body by the spells he casts; as he uses more magic he becomes more warped. This pattern works best for "evil sorcerer" adversaries in most campaigns, but in a dark fantasy campaign, all magic might work this way. Consider giving such practitioners a demonic Patron whom they have a Duty to serve.

Both magic and religion are based strictly on mythological tradition, and they also both exist in the atmosphere of the miraculous, in a constant revelation of their wonder-working power. They both are surrounded by taboos and observances which mark off their acts from those of the profane world.

– Bronislaw Malinowski

Modular Magic

In some campaigns, mages never learn spells permanently. Instead, they impress a group of spells on their minds before going out on missions, and can use only those spells until they study the next set. Buy this as Super-Memorization (Spells Only, -20%). This lets the mage cast each spell of the current set as often as he pleases. If each spell can only be cast one time, as in Jack Vance's *The Dying Earth*, this can be represented as Limited Uses (1 use), -40%.

This method of learning spells raises the question of prerequisites. If a mage must memorize all the prerequisite spells before he can use a given spell, he'll need many slots to cast any high-powered spell. Assume that he effectively "knows" all the spells in his grimoire as prerequisites. If he acquires a new spell book, he can add its contents to his grimoire, but he'll initially be unfamiliar with them and will use them at -2. He can gain familiarity with the new book in eight hours of study per spell, or memorize unfamiliar spells before going on an adventure. If he actually casts one of the unfamiliar spells under conditions of stress, assume that he's now familiar with it.

For a more difficult situation, a new spell book may contain an advanced spell without its prerequisites; perhaps the writer assumed that everyone knew how to cast them! Such spells are at -1 to skill per omitted prerequisite, and this can't be made up through familiarity.

In a setting where magic summons and commands spirits, it may take the form of Spirit Trapping (p. 130). This can have its own version of a grimoire: a book holding a sorcerer's agreements with a variety of spirits, one agreement per page, each spirit granting access to one spell.

Mysteries of the Trade

Various professions have a reputation for magical knowledge. Examples include bards, courtesans, physicians, scribes, and smiths, in various societies. To represent this, use a variant of ritual magic (p. B242). Instead of basing the system of skills on Ritual Magic or Thaumaturgy, base it on a relevant occupational skill – singing for the bard, Sex Appeal for the courtesan, and so on. The professional can then

learn a single IQ/Very Hard (Profession) Magic skill that defaults to this core skill at -6. Spells in turn default to the (Profession) Magic skill as techniques, at -1 per prerequisite spell. As usual for ritual magic, the professional doesn't actually have to know the prerequisites

In a low- or normal-mana setting, casting the spells requires Magery 0 (or Power Investiture from a god or patron saint of the profession). In a high- or very-high-mana setting, any professional can cast any spell based on his profession, if only at default. For example, a blacksmith with Smith-16 would have Smith Magic-10 by default from it, and Ignite Fire-10 by default from Smith Magic-10 (since Ignite Fire has no prerequisites).

Talent in a group of skills raises the skills themselves, and therefore raises the default value of the associated magical skills, but it doesn't enhance magical skills purchased with character points. On the other hand, Magery adds to the magical skill and thus to the techniques that default to it. It's possible to buy One-College Magery for a single professional magical skill; since there are more than 30 professional skills, this version of One-College Magery is bought at -60%.

The specific spells for each form of professional magic are determined by the GM. Spells should be useful in performing professional tasks, or should accomplish superhuman feats within a professional domain, such as raising the dead for a physician.

Syntactic Magic

For a more detailed treatment of magic based on college skills, base each spell on a combination of two or more colleges instead of a single college. The rules for rune magic (in ***GURPS Magic***) are the standard ***GURPS*** treatment of this approach.

Rune magic uses a list of verbs (magical actions that can be performed) and a list of nouns (objects that can be acted on or created magically). Each noun and each verb has a specific symbol in a runic alphabet. Mages learn the runes as separate skills; depending on the concept, each rune may be an Easy, Average, or Hard skill. Skill with any rune is limited to the mage's skill with Symbol Drawing in the tradition the rune comes from.

To cast a spell, the mage puts together a verb and one or more nouns. He can incorporate them into the design of a magical object (see *Runic Enchantment*, p. 25), write them on parchment or another medium, or trace them in the dirt or even in the air.

Tracing runes in the air takes 2 seconds for an Easy rune, 6 seconds for an Average rune, or 12 seconds for a Hard rune. Roll vs. the skill for each rune, at -3. Runes can be traced in half the time for an additional -2, or slowly and carefully, taking twice the time, for +1. After tracing the runes, roll vs. Symbol Drawing to activate the spell.

Rune magic doesn't have memorized spells; each spell must be assembled on the spot at the time of its casting. In normal- and low-mana settings, activating a rune spell requires Magery.

Magical Lenses

In contrast to modified magic, which changes some rules of the standard magic system, magical lenses keep the same structure and provide ways of enhancing its use. Most provide bonuses to skill in spellcasting. Think carefully about which ones to allow. If all of them work, mages may be able to cast spells at +20 to skill or more – and players may spend hours trying to work out which ritual will give them another +2 to skill. It's safer either to pick out one or two modifiers that suit the theme of a campaign, or to impose an upper limit to the total skill bonus that modifiers can grant. A limit of +5 will give a campaign a flavor of ceremonial magic; a limit of +10 or higher will make it a major theme of the campaign.

Astrological Magic

Just as some areas can have higher or lower mana than the surrounding landscape, some *times* can have higher or lower mana than others. Times are usually aspected to particular kinds of magic or even particular targets. A mage skilled in astrology, or advised by an astrologer, can select the proper hour for a given spell and gain improved odds of casting it.

To benefit from astrological influences in casting a spell, roll vs. Astronomy to predict the future movements of the heavens, or consult an ephemeris, if one is available. Then roll vs. Fortune-Telling (p. 135) to determine whether any time in a specified week is favorable. (Usually this will be the week immediately to come, but future weeks can be examined instead – for example, to plan ahead for the completion of a major enchantment at a favorable time.) On a critical success, a highly favorable configuration of the signs and planets is found; treat the effective mana level as two levels higher than usual. On a normal success, treat it as one level higher. On a normal failure, no benefit is gained. On a critical failure, the calculation is in error; the astrologer finds a day and hour that appear to be favorable, but are actually unfavorable, with mana one level lower than normal.

Each combination of spell and target requires a different heavenly configuration, and thus a new horoscope.

At the GM's option, other divinatory arts may identify either favorably or unfavorably aspected times, or favorably or unfavorably aspected places, for a given spell. However, most arts can't look ahead to precisely calculated future times, as astrology can.

Astrology works best with ceremonial magic such as enchantment. In a battle, a mage can't afford to wait for the stars to be right before he casts his spells.

Correspondences

For a more detailed exploration of magical thinking, the Three Laws of Magic can provide bonuses to spells, ranging from +1 to +4.

For contagion bonuses, include things that have been in contact with the subject. A physical object that he has used or handled gives +1. (It must be a complete physical object; you can't say, "I have some air here, and he breathes the same air.") The object must bear a strong imprint from his actions, such as shoes he has worn long enough to stretch them, or he must have formed a strong personal attachment to the object by using it. Any object he has personally made, or dead tissue from his body, such as cut hair or nails, gives +2. Living matter from his body, such as his bodily fluids, gives +3. So does having his corpse, if he has died.

For similarity bonuses, a likeness of the subject (such as a drawing), or a natural object that shares one of his attributes or one attribute of the desired effect (for example, an eagle feather for a flight spell), gives +1. A formal portrait or sculpture by a skilled artist or an imitation by a skilled mimic gives +2. A natural object that strongly resembles the subject, such as a heart-shaped leaf as a magical treatment for heart disease, also gives +2. An identical twin or a homunculus gives +3; someone closely related by blood, such as a parent, child, or sibling, gives +2. Having custody of a vampire would give +2 for the vampire who infected him and any vampires he had infected.

For naming bonuses, using the subject's true name (see *True Names*, right) gives +4. A standard form of his name that is not his full name, such as the name he uses as a signature, gives +3. A nickname, or "use name," or the name that he's ordinarily called, gives +2. An identifier that is not a name, such as his assigned number in a set of official records, is +1.

It's not possible to combine bonuses within the same category. Having a garment the subject used to wear (+1) and a small amount of his blood (+3) gives a combined contagion effect of +3, not +4.

Using correspondences to aid spellcasting takes more time; multiply required time by 10, as for ceremonial magic. However, this is not ceremonial magic. A mage can use it alone without the enhancement Solitary Ceremonial Casting (p. 130).

At the GM's option, any spell cast with the aid of correspondences may use the long-distance modifiers offset by the correspondence bonuses. A spell that normally wouldn't use long-distance modifiers has a -1 penalty and *must* have a correspondence bonus to skill in each of the three categories.

See *Correspondence Magic* for an alternative magic system based on these rules.

True Names

In correspondence magic, using the true name for the subject of a spell is a source of power. However, what is the true name of a tree, or a star, or a demon?

A name is a word that refers to a thing. But many different words can refer to the same thing in different languages, or even in the same language. For a word to be a true name, it has to have some kind of unique bond to the thing it names.

Sapient beings normally have true names as individuals. A sapient being's true name is the name he thinks of as his real name: his legal name, or his baptismal name, or the name given by his tribal shaman based on a vision during his initiation into adulthood. It's almost always in his native language. Anything he is called in another language, or any title or nickname he's given in his native language, doesn't count.

Nonsapient beings don't normally have true names. If an animal is trained to come when its name is called, that name becomes its true name. In a campaign that uses the rules for named objects (p. 26), the name given to an object by those rules is its true name, even if it's nonsentient.

When true names are a source of magical power, people often conceal their true names, as in Ursula Le Guin's *A Wizard of Earthsea* or Vernor Vinge's cyberpunk story "True Names." People introduce themselves by saying, "Call me Ishmael," or perhaps by elaborate riddling, if they want to make a point of the concealment.

If religious ceremonies grant names, this may not be necessary. After such a ceremony, the god knows the worshipper's name, and presumably has power over him. But the god may be jealous of that power; using a religiously granted true name to cast harmful spells invites divine retribution. Or the god may simply shield his worshippers from attacks based on their true names. Adhering to a religion may protect against direct magical attack.

Spirits are more vulnerable than material beings to their true names being used against them. A material being's body doesn't perfectly conform to its archetype, and thus is somewhat resistant to name-based magic. But a spirit, not being made of matter, *is* its true name and can be totally bound by commands addressed to it. If true names exist, spirits have the Reprogrammable disadvantage, if anyone learns their true names, and the Secret disadvantage before then. This may affect even very powerful beings. Jewish legend credits Lilith with magical powers gained by knowing the secret name of the Lord (see *Lilith*, p. 54). To a mortal who knows the name, such a being may be an unwilling Ally or Patron.

Placeholders

To ease spellcasting with long-distance modifiers, a GM may allow the use of "placeholder" correspondences. These magical connections based on the Three Laws have a value of +0. They're too minor to give any bonus to spellcasting, but they can meet the requirement for one connection of each type.

Any complete object a subject has ever touched or handled is a +0 connection by contagion. Anything shaped like the subject, such as a wax doll for a man, is a +0 connection by similarity. Any phrase that describes the subject, such as "the man who opposes my efforts," is a +0 connection by naming.

If the GM allows casting with *only* +0 connections, the caster risks getting the wrong target.

But above and beyond there's still one name left over,
And that is the name that you never can guess,
The name that no human research can discover,
But the cat himself knows – and he won't confess.
– T.S. Eliot, "The Naming of Cats"

Racial Magery

A racial template can include Magery 0 or higher levels of Magery. If the upper limit for a human mage is Magery 3 (as in a classic fantasy setting), and a race naturally has Magery 3, it's plausible that its magically talented members will be better than that, better than the best human mages. GMs may choose to let members of such races exceed the normal Magery limit for a campaign. In effect, Magery works like an attribute: a character of a magical race buys Magery at the normal cost up to the normal human limit, and then adds any further bonus to that level, even if the result exceeds the limit. If elves have racial Magery 1, an elven character might have Magery 3 [30], plus another level for racial Magery, for a total of Magery 4.

GMs may limit racial Magery to the same number of levels as individual Magery. Even fewer could be justified; racial Magery 1 would let a race's best mages exceed any human mages' capabilities.

Sacrificial Magic

Sacrifice is destroying or giving up something valuable in order to gain a benefit. Sacrifice generally implies that someone is receiving the sacrificial offering. There's an implied exchange, the substance of the sacrifice for some supernatural favor. How much benefit depends on how substantial an offering.

The oldest forms of sacrifice commonly involved killing something; their altars were not just tables but butchers' blocks. In many societies, killing any large animal required rituals. This may relate to the custom in some hunter-gatherer cultures of thanking a slain animal for the gift of its flesh, and apologizing for the need to kill it, so that its spirit will return in a new body. In some religious traditions, the priest offers prayers, but someone else carries out the sacrifices so priests do not shed blood in the course of their duties. Religious practitioners may be permanently assigned to performing sacrifices. In some traditions, they also act as guards for sacred places.

Other forms of offering may be acceptable in some settings. For example, the *loa* of Voudoun belief often like rum and cigars.

The basic currency of sacrifice is hit points. If the victim is sapient and consents to the sacrifice, use his full HP. If he does not consent, divide his HP by 3. For nonsapient victims, always divide HP by 3; they are presumed not capable of consent. At the GM's discretion, offerings of material goods worth 20% of a campaign's starting wealth count as 1 HP. Offered wealth may be cast into the sea, burned at a shrine, ritually consumed by someone possessed by a god or spirit, or otherwise destroyed or made inaccessible.

A god who cares about purity of intent may expect 20% of the starting wealth for a character's wealth level, instead of 20% of the average starting wealth. With this interpretation, a Dead Broke character who makes any offering is credited with 1 HP of sacrifice.

Sacrifices may create various benefits. Each HP of sacrifice could be exchanged for two energy points of magic. The spell to be cast must be specified before performing the sacrifice; the energy points gained can be held for a later casting of the spell, but a single mage can only have a single spell ready in this way.

Each 5 HP of sacrifice can be exchanged for two character points' worth of a Talent. A Talent applies only to a single task and to no more skill rolls than the number of skills the Talent includes. For long, complex tasks, more sacrifices may be needed.

Sacrificial offerings may help gain economic success. Each 5 HP of sacrifice buys either +2 to a monthly job success roll, or a 2% increase in the character's Independent Income rate for one month. Assume that the monthly job success roll actually includes a number of skill rolls that come up on the job. Each month requires a new sacrifice.

The GM may make other advantages available with the same rate of exchange with HP. Advantages gained in this way are always temporary versions of normally permanent advantages.

The GM's may require anyone who calls on spirit agents to work magic to provide them with regular small sacrifices. Instead of accounting for HP of sacrifice, treat this as a Pact.

Symbols and Magic

Many approaches to magic involve writing, drawing, and similar activities. Medieval magicians trace pentacles on the floor; Jewish kabbalists write the Name of God on a strip of parchment and place it in a golem's mouth; Haitian houngans draw vevers on the floor before summoning the loas.

In most fantasy settings, magical power comes from the will of the mage. The symbols have no intrinsic power, but are simply an aid to focusing the mind and will. To benefit from this aid, roll against Symbol Drawing before casting a spell. On a success, add half your margin of success, rounded down, to your effective skill with the next spell you cast.

In this approach, Symbol Drawing has a default from the core skill used in magic; Thaumatology-4 for standard mana-based magic, Ritual Magic-4 for animistic spirit-based magic, or Philosophy-4 for subjectivistic magic.

In many real-world occult beliefs and some fantasy worlds, *the symbols themselves* have magical power. (For comparison, in a cyberpunk setting, cheat codes would have intrinsic "magical" power in cyberspace.) In effect, these "magical attribute" settings make each symbol produce specific effects. Symbol Drawing in these settings is a limit on magical skill; roll against the lower of Symbol Drawing and your skill with the spell being cast.

If symbols themselves have power, then they can be used in making an enchanted object. In fact, enchanting the object *is* drawing or writing the symbols on it. The enchanter's skill roll is the least of Symbol Drawing, Enchant, and the specific spell being written. But once the spell has been written, it remains effective indefinitely, instead of for a single casting (however long maintained). Then the normal rules for enchanted objects apply for casting.

O lord white as jasmine, if my head falls from my shoulders
I shall think it your offering.
– Mahadeviyakka

A natural extension is that a mage in such a tradition can write or draw a magical symbol and give it to another person. That person can later take out the symbol and evoke its power, destroying the symbol in the process. When he does, roll against the lesser of the mage's skill with Symbol Drawing or the spell to find out if the spell works. Mages can then send out adventurers armed with one-use magical items. Producing such items requires one hour per item. If symbols are potent in themselves, Symbol Drawing has no default. Each alphabet or system of signs is a separate specialization of Symbol Drawing (see p. B224).

In either version of symbol-based magic, drawing symbols takes time. Determine casting times as for ceremonial magic. The other restrictions and advantages of ceremonial magic don't have to apply, though symbol drawing can combine with standard ceremonial magic if the mage wishes.

An alternative treatment of symbol-based magic is rune magic, discussed briefly under *Syntactic Magic* (p. 163) and *Runic Enchantment* (p. 25). See ***GURPS Magic*** for a full description.

Tattoos

In a setting where symbols are inherently magical (see *Symbols and Magic*, p. 166), they can be placed on a human body, making the body inherently magical. The process of inscription requires a roll against the lesser of Symbol Drawing and either Body Art or Makeup. Makeup will only produce temporary markings. Temporary markings produce the desired effect once; permanent markings work whenever they're evoked, in the same way as standard enchanted objects. Cutting off the body part destroys the enchantment!

The effective and effectiveness of the markings depend on where on the body they're placed. Ideally, a marking should go in a symbolically appropriate place. For example, a Breathe Water enchantment ought to go around the nostrils. If it's placed somewhere else, its effect has to be directed to the appropriate place. This acts as a skill modifier to the Makeup or Body Art roll, as follows:

Placement	*Modifier*
Exact place	unmodified
Same hit location	-2
Same facing*	-4
Anywhere on body	-5

*"Facing" means front, rear, left, right, top, or bottom.

Each design takes up space on the body. A standard design takes up 1% of the body surface. Effective skill with Makeup or Body Art is raised for

larger designs and lowered for smaller ones: -3 skill for ×0.1, -2 for ×0.2, -1 for ×0.5, +1 for ×2, +2 for ×5, +3 for ×10. The torso is roughly 36% of body surface, each leg is 18%, each arm is 9%, the head is 9%, and the hands, feet, and groin are 1% each (the area of the hands and feet is included in the total area of the arms and legs).

In a campaign that uses rune magic (see *Runic Enchantment*, p. 25), the tattoos or other designs are based on the runic symbols. Anyone who knows Symbol Drawing can attempt to read the intent of a body marking.

Theoretical Magic and Spell Design

Where do new spells come from? In some worlds, they may be a special gift of the gods, beyond mortal understanding. In others, they're improvised by Wild Talent spellcasters. In some worlds, critical failures by mages trying to cast other spells may lead to their discovery. This is especially likely for reversed effect spells and for spells that create light, sound, or odor!

But in many settings, mages deliberately invent and test new spells. This follows the same process as inventing new machines, with a few details changed.

Developing a new spell involves a concept roll and a prototype roll. Since spells are cast by individual mages or groups of ceremonial mages, there is no production stage in the development of spells. However, there may be two prototype stages: one to develop a ritual for casting the spell (this is waived if the spell is always cast as an enchantment) and one to develop a procedure for enchanting the spell into a physical object.

Spells do not have TL modifiers, since magic is usually separate from technology. Nor do they have complexity ratings.

When a player defines the intended effects of a spell, the GM writes up the spell in the standard format – including type, energy cost, casting time, and duration, defines prerequisites – and assigns the spell to a college. The GM can assign prerequisites that the research will have to learn or invent.

The concept roll is against Thaumatology. In place of the complexity modifier, subtract the number of prerequisites for the spell; this includes all the spells that must be learned first, back to spells without other spells as prerequisites. In place of the different TL modifier, apply a -5 penalty if the spell belongs to an unknown college. Apply a -5 penalty in a low-mana location.

The prototype roll for casting the spell is against skill with the spell. To do this, someone (not necessarily the person who made the concept roll) must invest at least 1 point in learning the spell. The spell must be cast by ceremonial magic methods, even if only a solitary mage is involved. A magical workspace is required with the following cost from *The Price of Enchantment*: (number of spell prerequisites + 1) × (400 energy points) × (cost per energy point). Use the standard ceremonial magic rules for the effect of having assistants. Otherwise, use the normal modifiers for prototype rolls, but with the concept roll modifiers defined above for spell research. Treat a critical failure as a standard magical critical failure (see p. B236). Each attempted casting takes one day, including setup time.

Developing an enchantment uses the same procedure, but usually takes longer. The researchers may use quick and dirty enchantment if they can afford its energy point cost, but this is at a skill penalty of -5. Otherwise, they must use slow and sure enchantment at one mage-day per energy point. Any enchantment has the spell Enchantment as a prerequisite; take this into account in determining the workspace cost.

Poorly funded mages may reduce the cost of their workspace by preparing it themselves. They still pay 10% of the standard workspace cost for materials; they pay the other 90% as magical energy, at one mage-day per energy point. In settings where mages or enchantments are rare, this may be the only way to create magical prototypes.

Major bugs in a prototype casting are rolled on the critical failures table for spells. Minor bugs can be treated as nuisance effects, which the GM is free to improvise, taking the spell's intent into account. Any bug that occurs during the prototype casting is inherent in that version of the spell and will recur any time it is successfully cast. The only way to get rid of it is to develop a new prototype. Once the prototype is bug-free, any successful recasting will also be bug-free. Many researchers will accept *small* bugs rather than start over! But no amount of prototype testing can eliminate the chance of a critical failure in some later casting, or affect the unpredictable results of such a failure!

Theurgy

In a society where religion and magic co-exist harmoniously, mages may pray before undertaking any challenging magic, asking God or the gods to aid their spells. Treat this as levels of Magery with Preparation Required. If the mages just cast the spell, they do so with their normal level of ability. If they pray first, they gain an increased Magery bonus. This is equivalent to the rules for Talents as magic.

A GM enhancing the links between magic and religion may choose to *require* prayer for effective magic: a spell cast without praying first, or with only hasty prayer, has a penalty to effective skill. Instead of praying for a fraction of a second before each spell, a mage can pray for half an hour at the start of the day and have normal skill for the rest of the day. If awakened in the middle of the night, he can pray for a minute and cast spells at -2 for the next hour and a half.

Full-length prayer may protect against demonic interventions. If prayer is omitted, they can still happen – a significant risk in its own right.

Nonhuman Magic

A nonhuman race doesn't have to do things the same way as humans. GMs can define alternative systems of magic, based on the distinctive qualities of each race. Here are some examples:

Blood Magic

Some vampires become mages, drawing on the power of their undead condition to work spells. The more potent vampiric abilities, such as turning into a different shape or controlling a victim's mind, are results of blood magic. The advantages and restrictions of this form of magic are a Feature of vampire mages (p. 112).

Vampires can't use FP as a source of energy for their spells. Instead, they cast spells by burning HP. Unlike ordinary vampires, a vampire mage can use his Vampiric Bite to raise his HP above normal, forming a blood pool. He can store as much life energy as he can take before his victim dies, at the usual rate of 1 energy point per 3 HP inflicted, but he can only have energy from one victim at a time in his blood pool. When he wishes, he can use this energy to cast spells. If he is injured, he can sacrifice his blood pool to heal himself, but this requires him to concentrate for 10 seconds per HP healed.

Vampire mages have a limited spell list, in the manner of clerics. Their spells have no prerequisites, but they do require study, or spell research based on Ritual Magic (Vampiric Blood Magic). Each spell is a separate skill. Suitable spells include those connected with shapeshifting, mind control, weather control, and similar feats.

At the GM's option, willing offers of blood may grant energy at a higher rate: one energy point per each HP drained. To count as willing, the offer must come from a person who is fully conscious, aware of the nature of the transaction, and not under the vampire's mental influence.

Devilfish Magic

Because they communicate by change in skin color and pattern rather than by speech, devilfish can't cast spells by speaking. The magically effective patterns on a devilfish mage's skin work the same way as tattoos or makeup (see *Tattoos*, p. 166). Because forming images in this way is natural to devilfish, they aren't limited by their skill in Body Art or Makeup; they simply roll against Symbol Drawing (see *Symbols and Magic*, p. 166).

For devilfish magic, ignore the usual effects of skill with a spell on the need to speak. Instead, use the rules for adjusting Symbol Drawing skill for the size of the symbols (p. 220). If the devilfish is maintaining a spell, note what part of its skin the spell is occupying, and take that into account in determining the difficulty of casting new spells, as discussed for tattoos.

Devilfish magic has a second peculiarity. Because they live beneath the sea, they almost never encounter fire and don't consider it one of the four elements. The system of elements in devilfish science only includes earth, water, air, and light.

Faerie Glamour

In most accounts, the fair folk are creatures of illusion (see *Illusion Disguise,* p. 170, and the *Faerie* template, p. 108), and their magic has the same quality. Faerie magic only works because it imposes belief on those who witness it (see *Glamour,* p. 20). Faeries thus have their own special form of magic, based on Impermanent Magery (p. 129). In addition to being mana-dependent and dispellable, faerie magic can be banished by the touch of iron (see *Cold Iron* on p. 109).

Faerie spells last more or less indefinitely, but don't truly change physical reality. An Ignite spell doesn't actually make things burn, though the image of flames will appear above a combustible object, and those close to it will feel a sense of warmth. A Fireball spell doesn't inflict actual physical injury; determine its hits of damage as usual, and roll vs. HT when the "damage" equals the target's HP to see if he loses consciousness from pain. However, further damage will not result in death, only in more chances for loss of consciousness. (A victim who is reduced to -5 × HP will become comatose, but can be restored by healing spells or by the touch of iron.)

Spells that take away or restore Fatigue have full effects, since Fatigue is a temporary condition that mental and emotional states affect. Impermanent healing spells can restore the seeming injury inflicted by faerie attacks, but only *seem* to take away real physical injuries; the subject feels better and can function normally, but may die of cumulative wounds. (However, real healing through natural processes will eventually take place.) Impermanent resurrection does not actually restore the subject's soul to his remains, but animates those remains with an illusion of life. The same principles apply to other spells.

This pattern applies to other sorts of glamour, such as the deceits and manipulations of demons (dispelled by True Faith or holy objects instead of iron).

Expanded Spell Lists

The spells in the ***GURPS Basic Set*** meet the needs of a straightforward fantasy campaign with mage adventurers. However, in a world permeated with magic, many other sorts of spells will be developed. ***GURPS Magic*** will provide a full treatment of this subject. Here is a small sample of additional spells. Most are included because they're listed in character templates in Chapters 6 and 9 of this book; including them here means that those templates are ready to use. Discussed under *Agrarian Magic* (p. 95) and *Magic and Warfare* (p. 190), their details are relevant to the effects of magic on the civilizations of a fantasy world. Some spells in the second group have prerequisites that aren't defined here or in the ***Basic Set***; those prerequisites are marked with an asterisk in this list.

Air Spells

Rain

Area

Creates or prevents one inch of rain in an outdoor setting.

Duration: One hour.

Base Cost: 1/10; same cost to maintain. Double cost to create rain in a

When the first baby laughed for the first time, the laugh broke into a thousand pieces and they all went skipping about, and that was the beginning of fairies.

– J.M. Barrie, Peter Pan

dry habitat such as a desert; double cost to prevent rain in a humid habitat such as jungle or swamp.

Time to cast: 1 minute.

Prerequisite: Clouds*, four other Air spells, and four Water spells.

Communication and Empathy Spells

Mind-Sending

Regular

Sends the caster's thoughts to the subject. Verbal communication is at talking speed; images transfer at the rate they could be copied onto parchment. Can be used to send messages at distance; use the *Long-Distance Modifiers* (p. B241), with an additional -4 if caster and subject don't know each other personally.

Duration: One minute.

Cost: 4 to cast; 4 to maintain.

Time to cast: Four seconds.

Prerequisite: Mind-Reading.

Earth Spells

Shape Stone

Regular

Lets the caster move stone and shape it into any form. If the form is stable, it will remain permanently changed after shaping. An unstable form will last only while the spell continues – no special concentration is required – and then collapse. A successful Architecture roll can create a stable wall, column, or other structure.

Stone *moved* with this spell travels at only Move 1. It can harm no one except by flowing over an immobile person and burying him. If a mage moves a stone onto a person to bury him – or from beneath him to create a hole – the person may move normally on his next turn to escape. He will only be trapped if he fails. Anyone trapped in this way will find it extremely difficult to get out; if the GM allows a roll vs. ST, it should be at a substantial penalty, at least -10. Other results are as for Shape Earth.

Duration: One minute.

Cost: Four per cubic yard of stone shaped; half cost to maintain. Triple cost if the stone has already been cut or worked.

Prerequisites: Shape Earth and three other Earth spells.

Walk Through Earth

Regular

The subject can pass through earth or stone unimpeded. His movement does not open a passage behind him. If he knows Earth to Air, he can breathe during his journey automatically; if not, he must hold his breath. If the spell ends before he gets out into the air, he is not directly harmed, but is trapped and will suffocate.

Duration: One second.

Cost: 4 to cast; 3 to maintain. Double cost to pass through stone.

Prerequisite: Shape Stone.

Purify Earth

Area

Removes foreign objects and harmful substances from the soil and adds nutrients, making it fit to support growing plants. Small buried objects (coins) are dissipated, medium-sized ones (swords) rise to the surface, and large objects (statues) cause the spell to fail; roll vs. IQ to sense their location if so.

Duration: Permanent.

Base Cost: 2 in average soil; 4 in sandy or rocky soil.

Time to cast: 30 seconds.

Prerequisites: Apportation and Shape Earth.

Enchantment Spells

See pp. 23-25.

Food Spells

Test Food

Information

Determines whether a substance is safe to eat or drink; reveals harmful decay, poisons, or foreign objects such as ground glass, but not of magic. Does not determine whether the substance is nutritious or tasty.

Cost: 1 for a single meal or bottle of wine, or 2 per cubic yard.

Healing Spells

Stop Bleeding

Regular

The subject stops bleeding immediately, as if bandaged by someone with the First Aid skill (see p. B195). This restores 1 HP, and prevents further HP loss from bleeding if the optional bleeding rules (p. B420) are in effect. It can also stabilize a mortal wound, at much greater cost. The subject of this spell will not subsequently benefit from bandaging of the same wounds.

Duration: Permanent, although later injuries will bleed normally.

Cost: 1 to stop bleeding on a normal wound; 10 to stabilize a mortal wound.

Time to cast: 10 seconds.

Prerequisite: Lend Vitality.

Cure Disease

Regular

Removes disease-causing microorganisms of one specified type from the subject's body. If the disease lacks identification (usually by a Diagnosis roll), cast the spell at -5. Does not cure any damage the illness has already inflicted on the subject, but prevents further damage. Only one attempt may be made per subject.

Duration: Permanent, but does not immunize against future infections.
Cost: 4 for creatures up to Size Modifier 0; for larger creatures, 2 × largest dimension in yards.
Time to cast: 10 minutes.
Prerequisites: Major Healing, Sterilize*, Decay*, and Test Food*.

Illusion Spells

Simple Illusion

Area

Creates a visual image seen by anyone in view of its occupied area. It may move to a different area, or change size or shape up to its maximum area, but the caster must concentrate to achieve this. Any sapient creature can dispel it by "disbelieving"; this requires spending one action on concentrating and making a Will roll. Automatically dispeled by any attack, any other spell, or the touch of any sapient creature.

Duration: One minute.
Base Cost: 1 to cast; half cost to maintain.
Prerequisite: IQ 11 and ability to see.

Complex Illusion

Area

Similar to Simple Illusion, but audible as well as visible. It is not dispelled automatically by a spell or touch; it has DR 0 and 1 HP and will vanish instantly if broken.

Duration: One minute.
Base Cost: 2 to cast; half cost to maintain.
Prerequisites: Simple Illusion and Sound.

Illusion Shell

Regular

Covers a physical object with a visual illusion (and an audible illusion as well, if the caster knows Complex Illusion). The illusion may be disbelieved, but cannot be automatically dispelled otherwise. It will move only as the underlying object moves, and its effects as a weapon are unchanged.

Duration: One minute.
Cost: 1 per cubic yard or less. Half cost to maintain.
Prerequisite: Simple Illusion.

Illusion Disguise

Regular

Must be cast after one of the preceding three spells; superimposes the illusion on the subject, so that it disguises him and moves with him. The disguise counts as only a single spell "on." The better the underlying spell, the better the disguise.

Duration: Same as for the illusion.
Cost: 3.
Prerequisite: Simple Illusion.

Light and Darkness Spells

Hide

Regular

Makes the subject harder to find. A Vision roll requires a subject in plain sight; Sense rolls to see a subject already hidden in some way are at -1 per level, up to 5 levels. The effects only apply while the subject remains still, but if a subject moves and then stops moving before the spell's duration ends, the effects resume.

Duration: One hour.
Cost: 1/level.
Time to cast: Five seconds.
Prerequisite: Blur or Forgetfulness.

Night Vision

Regular

Cancels all penalties to Sense and skill rolls for low light, but not for total darkness.

Duration: One minute.
Cost: 3 to cast; 1 to maintain.
Prerequisites: Five Light/Darkness spells.

Invisibility

Regular

The subject cannot be seen, reflected in a mirror, or photographed. He still makes sounds and can be tracked by scent or footprints. Anything he picks up becomes invisible, unless he wills it to remain visible.

Duration: One minute.
Cost: 5 to cast; 3 to maintain.
Time to cast: Three seconds.
Prerequisites: Blur and five other Light/Darkness spells.

Meta-Spells

Scryguard

Regular; Resists Information spells

Any information spell cast on the subject must win a quick contest of spells with the Scryguard to "see" him. Identify Magic will still detect that the Scryguard is present.

Duration: 10 hours.
Cost: 3 to cast; 1 to maintain.
Time to cast: Five seconds.
Prerequisite: Magery 1.

Mind Control Spells

Fear

Area; Resisted by Will

Those in the affected area feel fright. Those who are affected must make a fright check at -3. If this succeeds, they will be angered instead of frightened.

Duration: 10 minutes.
Base Cost: 1 to cast; cannot be maintained.
Prerequisite: Sense Emotion, or the Empathy advantage.

Movement Spells

Quick March

Regular

Doubles the subject's long-distance travel speed. At the end of the day's travel, the subject loses 10 fatigue and must sleep. No effect on Basic Move in combat or on Basic Speed.

Duration: One day's march.
Cost: 4 to cast; 4 to maintain.
Time to cast: One minute.
Prerequisite: Magery 1 and Haste.

Lighten Burden

Regular

Reduces the weight of any equipment the subject is carrying.

Duration: 10 minutes.
Cost: 3 for 25% reduction; 5 for 50% reduction; half to maintain.
Time to cast: Three seconds.
Prerequisite: Apportation.

Levitation

Regular; Resisted by Will

Subject must be a living being. Subject floats through the air, moving as the caster wills. Maximum Move for a levitated being is 3, horizontally or vertically. A caster who levitates himself uses DX-based skills normally; other subjects use them at -3.

Duration: One minute.
Cost: 1 per 80 pounds, minimum 2; half cost to maintain.
Time to cast: Two seconds.
Prerequisite: Apportation.

Flight (VH)

Regular

Lets the subject fly through the air under his own control, without wings, at Move 10. Flight speed reduces normally because of encumbrance. Subject can move and fight normally and has a combat advantage if above a foe.

Duration: One minute.
Cost: 5 to cast; 3 to maintain.
Time to cast: Two seconds.
Prerequisites: Magery 2 and Levitation.

Teleport (VH)

Special

Instantly moves the caster to a remote location. If he is not actually looking at the location, he must have been there before. Skill penalties may apply: -2 for a place not seen in the past month (except the caster's home); -1 to -3 for a place seen only briefly; -2 for a place "seen" only indirectly, through another's mind, television, magic, or the like.

Caster can carry anything along up to heavy encumbrance. Objects must be carried; another person can be taken along by holding hands.

The spell is risky to use. A roll failed by 1 inflicts 1d of damage and physically stuns the caster on arrival. A roll failed by more than 1 teleports him to a random destination. A critical failure can send him anywhere that doesn't kill him outright. Even a successful roll requires follow-up roll against Body Sense. On a critical failure, the caster is stunned. On an ordinary failure, he suffers disorientation and can take only defensive actions. He arrives in the same posture he was in at the start, but can change facing; this imposes a penalty to Body Sense, -2 to rotate horizontally, -5 to rotate vertically.

Cost depends on range, and increased range also imposes a penalty on skill in casting the spell:

Time to cast: Two seconds.
Prerequisites: IQ 15+ and at least 10 spells from different colleges.

Teleport Table

Range	*Cost*	*Penalty*
Within 10 yards	3	0
11 to 20 yards	4	-1
21 to 100 yards	5	-2
101 to 500 yards	6	-3
501 yards to 1.99 miles	7	-4
2 to 9.99 miles	8	-5
10 to 99.99 miles	9	-6
100 to 999.99 miles	10	-7
×10 range	+1 additional	-1

Plant Spells

Seek Plant

Information

Reveals the direction and approximate distance of the nearest growth of plants, or one specific plant type. Use the long-distance modifiers. Any known plants may be excluded if the caster names them before casting the spell.

Cost: 2.

Identify Plant

Information

Determines the species of any one plant and provides basic information about it (edible, poisonous, etc.). Gives +3 to skills included in the Green Thumb talent for that specific plant.

Cost: 2.
Prerequisite: Seek Plant.

Heal Plant

Area

Heals plants within the area of effect of disease, parasites, and damage, if they are still alive. Trees larger than saplings require a 3-yard radius or more.

Duration: Permanent.
Base Cost: 3.
Time to cast: One minute.
Prerequisite: Identify Plant.

Bless Plants

Area

Causes plants within its area of effect to grow faster and stronger for the rest of the growing season. To be affected, a plant must be entirely within the area of effect. Doubles the crop yield within the area of effect.

Duration: One crop or growing season.

Base Cost: 1.
Time to cast: Five minutes.
Prerequisite: Heal Plant.

Sound Spells

Sound

Regular

Produces any sort of meaningless sound the caster wishes; does not produce understandable speech or music. Does not produce loud sounds. Does not require concentration once cast.

Duration and Cost: 5 seconds for 1 point; 1 minute for 2 points; 1 point per minute to maintain.

Silence

Area

Creates an area of silence, within when no one can hear anything or make any noise. This will prevent spoken spells from working.

Duration: One minute.
Base Cost: 2 to cast; 1 to maintain.
Prerequisite: Sound.

Magical Pluralism: How to Use This Chapter

Many fantasy worlds have more than one school of magic. And certainly ***GURPS*** can support that kind of a fantasy world, as the options in this chapter illustrate. This pluralism can add interest to a setting, with each system defining a different race, culture, or tradition. Roma Arcana, later in this book, offers a worked example of a pluralistic magic setting. But having a number of magic systems can mean extra work for the GM. And having multiple magic systems can also make things confusing for the players.

Of course, having a single magic system makes things simpler for everybody. But if the whole world uses the same magic system, magic looks more like a technology and less like an aspect of culture. And everyone who plays a mage will be picking from the same spell list; anything that individualizes mages comes from the players doing extra work.

For a basic fantasy campaign, with an emphasis on adventure, use the standard magic system. For a campaign based on a literary source, or fitting a personal vision of how magic works, pick options from this chapter to produce a suitably adjusted system. For a campaign where magic itself is a major focus, design several styles and let players pick one.

Following a few guidelines will produce a pluralistic magic system that's easier for players to grasp:

Not too many styles. Psychologists talk about "the magical number seven, plus or minus two" as the number of things a person can perceive at a glance and remember easily. Keeping the number of styles in this range will give players a manageable list of options.

Distinct functions. If all the magical styles use the same mechanics, they'll blur together. Players will bypass talking about how their characters envision magic and go right to "I hit it with a 3d fireball!" Expressing the stylistic differences in different game mechanics keeps them in better focus.

Diverse power levels. One player may want a full-time mage; another may want a warrior, rogue, or sage who's picked up a few tricks. Having magic systems that fit both choices is a good sort of diversity.

Minimizing overlap. Nothing is as frustrating as designing a character to play a role – and then finding that someone else's character can do all the same things, and better, and some extra things as well. Don't design magical styles that make other magical styles useless. If the players adopt them, they'll be unhappy. If they don't, the design work was wasted. If the setting has a general-purpose magic system, the cost of being a generalist should be high enough so that a specialist can outdo the generalist at certain things.

This assumes that the GM designs the magical styles, which is generally a good idea. But it's possible to let players make up their own traditions, with the same kind of cautions as for letting them create racial templates. This freeform approach makes sense in a postmodern setting with chaos magic (p. 152), or in a large multicultural or multiracial empire. For this option to work, make sure the players are experienced with the magic rules and with character design, and the GM should review every character closely before play starts.

Chapter Eight
Storylines

Loki then, and Heimdall later had praised his fearlessness – ha, he said to himself, if they only knew! It was not true courage that animated him, but a feeling that he was involved in a kind of strange and desperate game, in which the only thing that mattered was to play it as skillfully as possible.

– L. Sprague de Camp and Fletcher Pratt,
The Compleat Enchanter

Oliver tugged at the reins, and his gryphon banked to the right, toward the Moorish fortress. He could already look down and see its outworks, where Saracen wizards waited to hurl fire or lightning against Frankish knights. But two could play at that game. With his free hand, Oliver fumbled the first vial of elemental fire loose from his belt. He could fly above the range of any spell, but from his vantage, whatever he let fly could only go down.

Now he was passing over the sloping earthworks that formed the outer perimeter of al-Matine. Down below, the Saracens were crying out.

Then the great portal in the fortress roof swung open, and a shape rose from it: a figure in the form of a man, but greater than any man, and wreathed in fire. It gestured, and fountains of flames shot up, carrying it toward the height where he circled. It gestured again, and Oliver felt the heat of a furnace against his face. His steed shrieked at the near miss.

In desperation, Oliver hurled his elemental fire against the demon. He expected little more than distraction, but cried out in triumph as the creature staggered in midair and fell back, an ugly mark upon the arm that had caught the vessel.

So, he thought, the alchemist's fire is fiercer even than the hellfire of that thing's dwelling place. Let's give it another taste! Yanking at the reins, he steered his gryphon into a plunge like that of a great bird of prey, to get within throwing range before the foe could regain its wits and burn him in its turn.

You've created a world filled with magic, and a band of adventurers to explore it. What do you do next?

You create a story.

Some roleplaying campaigns use distinct episodes. Each episode has its own problems, its own challenges, and its own adversaries. It's possible for every episode to be completely self-contained, with nothing carrying forward to the next episode except the PCs. However, an episodic campaign can also have a measure of continuity. Adversaries from one episode can come back in another; PCs can be involved in subplots, often about their nonadventuring lives, that show up every two or three sessions. The episodic campaigns that work best usually have some continuing themes.

Other roleplaying campaigns make continuity most important. Within a campaign or story arc, the majority of episodes may be about a master villain whose varied schemes the PCs have to thwart, or some other continuing problem they have to resolve. Or the campaign may not even been divided up into episodes. One session may start at the instant when the previous session ended, or time may skip ahead in the middle of a single session. New discoveries, meetings, and problems may grow out of the continuing activities of the PCs.

This chapter evaluates both types of storyline: the story of a single adventure and the tale of an overall campaign.

Adventures

Every session or two of play, characters need a problem that demands solving, or a situation that needs addressing. That's what drives GMs crazy, especially when the doorbell will ring in an hour and the new scenario isn't ready.

This section is a scenario cookbook. Fantasy stories, whatever the medium, confront their heroes with a few standard types of situations. Here are recipes for each of them. Each one starts with a basic formula: the essential ingredients plus a few extra nuances that will make it memorable. If there are interesting variations, it explores them. Finally, it considers the larger-scale implications: how to base a campaign on that type of scenario, whether as a recurring situation, a framing device, or a grand climax.

Every fantasy campaign is different. No scenario type will fit all possible campaigns, and few campaigns will use all the different scenario types. But understanding what makes them all work is a good start on keeping players happy.

Into the Labyrinth

Labyrinths, or dungeon crawls, are a very common type of adventure in fantasy gaming and one of the oldest, going back to the "underworld adventure" of ***Dungeons & Dragons***. Heroes from Conan to Bilbo Baggins ventured into dark underground realms, and before them, mythical adventurers such as Theseus and Gilgamesh did the same.

Visits to labyrinths are a classic type of adventure in sword and sorcery. Increasing the sense of mystery and horror can easily turn them into dark fantasy. They can also be high fantasy, if the heroes have a high mythic purpose for their venture.

Elements

A dungeon crawl requires a dungeon: a confined area in a definite place, with entrances and exits, to produce a sense of crossing a threshold. Once in the labyrinth, everything is potentially dangerous.

To enhance the sense of danger, the adventurers shouldn't be able to perceive the labyrinth clearly. Ideally, they won't even know its size – which is one reason labyrinths are often underground. Darkness and other barriers to the senses enhance this uncertainty. Twisting, branching, and even hidden passages make it harder to form a clear mental map. Letting adventurers carry lights or see in the dark, draw maps, and probe ahead with magical spells turns a dungeon crawl into a series of calculated risks. Preventing such actions keeps it suspenseful and raises the tension (see *Player-Made Maps*, p. B491).

The original Labyrinth had the Minotaur, and labyrinths in general should have monsters. A good pattern is one big monster and a large number of small foes or creatures whose numbers make them a threat. This is standard in computer games, where each level normally has a "boss" monster, with the Big Boss on the last level. Mechanical traps and crawls through tight passages are good optional additions.

Finally, a labyrinth should contain a treasure, a reward to the adventurers for surviving it. Wealth is good, but unique, even magical objects are better, symbolizing increased skill and confidence. Of course, they can also be a way of entangling the adventurers in an even bigger plot, as their new toys attract unwelcome attention.

Variations

Most labyrinths are semi-abandoned, inhabited by undead beings or other monsters. But a fortress or prison, still controlled by its builders, can force adventurers to rely on stealth instead of open combat. Missions for spies can involve such settings.

A natural cave complex can also be a labyrinth. Caves are even more dangerous than dungeons; they weren't made by intelligent beings and there's no guarantee that they *can* be navigated. Sudden drops, flooded areas, narrow passages, and other hazards can kill the overconfident.

Campaigns

It's easy to run a campaign based on labyrinth episodes. Just let the adventurers keep leaving and returning, as they explore deeper and deeper. Or if one labyrinth becomes boring, send them to a new one, in a "base and mission" campaign structure.

A completely localized point campaign, where the entire story takes place in one confined setting, is more of a challenge. At a minimum, it needs multiple threats and treasures, to give each session a sense of fulfillment. Clues pointing into the further depths are also essential. And if characters literally are never going to leave the dungeon, they had better have plenty of supplies and a safe place to sleep.

Adventure Seeds

The Dolorous Tower

In a land of wizardry, a master wizard has recruited a small band of adventurers – not only warriors, but also apprentice mages and skilled craftsmen – to perform an errand for him. His rival has been called away to a gathering of wizards in another country. The rival's tower stands deserted, open to forcible intrusion. The wizard offers rich rewards for bringing back its secrets and treasures. But if the adventurers take the offer, they find that a wizard's empty tower is not undefended. Cunning mechanisms operate traps for the unwary, and spirits bound to the site threaten them with magical attacks.

The Mouth of Hell, Part 1

Here and there across the land, something new and strange has happened: pits, caves, and tunnels open in the earth, giving access to underground mazes. Many who venture in never come out, but a few do, bearing wealth and amazing magical artifacts and stories of combat with creatures like devils wearing flesh. The rulers of the country are nervous about all the self-styled "adventurers," and the church finds the hints of dark magic alarming. The local bishop has called on a few good religious men to go into the nearest underground complex and find out what's going on – and advise him on whether the church should ban treasure-seeking in such places, and if so, whether there is any way for it to seal them off.

From this starting point, the adventurers can begin a classic dungeon crawl, but with adversaries and surroundings growing increasingly nightmarish as they penetrate deeper. See Part 2 (p. 182) for more information.

Perilous Journeys

In a perilous journey, the danger isn't hidden away in a dungeon; it's out in the open. The heroes travel through unsettled and lawless wilderness, or visit foreign places filled with unknown dangers.

The common perilous journey is the quest: the fairy-tale prince seeking his fortune, or the Knights of the Round Table searching for the Grail. But other reasons for journeying are also possible: flight from enemies, returning home, looking for a new home, or simple curiosity about what's over the next hill.

Perilous journeys work in any type of fantasy. Quests are especially suited to mythic fantasy.

Elements

Adventures need a reason to undertake a perilous journey. Most reasons involve something to travel toward or away from: a goal or a threat. The goal is often a treasure, but others are possible: a weapon, a source of knowledge, a friend in need of rescue, a marketplace, or a teacher or protector, for example. The threat is most often an enemy, but it may be a natural disaster, famine, or plague. Other reasons are possible, from simple wanderlust to scouting a path for someone else's journey.

A journey needs a route for the travelers to follow. On a journey with a goal, there is often only one route, whether it's as clearly marked as the Yellow Brick Road or completely unknown. But there may be alternate routes. And when the party must turn tail, the choice of which direction to flee is often wide open.

There also should be perils along the way. Even in flight from an enemy, some should be random encounters, such as bandits, monsters, or natural hazards. In a quest with a goal, all the perils may be random. The journey should pass through unsettled or lawless regions – more so, at least, than the travelers' home.

The journey should be long; the country it passes through should be too large for the travelers to see it all at once. It's not darkness or hidden passages that conceal the space where the adventure takes place, but sheer size. To maintain this lack of knowledge, maps should be old and incomplete and guides unreliable.

Variations

A quest may have unusual goals. Odysseus and Dorothy Gale just wanted to go home; Frodo Baggins wanted to *destroy* a magical treasure; Moses was looking for a new home for his people.

The wilderness can take some unusual forms. In the natural world, many journeys have taken place by sea. Journeys can also pass through the supernatural world, as in Dante's tour of Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven.

Campaigns

Quests and perilous journeys are one of the easiest types of adventure to turn into a campaign. Just make the journey long and the goal distant and elusive. It's worth recalling that perilous journeys can also be brief; a single session of travel is an excellent interlude between two longer storylines.

One vital feature in a prolonged journey is resting places along the way. Let the travelers come upon an inn, a monastery, or a hidden valley inhabited by elves or halflings. This gives them a mark of progress and a chance to recover their strength and make new plans. If they hurry on as quickly as possible, let them; if they prolong their stay, entangle them in local activities and problems.

Hunting Parties

From Heracles to St. George, legendary heroes have hunted dangerous game. Many "wilderness adventures" in fantasy roleplaying have the same main goal. This type of adventure is similar to a quest, but not the same: the goal is not acquiring treasure but overcoming danger.

Hunting parties work in any fantasy type, but especially sword and sorcery. In dark fantasy, the hunters may not return from the hunt!

The baby has known the dragon intimately ever since he had an imagination. What the fairy-tale provides for him is a St. George to kill the dragon.

– G.K. Chesterton,
Tremendous Trifles

Elements

A hunt needs a quarry, usually a monster. Killing it should test the hunters' skill and courage.

If possible, the adventure should include supplicants, people threatened by the quarry and seeking the hunters' protection.

Finally, the hunt should take place in a wild area. The quarry needs room to hide, move around, or even to ambush its hunters. This may be an area even less settled than the site of a perilous journey, which typically contains at least old trails through the woods or mountains.

Variations

In a less combat-oriented campaign, hunters may be sent after an animal that's not dangerous, but just rare and elusive. They may even be asked to capture it alive as a specimen for someone's menagerie.

A hunt can also pursue a man or other intelligent being instead of a beast. A criminal, a defeated military leader, or an evil magician may be an especially dangerous quarry. A manhunt can even take place in a large city. If the quarry has a mask of legitimacy, the hunt may be even more dangerous, with the hunters considered fanatics or outlaws.

Campaigns

It's not practical to spend a prolonged campaign on a single hunt. The quarry is probably less powerful than the hunters; if it fights them openly, the hunt will end. But having it keep eluding them will get dull. A more useful structure is a series of hunts for different but related targets, whether they're large, dangerous beasts or aristocratic vampires.

Warfare

War can play a part in any genre of fantasy, with differences in style. In particular, warfare in sword and sorcery is primarily an expression of individual heroism, just as in epics such as the *Iliad*.

Elements

War needs opposing armies or fleets. The PCs will belong to one. In low fantasy, the army will usually be human and will rely mainly on realistic weapons. In high fantasy, magic will have more importance, and both sides may include wizards, demigods, or monsters. Dark fantasy may pit human beings against terrifying supernatural foes.

War implies battlegrounds. Define strategic factors such as fortifications and cover. These are especially

Adventure Seeds

Once Upon a Time, Part 1

The king has three sons, and the customs of his land permit him to leave the kingdom to any of them. So he's decided to follow a very traditional method of making the choice: sending them out on a quest. Each of his sons has a year and a day to bring back an object of great worth and a potential wife who could fittingly reign with him. The youngest son has turned to a few of his friends, asking if they can help.

Pilgrimage

A band of worshippers travels to a shrine of their faith. They need guides, guards, and priests to travel with them – and offer a chance to share in the sacred journey with all expenses paid, for whatever blessings it may bring.

Tourist Traps

In a world where the beginnings of modern technology and the remnants of ancient magic exist together, a touring company offers voyages to picturesque magical lands. A group of young people from respectable families decides to take the tour. The touring company does offer professional guides, but it's much cheaper to buy the guidebook and find your own way. Without the guide, there's a much better chance of finding interesting places that haven't been spoiled by too many other tourists getting there first . . .

important in sieges or guerrilla warfare against superior invading forces.

In a realistic treatment of war, supply lines are vital. Logistics often makes the difference between victory and defeat. Low fantasy solutions to logistic problems involve backpacks or baggage trains. High fantasy may involve miraculous sources of food or water, as in the Old Testament.

Finally, a military force needs a strategic objective: conquest, looting, defense against invasion, or overthrow of oppressive rulers. Bringing defenders into contact with the civilians they defend can make the consequences of defeat more real, a useful way to increase the emotional intensity.

Campaigns

A full-scale war is a large enough story to make up an entire campaign. *War in Fantasy Settings* (pp. 186-194) discusses how to plan such a campaign.

Treasons, Stratagems, and Spoils

Scenarios of this type encourage hidden conflict. From stolen glimpses of a foe's private papers to a knife in the back, covert operations are as old as civilization . . . and so is the practice of disavowing the agents who perform them. This mission is perfect for adventurers, especially those with no official standing to confuse the issue.

Covert operations normally fit best into low fantasy or dark fantasy.

Elements

Like a warfare scenario, an espionage scenario needs two opposing forces. These may be armies, but could also be entire governments, merchant houses, or criminal gangs. In some settings, the differences between sides may be vague.

The setting for an espionage scenario is not usually a battlefield, though given the usual treatment of spies in wartime, battlefield missions can be quite dramatic. But a great deal of espionage takes place in peacetime, as opposing forces maneuver for small advantages. International espionage may take place near ports or fortresses, or in capital cities. Private espionage often takes place in cities, where spies find protection in the anonymity of crowds.

A mission needs an objective. Often this is simply information that an enemy wants to keep secret. However, it can be to get a message to covert allies, or propagandize for an uprising; to kidnap or assassinate an enemy; or to rescue a prisoner.

Finally, the mission needs obstacles. There may be guards and patrols, identity checks, and interrogation. Animals can also serve as guards. Inanimate obstacles include alarms, traps, locks, and concealed paths adventures must find. In fantasy, spies also need experience with spirit guardians and other magical defenses.

Adventure Seeds

The Fugitive

The zombie legions of Aonghais the Black have been defeated, and his tower lies in ruins. But where is Aonghais? The queen, the church, and the Collegium Magicum all want to know. There's a price on his head, well worth the interest of a group of adventurers – not to mention more altruistic motives such as preventing him from doing any more harm elsewhere. But even as an outlaw, Aonghais is a dangerous quarry. His spells of Body Control, Illusion, and Mind Control make him a serious threat to the unwary or overconfident. Many teams of bounty hunters rival each other. Some would not be above letting another party capture the mage and then taking possession of him.

Menagerie

The king's greatest diversion is his zoological gardens, filled with rare and magical beasts from across the globe. Now he has heard rumor of a new wondrous beast: the manticore that stalks the jungles of Hindostan. But a manticore is difficult and dangerous to hunt – and the king wants it brought back alive! No quest, he says, could as well prove the loyalty of his knights and his court enchanters.

Adventure Seeds

Mines of the Mountain King

Individual orcs are fierce fighters, but as a race, orcs are seldom more than a nuisance. Better-organized human armies have driven them into wilderness too desolate to be worth conquering. However, over the past generation, an unusually clever orc leader has come up with something new: organized slave raids. Human slaves grow food and toil in the mines for their orc masters.

Recently the king decided that he's lost too much land and too many subjects to the orcs. Recruits in his army will take the war to the orcs' dark tunnels, in small bands of fighters, each aided by an engineer and maybe a surgeon, scout, or mage. It's the perfect job for a team of adventurers looking for a bigger challenge. (This could be an early encounter with the Red Orcs described on p. 62.)

War in Heaven

The adventurers are among the world's greatest heroes; they have battled armies, monsters, and evil wizards. But can they fight the gods? Even in heaven, it seems, rivalries and battles rage, and one of the gods wants the heroes to help him wage war against his dark sister.

Variations

The most straightforward variation on espionage is theft. Simple theft, such as picking pockets or shoplifting, isn't much like espionage – and usually doesn't make for exciting adventures. However, glamorous thefts, such as stealing a rare art object out of a rich merchant's house or a king's palace, have much more in common with spycraft. The main difference is that the thief seldom has any backup.

Bringing magic into the picture can make things even more exciting. The thieves or spies may include mages, or their target may be magically guarded, or their goal may itself be magical – a rare enchanted item, a new spell, or an enemy's true name.

Campaigns

A campaign can easily focus on the continuing exploits of a team of spies going out on various missions. A small group of thieves learning about treasures and making off with them can play a similar role.

A single major theft or spy operation can also provide the frame for a whole series of lesser adventures. A campaign based on such an operation will naturally end when the goal is won or lost and the survivors paid off.

Diplomacy

At one end, the spectrum of diplomacy merges into covert operations; diplomats of a certain type trade in lies and secrets. At the other end, it's more like courtship, in which two people discover that they both want the same thing – a lasting relationship. The trouble is that the same opening negotiations could lead to either conclusion.

Diplomatic missions focus on the attempt to gain benefits from someone, usually by offering benefits in return. This isn't limited to making treaties with other nations; everything from courtship to trade involves negotiation. (Of course, in feudal societies, a treaty with another nation may involve courtship, trade, or both!) Advantages such as Charisma and social skills help negotiations succeed.

Diplomatic scenarios work well in high fantasy, whose characters are often noblemen or courtiers. With suitably silly customs, they also work in light fantasy. Try to avoid them in sword and sorcery; players who favor that genre usually don't want to settle things by talking. In dark fantasy, it may not be possible to negotiate with the other side, or to trust them to carry out their agreements.

Elements

The most basic element of a diplomatic scenario is two parties who have something to gain from each other. The adventurers may represent one of the two parties, or one of them may

Adventure Seeds

Among the Infidels

In the Levant, Christian and Muslim have faced each other in mistrust for generations. Now a Christian order wants agents who speak Arabic. Their mission: to pass for Muslims, operating a "safe house" in the Muslim capital, from which information can come back to the Christian bishops and through which secret operations can be conducted. Espionage is a dangerous trade, and a captured spy cannot expect mercy.

Inquisition

Reports from Dacia worry the bishops. Rumors claim that King Bela has turned to devil worship and gained uncanny powers, and that his subjects are paying the price. However, it's not easy to investigate a king in his own country. The Church has contrived a cover story for a diplomatic mission to visit Dacia. They want to send along a team of investigators to find out what the king is really doing. The last thing they need is a fool who would walk in and demand to search the royal dungeons in the name of the Inquisition. That can wait until the first team brings back enough evidence to justify it – and to make excommunicating Dacia a credible threat, if it's needed.

actually be one of the parties. The gain may take various forms: cessation of hostilities, mutual protection, cooperative work, trade, or marriage, for example.

There must be a reason for the PCs not to simply take what they want. This may be that the other party can defend itself, or that willing cooperation may benefit both more.

The parties must be at least partly ignorant of each other's motives and interests. Without uncertainty there is no negotiation and no drama.

Finally, negotiations occur in a neutral location. This can be a public place, or a private space belonging to someone neutral. Or, in a society with strict rules of hospitality, it can be the territory of one of the parties. The idea of "diplomatic immunity" represents the survival of such laws about hospitality.

Variations

The word "diplomacy" suggests the higher levels of society. However, negotiation can take place at any level: shopkeepers haggling with customers or soldiers flirting with barmaids engage in diplomacy. Some negotiations depend on Streetwise instead of Savoir-Faire. A party of disreputable thieves and bravos need a good command of social skills to sell their loot to a fence – and they may pay heavily for failing to use them correctly.

Similar persuasive skills help determine the outcome of a trial. In some archaic societies, trials centered on negotiation between the parties. A judge might gain authority from oaths to accept his judgment.

Add interest to a diplomatic situation by involving more than two parties. The adventurers will have to choose which alliance to accept, or which merchant to patronize. They may worry that a rival will conclude the alliance or buy the coveted item.

Campaigns

An episodic campaign may present a series of diplomatic missions, customers, or other bargaining situations. Characters may be traveling merchants or bards looking for a place to perform or any similar role.

A campaign may revolve around one major negotiation. Perhaps the adventurers travel to some remote kingdom to persuade its ruler to accept an alliance with their own land. This framework can embrace episodes of wilderness travel, warfare, and espionage; ultimately all these are just ways to secure a better bargaining position.

Investigations

Investigation scenarios provide another low-violence option. But investigation leads to confrontation when the adversaries and their purposes have been exposed – or earlier, if they notice the investigators! This formula is more familiar in modern settings, from private eye stories to superhero adventures, but it can work in fantasy.

If any kind of fantasy works with investigative scenarios, it's dark fantasy, whose heroes face supernatural threats. Detecting where evil or horror has infiltrated a human society and determining how it can be counteracted are central to this genre.

Elements

An investigation needs a suspect. Typical suspects are criminals, spies, saboteurs, and assassins.

An investigation also needs a victim. If the suspect is a criminal, then the victim is normally an individual, a family, or a business. If the suspect is a spy, saboteur, or assassin, the primary victim is the state, though individuals may get hurt in the process.

The suspect has a scheme or plan. Two types of investigations diverge at this point: those where the plan has been carried out and the goal is to capture and punish the suspect, and those where the plan is in progress and the goal is to prevent its completion.

Something has to keep the plan secret. In a world with functioning magic, this can be difficult; one successful divination can ruin a scenario. Either limit what magic can reveal, perhaps to a few words, or give the suspects their own magical concealments.

However, there should also be clues; that is, the suspects' actions should leave traces for the investigator to uncover. In coming up with clues, it's dangerously tempting to work out a complete list and try to point the investigators toward finding it. This approach can feel contrived and could provoke resistance. Be prepared to improvise new clues; often the investigators' methods of learning the truth provide useful ideas.

Adventure Seeds

Once Upon a Time, Part 2

The prince has found a possible wife: a king with lands adjoining his father's has a daughter who has reached marriageable age. But the daughter is a handful! Her father is fond of her and has indulged her enthusiasms, and she's not sure she's ready to settle down and become someone's wife. She enjoys the sense of her own attractiveness (she is genuinely attractive, too) and flirts with her father's guests to perhaps see if one of them will become seriously interested in her. Should the visitors call the whole thing off? If not, can they persuade the girl to marry the prince without falling in love with her themselves?

Key to the City

The royal army advances steadily into enemy territory – just a little faster than its supply train can move. The king doesn't want to give the enemy time to regroup, but needs food and fodder. He chooses some of his trusted advisors to travel ahead of the army, visit enemy towns, and make an offer: If they voluntarily surrender, instead of holding out against a siege, his forces will pay for the supplies they need and take only what the towns can afford to give. Can the adventurers' embassy gain the cooperation of the suspicious locals, without revealing how urgently the king needs it?

Adventure Seeds

The Giant Rat

Any harbor district has rats, more or less under control. But lately a very unusual rat prowls the docks and alleys. Reports describe it as nearly as large as a man and credit it with unnerving cunning. It mostly avoids people, but it likes to steal, not just food but money and jewelry. Jehan the Merchant caught it in his house, and it mauled him so badly he's not expected to live. And no one has found its lair.

In fact, the Giant Rat is an alchemist whose newest potion grants him lycanthropic abilities, turning him into a huge rat. He's terrified of being found out, but he's decided that a few more large thefts will give him the funds to set up in another city. Can the adventurers track him to his laboratory before he kills anyone else?

Police Procedural

In a provincial city, a young man of good family, Quintus Julius Ahenobarbus, is found dead in the streets with a knife wound. Suspicion naturally falls on members of a rival political faction, which includes the town's youngest magistrates. (Ideally, they should be player characters.) Consulting oracles produces a typically ambiguous clue: "Julius was killed by Julius." Does this point to suicide (the obvious answer) or to another member of the family (perhaps the young man's wealthy and powerful uncle), or to a freedman who took the family name (such as the family doctor, Julius Sector)? Both physical evidence (such as the lack of blood on the street where the young man lay) and the testimony of slaves raise as many questions as they answer. (This fits in the Roma Arcana setting in Chapter 9.)

Variations

An important variant on investigation is magical investigation: trying to identify the powers, or the origin, of a magical object, or trying to learn the source of and how to counter a spell.

In a high fantasy setting, where aristocratic bloodlines are important, a search for the missing heir to an ancient throne can require investigation.

Campaigns

An episodic campaign of investigation is easy to create: invite the players to take on the role of investigators and then confront them with a series of mysteries. Professional detectives really only emerge at TL5, but earlier eras may include government officials charged with pursuing criminals or spies, examining magistrates with broad discretionary powers, and even religious inquisitors – whose adversaries may really be evil, monstrous, supernatural, or all three!

Making a single investigation the theme of an entire campaign is difficult. The players must accept that the completion of the investigation ends the campaign. It's possible to set the investigators against a succession of agents working for the same master criminal or spy, whom they may never touch . . . unless, perhaps, that is the climax of the whole campaign!

Confrontations

Confrontations often occur at the conclusions of larger scenarios. When an investigation finds the true evildoer, or a war reaches the point of final victory or defeat, or a dungeon crawl penetrates the inner sanctum . . . it's time for a grand, climactic battle. In fact, one way to design a variety of adventures is to work out the final confrontation and then arrange other matters to lead up to it. But it's also possible to cut the preliminaries short and get to the fighting as quickly as possible. An adventure can even begin with an open challenge.

Confrontations are mainly a dramatic device; sword and sorcery, with its focus on action, is their most natural home.

"Cousin," said Lessingham, "you did throw a knife at me?"

The Vicar was ill at ease under Lessingham's secure and disturbing smile. "Tush," he said, "'twas but in sport."

"You shall find it a dangerous sport," said Lessingham. "Be advised, cousin. Leave that sport."

– E.R. Eddison,
Mistress of Mistresses

Elements

A confrontation needs an adversary, or perhaps a group of adversaries. The best adversaries are almost as powerful as the adventurers; that way, there's a challenge, and even a real chance of defeat.

A confrontation also needs a battleground or arena. Ideally this should be fairly clear and open, to keep attention focused on the struggle and not on such concerns as rescuing innocent bystanders. At the same time, it's a good thing to have objects scattered about that a clever combatant might turn to use.

Participants need something to fight over. This could be the recognition of one's fighting skills, a treasure, or someone to rescue. It's best to keep the motivation simple; treat scenarios that probe hidden motives as belonging to another category.

Variations

In some settings, confrontation and combat may be a game, performed before crowds of spectators. Fighters' motivations may include wealth, fame, or the chance to test their skills – though personal rivalries may emerge in such a setting. Gladiatorial contests and tournaments offer obvious examples. Magical duels between wizards could have the same appeal in a world of commonplace magic. In a highly ritualized or stratified society, duels of single champions may take the place of battles; the champions may be warriors, wizards, or even bards. (The game *Lace and Steel* offers ingenious

rules for contests between women's gowns to determine which woman is the center of attention at a ball.)

As discussed under *Warfare* (p. 176), cinematic play may treat a battle as a series of combats between single champions, with little attention to tactics or mass formations.

Campaigns

A campaign's structure can form around a series of confrontations. This formula is common in superheroic campaigns, where each adventure culminates in a battle against a new villain. The formula works for fantasy settings, especially in sword and sorcery. In a chivalric setting, knights can ride out seeking opponents to test their skill. If single combat between champions actually settles battles, adventurers may have to fight off the champions of neighboring lands, one after another.

Or an entire campaign can lead up to a single confrontation with a master adversary. Any number of other missions can help reach the point of that final battle – investigations, quests, wars, even confrontations with lieutenants of the master villain. This structure usually means that when the ultimate foe is defeated, the campaign is over. But it's always possible to reveal that the ultimate foe was really working for someone else even more dangerous.

Through a Glass, Darkly

Another style of adventure confronts the adventurers with mysteries – not crimes to be unraveled, as in investigative scenarios, but mysteries in the original sense of strange and supernatural events. Mysteries are the archetype of dark fantasy adventures. They work well in high fantasy, too, though the mysterious forces probably won't be malevolent.

Elements

The heart of this mystery scenario is supernatural or otherwise exotic power. Its real nature should be unknown to the adventurers and should remain unknown even at the end of the scenario. Its power should be too great to overcome by any form of combat or magic. But at the same time, it should be indifferent to their actions, or at least should not primarily focus on overcoming them.

To bring the adventurers into contact with the ineffable, it needs to have manifestations. Something should awaken it and draw its attention to the physical world, and that attention should produce strange effects. Often these will be harmful or terrifying, but in any case, they should attract investigators.

Adventure Seeds

The Challenge

After a group of adventurers gains a reputation, they get an unexpected visit. As they relax between adventures, perhaps in their favorite tavern, a young warrior or wizard shows up and deliberately provokes them. If the adventurers show any sign of resenting his behavior, he will attempt to push them into challenging him to a duel – using his Savoir-Faire for the purpose, to ensure that he gets to pick the weapons used. In an actual contest, he will fight fairly, and be a very close match to his adversary; it won't be an easy fight. He's deliberately taking a calculated risk, hoping to gain a reputation by beating one of the other up-and-coming people in his profession.

Dragonslayer

A great beast is assailing the kingdom, ruining villages and eating people and cattle. Half a dozen warriors have tried to kill it, and died. The adversary is huge and even stronger than its size suggests, but also more cunning than any normal beast. But then the king hears of a mighty swordsman who is passing through his lands, and turns to him for help, inviting him to name his own reward.

Provide ways of perceiving the supernatural force more clearly. The adventurers may physically go where they can encounter it, or have the ability to perceive the supernatural realm, or gain information through divination or other magic. In doing so, they should never gain complete answers, but only obscure hints. In dark fantasy, the risk of going mad after a failed Fright Check can limit information.

Finally, some underlying violation of the order of nature must have unleashed the supernatural force. The adventurers should discover this violation and find a way to correct it, though doing so may cost them a great deal. By undoing the violation, the adventurers should have restored natural order to the world.

Variations

A classic form of a mystery scenario uses the curse. Someone breaks a law or taboo or offends a powerful being; as a result, both they and those around them, and perhaps even their descendants, suffer great harm. Recall, for example, the legend of Oedipus, who brought plague on Thebes by killing his father and marrying his mother.

It's also possible for a priest or sorcerer invoking a god or casting a spell to disturb the order of nature deliberately. In this kind of story, the adventurers may struggle with fanatical cultists or magical attacks before they can actually confront the central mystery.

Campaigns

The best-known recent fictional treatments of inquiries into the unknown have contemporary settings, as in the television series *The X-Files* or the comic book *Planetary*. But it's perfectly possible to run a historical fantasy on the subject. Priests seeking out black magic have acquired a bad name, thanks to the Spanish Inquisition, but in a world where magic is real, inquisitors could have a legitimate role. Evidence of holiness can also draw a church's attention, with investigators trying to find out if the apparent miracles are real.

Episodic treatments of mystery unfortunately often turn into "the monster of the week." It's hard to keep players in awe through one story after another of encounters with dark, hidden forces. An entire campaign devoted to such inquiries can work, but it needs to walk a fine line between trivializing the mysteries and constantly making them more incredible.

An entire campaign devoted to a single mystery, or to a small number of mysteries, can work very well. The adventurers may not even know if their strange encounters all involve one hidden force or several conflicting forces. They may even become agents of the hidden force, without knowledge of its true nature or what it expects of them.

Adventure Seeds

The Mouth of Hell, Part 2

As the church's assigned representatives explore the nearby labyrinth, they make a series of disturbing discoveries. The underground realm brims with creatures out of a madman's nightmare of Hell, all ferocious and eager to attack. And each time a creature dies, the killer experiences an enhancement of his abilities. Still more disturbing, each time one of the party, or of another party, is slain by a monster, the underground realm seems to grow darker and deadlier. And something unseen and malevolent seems to be watching. This hidden realm, and others like it across the land, were shaped by a demon, which feeds off human terror, greed, and blood shed in its domain. It hopes to lure the entire human population to throw away their lives while playing its dark game.

Snow Falls

In an idyllic, dawn-age world (p. 79), something new has happened: for the first time, snow has fallen and the weather has grown chill. People accustomed to a mild climate now face cold and hunger. They choose a band of their most respected people to journey to the shrines of the gods and ask for relief, or at least understanding. At the shrine of the queen of the earth, they learn what has happened in a great vision. The queen of the underworld has taken away her beloved son, the god of rain and vegetation, and in her grief, the earth goddess has cursed the world. The best she will offer the petitioners is the chance to be her delegates and travel into the realm of the dead to ask for her son back. But the queen of darkness has her own wiles and may impose conditions on the release – and the young god may actually not want to go back. Play this one as high fantasy – the gods are not merely combat monsters, but incredibly strong personalities governed only by their own desires.

Learning Experiences

Of course, every adventure can be a learning experience. But an adventure can be set up deliberately to train the characters. Adventurers might study to improve their skills or gain new ones, engage in field exercises, or even undertake actual missions suited to their abilities. This scenario suits light fantasy particularly well, as it often involves lower risk levels and entertaining mishaps. If treated as low fantasy, it can realistically appraise the adventurers' limited skills.

Elements

A learning experience focuses on performing a task – either real or simulated. Either type should fit the adventurers' skills. Most of the previously discussed scenario types scale down to such a purpose. Don't remove all the risk, though; a little real danger sharpens a student's attention wonderfully.

An observer must monitor the students' performance, stepping in if they get in too much trouble. Usually he'll keep out of sight, appearing out of nowhere at the critical instant.

The scenario should include an evaluation of the students' performance. Keep notes of skillful or clever actions, but also of points where the students can improve. If a scenario produces a spectacular blunder, dwell on it. Remember that the evaluation may not be entirely fair; teachers don't know everything. They may have excessively high standards, and aren't always unbiased. Base the evaluation on the teacher's personality as well as the facts.

Finally, the scenario should teach a specific skill or perhaps more than one. But not all the students should learn the same skill. For example, group exercises may offer one student a chance to gain leadership skills, another an opportunity to hone combat abilities.

Adventure Seeds

The Old School Spirit

The town of Oxbridge has long taken pride in its school for sorcerers, Brockhouse. Now Brockhouse will defend its claim as the best school in Great Britain in the annual Magic Arts Competition (Jr. Div.). All the player characters want to make the team in their respective arts – but will their rivals in the school get the coveted places instead? And if chosen, will their training and practice let them preserve the honor of Brockhouse?

The Prince

The king has sent his oldest son to a border fortress, wanting him to gain experience of military life and spend some time away from the intrigues of the palace. Prince Xiaolong is a decent young man who will probably become a good king. He has polished manners, and knows how to use a bow, spear, and shield, and drive a chariot. Unfortunately, he's also Overconfident (no one at the palace wants to press him really hard in training) and Stubborn. The king hopes his military service will hammer out these faults. But the lucky officers and scribes stationed on the frontier need to know how to deal with Xiaolong.

The protagonists may be the personnel of the fortress, or the prince may have brought along a few companions.

Variations

A training exercise may involve an element of competition. Two groups of students may try to outdo each other while performing the same assignment, or even compete to perform a task before the other group does. Training in combat skills may involve duels or war games. If students become overzealous, competition may turn into actual combat, or students may begin sabotaging each other's efforts. Depending on the philosophy of their teachers, such actions may be strictly against the rules and require secrecy . . . or they may be tolerated, even actively encouraged. If the adventurers face continuing rivalry from another team, they will become more personally involved in their training.

As an extension of this theme of rivalry, students may even face challenges from another school's students, and have to defend the honor of their own school and teachers.

Students may also find their own learning experiences. Such player-initiated scenarios can run very much like training exercises, complete with the final evaluation by their teachers . . . but the prospects for getting into serious trouble will be greater.

Campaigns

A training campaign naturally begins at a school where the adventurers are students. Characters built on 25 to 75 points work well in such campaigns, though advanced students may require 100 points. The school could reflect classical fencing academies, dojos, fictional schools of wizardry (p. 102), or even Professor Xavier's school for "gifted" youngsters in *X-Men*! GMs may intersperse actual emergency missions and scenes from the daily life of the school into the scenario.

For an entire campaign to be a single story about training, it's necessary for the adventurers to learn something big. Perhaps advanced students undertake a long-term group project where they learn to use their skills on real tasks. Or perhaps they strive to gain some form of mystical enlightenment – a theme that could involve encounters with supernatural mysteries.

The Responsibility of Power

Successful students go on to become adventurers, but successful adventurers go on to become leaders, teachers, or rulers. Youthful hobbit adventurers come home to set their country to rights, or a mighty-thewed barbarian becomes a king. This is often where a story ends, but the duties of such positions can create their own stories.

Sword and sorcery's focus on action makes it poorly suited to this type of scenario, except as a bridge to another genre. Any of the other subgenres can include stories about responsibility: small responsibilities in low fantasy, great ones in high fantasy, harsh ones in dark fantasy, absurd ones in light fantasy.

Elements

Power requires responsibility to someone. For characters, this may be a private individual or organization, or a community. Of course, private organizations, especially powerful ones, often face demands from the rest of their communities. A rich merchant or a ruling prince may lose his wealth or power if he makes too many people unhappy. And any sizeable organization will develop an internal community, whose demands may affect it more than those of the larger community; a mercenary captain or the head of a monastery is in this position.

Meeting these responsibilities involves performing a system of routine tasks. These tasks offer a framework in which adventures fit. Simply keeping things going can create interesting scenarios, especially if supplies are uncertain. And the daily routine should include information collecting.

Such information may point toward a variety of nonroutine tasks. Adventurers may seize opportunities, counter threats, or overcome obstacles so that the routine will continue. Failure to accomplish these tasks should have consequences.

Finally, a GM should provide resources for the various tasks – both people and equipment. Anyone powerful should have control of both, and should be ready to delegate jobs as necessary.

Variations

Nothing says that "responsibility of power" scenarios have to focus only on the people in charge. A city watch takes orders from somebody, but the watchmen's duties can generate interesting challenges. A king's courtiers may have more exciting duties than the king has.

Another potentially interesting type of responsibility is training new recruits. This is the training scenario, but from the other side, as the old hands try to instill discipline and necessary skills in students.

Campaigns

Responsibility of power is poorly suited to episodic campaigns. It's not very likely that the same team of adventurers, after working together at one set of duties, will all go on to work together at the next set of duties. And moving frequently from one set of responsibilities to another often leads to not taking the job seriously. If adventurers are in charge of something, they could control it for one incident in an adventure – for example, setting up a base of operations for a military expedition – or have a long-term job that defines the entire campaign.

Such a job should have a goal beyond just meeting the day's obligations. Many goals fall into two broad categories: building something, or defending something already built from those who want to seize it or destroy it.

Shore Leave

Every campaign can benefit from occasional down time, when the adventurers don't explore dungeons or wildernesses, battle armies or monsters, or seek treasure, but rest, spend their treasure, and drink and flirt with the help at the local inn. Grim warriors and secretive wizards can gain unexpected life from a "shore leave" scenario.

Adventure Seeds

Heritage

An adventurer receives a letter asking him home. It's a sad occasion: his older brother has suffered an untimely death (perhaps in a war, perhaps in a hunting accident). When he arrives, his father asks him if he is willing to be the heir, in his brother's place. This won't immediately mean giving up his life of adventure, but he needs to stay for a while and acquaint himself with his prospective domains and their tenants. Of course, his friends are welcome as well; perhaps they might one day become members of his household.

The Worst Danger

The town guards deal with a variety of problems: pickpockets, drunken mercenaries, noblemen's brawling children, and even magic students' pranks. Now, they have a bigger problem. Two weeks ago, a small group of warriors, wizards, and rogues came through, not saying where they were bound – but they headed for the ruined castle to the south, said to be under a curse, and no one expected them to return. They did, with chests full of coins and several enchanted objects. Now their free spending is driving up prices, their brawling makes the taverns unsafe, and everyone is worried about what might come to get its treasures back. Can the guards keep these rowdies from causing too much harm, or get them to leave before they kill someone?

(This adventure could be combined with the storyline of *The Mouth of Hell*.)

This kind of scenario fits into any type of campaign. The grimmest tragedy needs occasional comic relief. But its truest home is light fantasy, where mishaps and misunderstandings that all come right in the end are the standard plot.

Elements

A "shore leave" adventure needs a setting with a low danger level. This can be as small as the common room of a single tavern, but it works better if it's on the scale of a town. Rural settings can work too, as Shakespeare showed in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *As You Like It*.

The adventurers need to interact with a variety of people or creatures. If some are impressively powerful, don't make them foes for the adventurers to defeat or sources of free benefits. Give them their own agendas, from running the Great Quinquennial Riddle Contest to finding husbands for their seven daughters. And spend equal effort on a few characters with no power at all, such as the barmaid who flirts with the quiet warrior, or the sausage peddler by the city gates.

It's also good to include a few community events. Weddings, funerals, and birthdays all work well. Contests let the adventurers show off their abilities and win something without mortal combat.

Variations

Instead of having a fixed location, a change of pace scenario can take place during a journey. A pilgrimage to a sacred shrine or a long sea voyage can provide relaxation, entertainment, and a sense of transition.

Or devote the scenario to an event or contest – but have the adventurers recruited to help run the event! A riddle contest with obsessed loremasters coming in from half a continent, or a great mercantile fair filled with eager buyers and sellers and the odd drunk or pickpocket, can offer some novel challenges to its staff.

Campaigns

An entire campaign of "shore leave" scenarios is probably too much of a good thing. The charm of such episodes is their contrast with the usual round of adventure and combat. Character interaction and humorous mishaps stand out better when they reveal a new side of the people involved.

However, something like shore leave can make a campaign frame. Think of an episode as "a day in the life of X." Then a campaign can simply portray the ongoing life of a community, with adventures growing out of various encounters; many episodes may not have an actual "adventure." This kind of freeform approach works best if the players are enthusiastic about character portrayal more than action or combat.

What high immortals do in mirth
Is life and death on Middle-Earth.
– W.H. Auden, "Under Which Lyre: A Reactionary Tract for the Times"

Adventure Seeds

Crossing the Line

Legend spoke of the realms of the immortals across the western seas. With advances in shipbuilding and navigation, daring sailors ventured west – and discovered that it was true. On the many scattered islands, explorers discover magical creatures and the inhumanly beautiful lords of the Fair Folk.

A band of curious travelers set out for the True West, for their own diverse reasons, taking the next ship that sails. But sailors on that voyage have their own traditional ceremonies, held as they pass from the seas of mortal lands to the seas of the undying. "Crossing the line" is even more exciting when the real King Neptune presides, and when the unwary traveler gets a first taste of faerie wine.

Masque

In a high fantasy setting, the royal courts have taken up masques as an entertainment: social events where participants appear in disguise, using other names or none, and playing roles, partly scripted and partly improvised. The use of magic enhances the possibilities of such entertainments greatly, with hidden prompters, illusory disguise or actual shape change, phantasmal scenery and music, and even materialized props or extras. A group of adventurers accepts an invitation to take part in the entertainment, finding their way among elaborate illusions. GMs may play the adventure straight, or complicate it by some serious event, such as a murder, palace intrigue, or supernatural manifestation. Perhaps the players even have their memories of their real identities temporarily suppressed!

Once Upon a Time, Part 3

The prince completes his quest and brings his – high-spirited – fiancée home to meet his father, who approves of her, or at least her dowry and good health. Everything is ready for a wedding that will strengthen the alliance. But a few complications remain: the prince's brothers, who lost the competition, are jealous; the petitioners who know the king will grant almost any request on the happy day; the spiteful faerie or powerful witch who didn't get invited; the troupe of entertainers who all got excessively drunk the night before, in half a dozen different taverns. Can the prince's friends get all the problems worked out so that the marriage isn't marred?

Subplots

Recurring subplots can provide a serial or episodic campaign with greater continuity. While the main characters deal with the problems and crises of the day, they also have to spend time on less important issues. Small developments can advance these subplots from episode to episode, without ever making them the main theme.

The most fruitful source of such continuity is characters' relationships. It's easy to fall into thinking of these only in terms of their direct impact on an adventure: a Dependent needs rescuing, an Enemy poses a threat, an Ally or Patron provides help. But less dramatic themes can be worth exploring. What if the Ally falls in love and is either terrified that his love isn't returned, or distracted because it is? What if the Patron wants the adventurer to attend his dinner parties? Taking advantage of established supporting casts can complicate a PC's life in interesting ways.

It's also possible to introduce NPCs who assume these roles in play. An adversary who is defeated in one scenario may get away and plot revenge, or a victim of mistreatment may turn up and obviously need help. To make things more complicated, these NPCs may attach to the predefined supporting cast. The PCs may befriend a lost child only to discover that he's an adversary's son and needs to hide from his abusive parent – or that the adversary genuinely cares for him and is reluctantly grateful to his foes for succoring him.

Even inanimate objects can have such secondary relationships. A headquarters building probably has some sort of staff; a vehicle has a crew, or at least a mechanic. A treasure can have someone trying to reclaim it, sending dark agents to stalk the hero who tries to deal with more immediate problems.

Some players can generate their own subplots. What if two of them become lovers, drinking buddies, or mismatched partners? Encourage this by giving the players time to roleplay the relationship and granting an occasional character point for good roleplaying.

War in Fantasy Settings

War stories have something for every type of audience.

To go beyond a series of separate adventures, a fantasy campaign needs a storyline with a continuing focus. War stories have something for every type of audience. Action/adventure fans get combat, physical danger, and perilous journeys. People who focus on character get tests of courage and loyalty and a variety of dramatic scenes, from confrontations with enemies to unexpected acts of mercy. If the world itself is the attraction, the characters may see a lot of it – and they'll see it as a moving picture, not a static landscape.

A roleplaying campaign, like a novel or a film, needs to emphasize the experience of war: how individual soldiers or individual commanders actually see a battle. It focuses on tests of individual skill and courage. GMs can analyze tactics ahead of time if they like, but shouldn't slow down actual play for detailed calculations, or discuss those calculations with players. In a real battle, all the ordinary soldiers know is the immediate struggle to survive, and even their commanders never have complete or up-to-date information – and no one ever has time to analyze the situation thoroughly before deciding what to do. Giving the players complete information will distance them from their characters. They can plan as much as they like before the action starts, but once it starts they have to act.

This chapter's approach to fantasy warfare focuses on the experience of war. The GM works out a quick sketch of the general situation and determines where the PCs are in that sketch. Then he works out the details of the situation as they see it and asks what they do about it. Based on how their actions turn out, he adjusts the overall result of the battle.

Varieties of Forces

In historical fantasy settings, military forces take three main forms: tribal, feudal, and civilized armies. The three types differ in size, organization, combat style, and relationship to the societies for which they fight. In some settings, all the important military powers have the same kind of forces; other settings may pit forces of different types against each other. For example, a fantasy civilization may defend against vast numbers of orcs organized as tribal warriors.

Tribal Armies

Tribal societies don't have much division of labor. Men and women usually do different jobs, but every man has some skill in most male jobs, and every woman in most female jobs. War is a male job, so every man is a warrior. But no one specializes in war as a full-time occupation.

In a way, this lack of specialization is a strength. If a tribal society has to fight, the entire adult male population can go into battle. But their skill is another question. Nomadic herders are often warlike, thanks partly to stealing and fighting over each other's

herds. Mounted nomads such as the Bedouin Arabs may be extremely skilled in combat and have the benefit of mobility. Hunters also know how to use weapons, but often rely more on stealth or traps. Tribes that raise crops have less need for weapons and less time for fighting. If patches of fertile soil are scarce, though, they may have border clashes with neighboring tribes who covet their land. When tribal peoples do fight, they don't have formal organization. Men fight alongside their relatives or in-laws, or follow a respected elder or successful warrior. Leaders depend on personal influence or intimidation, not on a chain of command. Men fight individually, as warriors, rather than in disciplined groups, as soldiers.

Tribal populations are often small, and so are tribal armies. A tribal community may have fewer than a hundred people, or as many as a few thousand. Only 15% to 25% of the men are combat age. Forces larger than a thousand men require recruitment from several related or allied tribes. Tribes may choose to fight together for a variety of reasons: because they were all driven from their homelands by an invasion or natural disaster, because a weak civilized land offers a prospect of looting, or because a strong civilized land bribes them to fight on its side. Fantasy races such as orcs or centaurs may form tribal hordes of this sort.

Feudal Armies

Feudal armies depend on personal influence to recruit soldiers even more than tribal armies. Oaths hold together the feudal societies that support these armies. Great lords form the armies because of sworn allegiance to a king, or to each other, or to serve their own ideals or ambitions. Each lord brings with him the warriors who have personally sworn to him. Warriors obey the commands of their own lords, but not of anyone else, whatever his rank.

Military Rank doesn't exist in feudal armies. Status partly takes its place, in that lords with higher Status have more voice in what the army does. The other part is simple anarchy, with every lord doing as he likes, until someone makes him stop. In extreme cases, two men may fight a duel to settle a debate over strategy.

Status comes, in turn, from holding land. The basic feudal contract is that one man, a *vassal*, agrees to fight for another man, his *lord*. The lord doesn't pay the vassal; instead, he allows him to occupy some of the land that the lord controls. The land produces enough to support the vassal, including the expenses of his maintaining himself as a warrior.

When feudal societies develop trade and larger cities, they can also support mercenary companies. About the same size as feudal companies, these depend on personal obligations. But their soldiers are paid in cash, and their captains expect cash as well, not land. Mercenaries in the Middle Ages were starting to function like professional armies, with Military Rank and chains of command, when nonmercenary forces were still mainly feudal.

Feudal armies are comparable in size to large tribal armies. A major war may involve several thousand men on each side. Supporting this many men is a strain on most feudal economies. Feudal infantry are often farmers called away from their fields, and must get back in time for the harvest. This may limit the campaigning season to a few months out of each year.

Professional Armies

Professional armies train and pay soldiers to fight in an organized way. They often spend all their time on training, fighting, and guard duty. Historical low-tech societies couldn't spare many men from their farms, so an army couldn't be more than a small fraction of the adult male population. Other men had limited combat skills and little or no battle experience; some cultures forbid them from learning fighting skills or own weapons.

Soldiers have assignments to specific military forces and to units within those forces. Each force has a chain of command based on some version of Military Rank. A common historical pattern formed groups of 10, 100, and 1,000 men, each commanded by an officer of a specific rank. Names of units and ranks may reflect this even if the numbers aren't exact; for example, in the Roman Empire, a centurion commanded a century that was usually 80 rather than 100 men. Military Rank is distinct from Status, but officers may come mostly or exclusively from the nobility.

Soldiers should obey orders from officers, whether they have any personal ties or not. These orders tell them what maneuvers to perform at what times. They fight in formations, so they can protect each other. As a result, a civilized and well-organized army might defeat a horde of tribal warriors several times its size.

Standing armies are larger than most feudal or tribal armies. A war between civilized peoples can have tens of thousands of soldiers on each side. The formal command structure means that the entire force ultimately obeys a single general and pursues a single goal.

This kind of organization occasionally also appears among nomadic peoples. For example, the Mongols had armies on this scale and a formal chain of command, with the khan at the top.

Strategic Positions

The basic strategic position depends on the relative strength of the opposing forces. There are three stable "steady states" between enemy forces: boundaries, siege, and occupation. Transitions between these states often occur quickly, usually through battles or wars. The steady state conditions may be found at any level of conflict, from peace to open battle.

If two states or peoples have roughly equal forces, neither is likely to defeat the other. Usually each will have secure possession of some territory. In between is contested ground. Either each side dominates some, neutral territory exists in between, or the two sides may face each other without a gap.

In an actual battle, the combatants draw the lines. When one side loses the battle, the line moves or vanishes. But war is more than battle. What keeps one army out of a territory may be the potential threat from the enemy soldiers who *could* attack them if they went into it. Invaders may slip through a gap between enemy forces, but if the enemy closes the gap behind them, they can't receive supplies, gather reinforcements, or retreat. This same kind of potential threat can define a guarded frontier in peacetime. In a sense, political boundaries are all potential battle lines.

Large kingdoms or empires sometimes find small, nominally independent kingdoms useful for separation – a peacetime form of neutral territory. The rulers of these tiny kingdoms may become clever at playing their bigger neighbors against each other.

When one side gains superiority over the other, the battle line collapses, and the superior side moves to occupy the inferior side's territory. This doesn't always involve actual fighting. The weaker side may voluntarily pull back to a defensible position, rather than face an overwhelming attack and lose most of their men. If it does come to actual fighting, victory may come from brilliant maneuvering to hit the enemy's weak points, or from prolonged battle that wears him down with superior numbers. Historically, an attacker needs at least three-to-two odds to win by attrition; anything less than three to one is still risky.

During a defeat, the losing forces try to retreat to strong points: defensible ground, fortifications, or cities. Ideally, this is a controlled retreat with a rearguard, instead of a rout. If they succeed, the war enters a second steady state: siege. A besieging army has enough strength to control most of the ground, but not to break down the other army's defenses; as a result, it has to remain on guard against raids and counterattacks. A successful counterattack may even reestablish territorial boundaries between the two armies.

This balance of forces also has a peacetime equivalent. A stronghold may become an enclave: a small territory belonging to one side, surrounded by the other side's territory.

Besieging armies concentrate their forces around the enemy strongholds, though they also have to maintain supply lines. They may passively trap the enemy and wait them out, but more often, they try to reduce the strongholds. Ancient military theorists recognized five ways of doing this: going over the walls, going through them, going under them, blockade (starving the defenders out, the slow way), or betrayal. Success at any of these methods leads to fighting in the streets and buildings of a city, often followed by looting.

After storming all the cities and strongholds in an area, the military situation enters a third steady state: occupation. Any surviving opposition forces keep themselves safe by hiding from the new rulers, instead of waging open battle against them. They may have secret bases or camps in forests, caves, or other secluded areas, or disguise themselves as noncombatants and live among the general population. They support their rebellion by their own work, gifts from the common people, or robbing the invaders or people who collaborate with them. Often rebels are hard to distinguish from bandits (see the *Bandit* template on p. 116). Popular legend may turn any bandit into a freedom fighter against an unpopular ruler. Attacks on occupying forces are mostly ambushes and raids instead of open battles. These methods attempt to weaken the occupying forces to the point where local strongholds can rebel against them and win.

An occupied country may eventually accept its occupation; if it does, it becomes a province in an empire.

Battles

In the historical periods that form the basis for most fantasy worlds, several different types of battles were common.

Raids

The commonest form of fantasy warfare is raiding the enemy countryside. The invader burns villages, carries off livestock and slaves, and plunders any poorly defended towns. Towns shut their gates, and villagers gather up what they can, fleeing to secure castles or walled towns.

Defenders can simply choose to wait out the raid. However, this is bad for their Reputations, and can make them a target for future raids. It also takes away taxable wealth that could support their military strength. So defenders may stand up to the raiders. The high-risk way to do this is in pitched battle. The lower-risk method allows the attackers to invade, and then counterattacks when they spread out to pillage, or as they retreat, carrying their loot. Both the Chinese and Roman Empires used versions of this strategy against their barbarian neighbors.

Sieges

Some armies do more than raid. They may want to take back a country's greatest treasures, which are usually in defended places. Or they may want to become its rulers. Seizing a significant fort, castle, port town, or commercial center – often with the threat that "if you don't surrender, we'll storm the place and put everyone to the sword" – can change the balance of power, especially if the attacker is ready to garrison the place, making it hard to take back. Either goal requires a siege.

A walled stronghold can hold out for months or years providing plenty of opportunity for dirty tricks, treachery, assassination, assaults down hidden sewers and secret passages, magic, and similar methods. If the attackers outnumber the defenders, they may try an assault with scaling ladders and siege engines. Open assault is risky; an army behind good fortifications can have a fighting chance against five or even 10 times its number.

A siege of a town might precede a brutal sack. Artifacts and relics can be lost or stolen. If the conqueror is particularly harsh, or the town has held out for a long time, the inhabitants may be enslaved or massacred. PCs can join in, lead it, or try to control their troops or comrades. In realistic treatments, noncombatant deaths are likely and looting almost unavoidable; in mythic treatments, conquerors may act nobly generous or inhumanly brutal.

A standard fantasy trope is the important border fortress or castle, once strongly garrisoned, that is now only guarded by a small (if valiant) shadow of its former host, as people have forgotten the enemy it was supposed to protect against.

Breaking Sieges

Battles often take place as an army tries to rescue a besieged defender. Sometimes the besieger will build his own fortifications, and then end up besieged himself. The defenders have plenty of opportunity to heroically sally out at the critical moment. An advance party can try to fight or sneak through the siege lines to tell the defenders not to surrender, because help is coming.

Pitched Battles

Any of these actions may lead to a pitched battle, where both sides stand up and fight. A typical battle starts early in the day and is over before noon. Armies almost never fight to the last man; a battle ends when one side's troops no longer defend themselves as a unit, but try to save their own lives. If the losing side's retreat is cut off – by a river, swamp, mountain range, or fortification – they may experience enormous losses.

Given the relatively small size of armies in most fantasy settings, it's not practical to have a line of soldiers along an entire frontier. Armies meet because their leaders choose to look for battle. Typically both sides have time to set up camp and arrange their troops. A common pattern divides the troops into left, center, and right forces; cavalry usually go at the end of the battle line, letting them ride around the main battle to strike where needed. Prudent commanders keep at least a small force in reserve behind the main battle, ready to aid other troops in a crisis or finish off a defeated foe.

Contested Passage

Mountain passes, fords, bridges, and (for naval battles) narrow straits give one force – even a smaller one – the ability to block an invasion or retreat. The defenders have the chance to make heroic stands, as their enemies have to come at them in small numbers. In this way, a small force can protect the main army from a pitched battle against a more powerful foe.

Ambush

Missile troops can limit an enemy's mobility in a different way. If the terrain limits an army's choice of routes, attackers can lie in wait along the likely routes and attack, by surprise, when the enemy comes into their range. Foot soldiers will usually strike from their hiding place and then escape by preplanned routes. Light cavalry can ride forward from a camouflaged location to attack, and then escape faster than infantry or heavy cavalry can follow. An extremely successful ambush might stop an army's advance, but the usual goal is to delay it while the advancing troops defend themselves and send a force out to drive away the assailants.

Diversion

One side may attempt to confuse the other about its actual goals. If this works really well, the other side may commit all its forces to defending against an attack that never comes. Most of the time, a successful diversion simply means that the enemy doesn't have a clear objective. When the attack does come, it takes longer than it should for him to arrange his forces to meet it.

Magic and Warfare

In a fantasy setting, combatants will try to find ways of gaining an advantage in battle from magic. If magic is slow, they'll use it in intelligence, logistics, and siegecraft; if it's fast, they'll turn it into an actual weapon.

Magic in the Field

Treating mages as man-portable artillery may show a disregard for mystical philosophy, but it's also extremely useful! Any commander offered the services of a battle wizard with Explosive Fireball would be seriously tempted. Be careful to consider Fatigue, though. A mage with Explosive Fireball-15 and Recover Energy-15 spends 5 energy for a 3d attack and needs 25 minutes to recover, roughly 2 shots per hour. If wizards are rare and expensive, a catapult may be a better choice.

Player Characters in Battle

Presenting a battle dramatically means showing it through the eyes of specific people. The role PCs serve in their army determines what they see of its battles, and therefore how the GM has to present battles. Three basic points of view are possible. Ordinary soldiers mainly see the combat in their immediate area; they'll be aware in general of how the troops near them are doing, but not of the details of combat. Leaders who command from the front (standard practice in tribal and feudal armies, but not necessarily in civilized armies) get a clear view of the enemy as the battle starts, and occasionally can pause to look around and choose new objectives as it continues. If a king or general commands from the rear, his staff can have a picture of the whole battle, but usually not a complete or current one, because they aren't at the front lines. Historically this command style was rare until the late Renaissance, though in fantasy it's very popular with evil overlords. Magical methods of scrying and long-distance communication can support this command style in a fantasy setting.

If player characters are actually in combat, their actions are unlikely to sway the outcome of the battle. Hand-to-hand fighters will affect only what happens along a few yards of the front line. Missile troops will be taking part in massed volleys that affect the battle only statistically. But this isn't much fun, or consistent with the heroic myths a lot of fantasy is based on. In epic fantasy, battles change based on single combats between champions, as with David and Goliath or Homer's heroes before the walls of Troy. When one side's champions fall, their followers can only surrender or flee.

For a more realistic style that still makes the PCs' actions meaningful, treat them as a sample of their side's forces. Set them up against a sample of the other side. If the enemy consists of bigger or smaller numbers, make their sample proportionately bigger or smaller. Then run through the small-scale fight and see who wins. If the PCs are average soldiers, assume that their battle performance is the average for their side as a whole. If they're a leader and his elite companions, either match them against the other side's elite, or have them fight ordinary soldiers and assume that the rest of their side doesn't do quite as well. On the other hand, an elite group that achieves a really stunning victory may inspire their own troops to heroism, or break the enemy's resistance. Soldiers leading the assault on an enemy stronghold can play a similar role.

If player characters are behind the front lines, they may not see much fighting. This approach calls for more roles against Strategy, Tactics, Administration, Intelligence Analysis, and any spells that support them. If the players want action as well as planning, they may lead the reserve forces into battle at a critical moment, with victory or defeat resting on their leadership. Or a campaign can have everyone play two characters, a member of the command staff who plans for a battle, and an ordinary soldier who fights in it. Shifting between the two viewpoints can build tension, as in many war movies, and having combat go better or worse depending on how good the officers' plans were helps dramatize the results of their staff work. This also allows players a broader range of characterization, contrasting the heroic or sophisticated leaders with the "common man" troops.

Magic can make troops harder for an enemy to spot. For example, Fog can block the line of sight of enemy sentries, as can Darkness. Fog or Darkness can also prevent enemy troops from keeping track of each other and thus disrupt formations.

Other weather spells can scatter troops, making it impossible for them to hold a battlefield. Powerful earth spells can have similar effects. In a magical setting, close formations may be an invitation to disaster; armies may spread out sideways, as they have historically since the end of the 18th century.

Mages can engage in psychological warfare. Fear is an area spell; spending 6 points of Fatigue on Fear will generate fear in a 6-yard radius, which could create a useful hole in enemy lines, especially with poorly disciplined troops. A mage with Recover Strength-15 can do this every half hour.

An extension of this effect, if the mage's own side will tolerate it, is the use of Necromantic spells. Consider the shock of troops seeing their own companions (or, even worse, their leaders) rise from the dead and march against them. One casting of Zombie uses 8 energy, which can be regained in 40 minutes with Recover Strength; a necromancer could send a dozen slain enemies a day back into battle on his own side. GMs should consider this especially for evil armies in sword and sorcery or dark fantasy settings.

Magic and Fortifications

Fortifications are even more susceptible to magical disruption in a fantasy setting. If magic is rare, wizards or holy men will occasionally inflict miraculous defeat on a supposedly impregnable city or fortress. If magic is common, the concept of impregnability will change; in effect, fortifications and siegecraft will be at a higher TL (p. 66).

Attack in the Air

Magical worlds may achieve flight in a variety of ways: spells such as Levitation or Flight, the corresponding enchanted items, or harnessing or training flying creatures such as gryphons or dragons. Aerial forces can bypass the usual sorts of fortifications in several ways. Small teams of magical warriors can fly over walls to engage the defenders in hand-to-hand combat, perhaps striking from above. Magical flying beasts can do the same, or carry missile troops or spellcasters to vantage points above a castle. Or aerial forces can take stations high above a castle and bombard it with anything from rocks to molten lead.

To counter such attacks, fortresses must be roofed; men standing on walls or towers will just be targets. Defenders bar windows, or reduce them to slits, to prevent flying attackers from entering. The bulk of a fortress may even be underground, resembling a bunker more than a medieval castle. Missile troops will be vital; even better will be spellcasters, whose lightning bolts aren't pulled down by gravity. Weather wizards could make the sky unnavigable.

Defenders may seize the high ground themselves, enchanting an entire fortress with Levitation. A floating fortress provides an observation station, with a horizon in miles equal to the square root of its height in feet (or, on a flat world, an unlimited horizon). It also serves as a firing platform. The gods of mythology were well aware of such advantages; the Norse god Heimdall watched everything happening across the earth, and the Greek gods hurled thunderbolts or fired magical arrows at their earthbound foes. In *Gulliver's Travels*, Jonathan Swift described a different form of assault – the flying city of Laputa dropped onto opposing cities to crush them with its adamant undersurface.

Attack Through the Walls

Defending a fortress becomes even harder if mages know Teleport or similar spells. Teleport requires seeing the destination, so areas inside fortress walls will be off limits; parleys will take place outside the gates. Alternatively, hosts may blindfold visitors and lead them into special locked rooms, or permanent Illusion enchantments may mask the fortress' true appearance. Scryguard, to prevent anyone from looking in magically, will apply to essential sites, possibly over an entire building. Earth to Air and Walk through Earth do not depend on sight, but double walls make them less effective, especially if the space between the walls is a pit or other trap or can be attacked easily. Each of the two walls should have doors, preferably not directly facing each other.

Magical Defenses

A fortress in a fixed location is vulnerable to other magical attacks, from heavy-duty attack spells to having its walls taken down with Shape Earth. Fortresses important enough to justify the expense have a variety of countermeasures. Some lower the mana level of the ground just outside the walls, to enclose the structure in a no-mana zone. (The mana level inside the perimeter is usually unaffected, but mages usually prefer to leave a few normal-mana breaks in the perimeter.)

To resist physical attacks and spells such as Fireball, build fortresses out of adamant or other magical materials. Or design like fortifications of the post-gunpowder era, low to the ground, with sloping earthworks in star-shaped ("Vauban") layouts. When cannons or wizards can smash any normal wall, castles become obsolete.

Magical Support Roles

The most familiar support role for mages is that of healing the wounded. Magical healing is expensive enough to be reserved for the worst wounds; a healer with Major Healing and Recover Energy can spend 3 energy to heal 6 hits, rest 15 minutes, and repeat the process, treating perhaps 40 wounded soldiers in a day. This will not prevent immediate death for those suffering -HP or worse, but if it raises the wounded man above -HP, he can begin recovering.

Mages can help with military construction, using Earth spells to dig ditches or build walls.

When a messenger is needed, a mage specializing in Movement spells can be very useful, with Quick March, Flight, or Teleport. Other spells can let him sense enemy patrols (Communication and Empathy or Protection and Warning) or conceal himself from them (Illusion and Creation, Light and Darkness, or Plant). If the mage adds to these spells a few sense-enhancing Mind spells, he can act as a nearly undetectable scout as well.

Finally, though the function isn't glamorous, a mage can be a real asset to the quartermaster corps. Water and Food spells can find supplies, test or improve their purity, or even create them from nothing.

How Common Are Mages?

The influence of these changes depends on the amount of mages an army recruits.

In some settings, individual mages have about the same impact as special ops teams or a large artillery piece. They can assassinate leaders, break the occasional formation, facilitate entry into a stronghold, provide intelligence, or counter the enemy mages (or other supernatural forces). They

may positively affect morale in unsteady troops, but ultimately the battle is man against man.

In some settings, powerful mages are rare, but their effects are strong enough to wipe out or frighten off entire battalions of ordinary troops (vast areas of fire or darkness, conjured monster hordes, windstorms, shields against arrows for entire units). Most of the time, soldiers fight in massed formations as usual. But when suspicions circulate that the enemy does have a mage, they often disperse to survive. Units that disperse are vulnerable to massed enemy conventional forces. It becomes vital, in this scenario, to have your own supporting wizards to get the enemy to disperse as well! Special, mobile forces experienced in working with wizards or priests, equipped with Magic Resistance or talismans to protect them, may train to target enemy mages or protect them. Such elite units will stay calm if things go magical.

In still other settings, magic is powerful and common. Wizards, demons, and the like integrate at the small unit level or mass in special units. Many people have minor magic; entire units can cast spells collectively. The amount of magical firepower dominates the battle. Mages/priests may replace knights as the basis of a feudal system. Close formation troops cannot survive against the firepower a mage can generate unless ways exist of reliably neutralizing magic or shielding entire units; if not, light infantry and cavalry forces, possibly airborne, are dominant.

The predictability of magic also makes a difference. If magic is essentially an art, than the advantage goes to the offensive. Troops cannot predict what will hit them; even if a mage is with them, he probably won't have the right counterspell. The best tactic is to hope your mage kills his mage (or troops) first. If magic is more of a science, mages can have set drills and well-worked counterspells based on the most efficient area spells. Teams of mages may be assigned to specific units with specific offensive/defensive roles. Depending on how common mages are, one mage and apprentices might be assigned to protect a unit, another to damage enemy troops or mages, a third to scrying/counterscrying, and so on.

Mythical Beasts in Combat

Mages aren't the only complication a fantasy world offers to the art of war. Many fantasy worlds have races or creatures with unusual capabilities. In terms of effects on battle, these fall into three main groups.

First, they may be unusually deadly in ordinary combat. An infantry force of trolls or ogres can carry massive weapons and wear the heaviest armor, making them nearly impossible for ordinary men to defeat. Gigantic creatures may have enough HP to make them almost invincible, or natural DR, or both. Elephants played this role on many real-world battlefields, but fantasy battlefields may have even greater behemoths. Manlike giants can serve as walking catapults, throwing boulders big enough to smash down castle walls.

Second, they may improve mobility. If unicorns can be tamed, their incredible speed makes them ideal cavalry mounts . . . perhaps for an elite warband of women pledged to virginity. Flying creatures carry this even further, especially if they're big enough for humans to ride, or intelligent enough to follow orders or make tactical decisions. A fantasy country might have a gryphon-mounted air force.

Third, they may have magical attacks. Fiery breath is traditional, but far from the only choice. Any Affliction or Innate Attack could either kill the enemy, or break their will to fight. Supernatural beings with Terror can do the same.

The very dangerous magical races and creatures can have all three advantages. Dragons, for example, can fly, breathe fire, and are big and well-armored enough to kill a mounted knight in straight physical combat. If a fantasy world has races or beings that are this dangerous, rulers will be eager to form alliances with them. Or they may *be* the rulers (see *Teratocracy*, p. 69, and *The Good Shepherds*, p. 61).

The Armies of Darkness

In some fantasy settings, the enemy has access to magic that the heroes can't use. Perhaps they simply don't know about it, or they can't use it without strong temptation from the dark side, or it requires sacrifices that would kill the very people they have to protect. Dark supernatural allies may simply be too hard to control and too dangerous. This can set up one of the classic situations of fantasy: the hero whose resolve and skill must stand against unnatural powers.

High fantasy often involves this kind of battle. A great struggle between good and evil is one of the classic mythic themes, all the way back to the war of Horus against Set in Egyptian mythology. It also works well in dark fantasy, though the main emphasis is likely the adversary's mysterious evil powers. The "good" forces may only work together to stop a common threat – and they probably won't all survive. Classic sword and sorcery often matched heroic warriors against villainous wizards; recent treatments may have special dark spells that only evildoers would use.

In a low fantasy campaign, good and evil may intertwine more, as they often are in real history. The heroic forces may find themselves compelled to use darker and darker methods against their foes, to the point where it's hard to tell the two sides apart. Or the good side may have to ally with the evil side when both are threatened by an even greater evil – for example, a monster slayer and a monster may team up against a demon that wants to destroy the world rather than fight over it. Or there may not be clearly defined good and evil at all . . . just people trying to get by in a hard world.

For a "fantasy in the real world" treatment of these themes, consider introducing magic and the supernatural into World War II. Any of the various low fantasy motifs could fit there, right next to the Manhattan Project and the alliance between the United States and the Soviet Union. On the other hand, it's hard to find a better modern example of a great mythic war against evil; a dark fantasy World War II could have its own appeal, whether the fantasy was openly revealed (perhaps in the style of four-color comics) or deeply hidden.

Chapter Nine
Roma Arcana

Then Julius Fabricius died, as even prefects do,
And after certain centuries, Imperial Rome died too.
– Rudyard Kipling, "The Land"

Standing by the bank of the Garumna, Johannes Niger glimpsed the wagons coming up to the opposite bank. "God DAMN!" he said – and realized he had said it in English, despite all his training to speak only Latin. He berated himself while he raced to the bridge, and watched for what would come over. He wasn't the only one standing there; boys, sailors whose ships were in port, and a few slaves who thought they could get away with it had all gathered there as well.

The bridge strained under the weight; he could hear the creaking. Roman engineers built well, but not for what was pulling the lead wagons. He could see the horned heads, and the bony shields that supported the horns.

Beside him, he heard someone say something about "megalogryphontes," His linguistic training noted the word, and then dissected it: "big gryphons." Well, they were quadrupeds with beaks . . . but he had been a dinosaur enthusiast as a child; he knew them as triceratops. He remembered being disappointed when it sank in that no human had ever really seen a live dinosaur. Apparently that wasn't true here. One more weirdness to add to the other weirdnesses of this alternate Rome.

The wagon driver was a large middle-aged man. Beside him was a slender woman with straight black hair and epicanthic folds. Well, she could have gotten here by the Silk Road, as a traveler or as merchandise. She was getting almost as many stares as the dinosaurs; apparently East Asians didn't get to Rome very often.

The wagon rumbled down onto the street and headed for the main cross street. Johannes saw the paintings on its side, exotic beasts and the word "BESTIARUM." He supposed the satyrs and sphinxes were just for advertising.

But if they were real, he definitely wanted to know it. This was one show he'd go to see.

At the start of its second millennium, Rome is in great danger. The gods grow angry at an empire that pays them little honor, and withdraw their protection. The emperors squander the public trust. The rule of law fails, in the city and its many provinces. Barbarians, monsters, and magic cults threaten honest citizens and disrupt trade. If the empire will survive, wealthy and powerful men, in Rome's ancient tradition, need to step forward as benefactors of their cities.

Times of trouble are unpleasant to live through, but make exciting settings for adventure stories. Citizens and soldiers will work to hold back the shadows; explorers from other timelines try to uncover the secrets of an empire where pagan gods and magical spells have real power.

Roma Arcana is a setting for a sword and sorcery or dark fantasy campaign. Use it on its own, or as a timeline in the Infinite Worlds campaign setting (see Chapter 20 of the ***Basic Set***). The year is 258 A.D., or in the Roman calendar *ab urbe condita* (AUC) 1011.

The Roma Arcana setting is TL2 and CR4. The mana level is normal, except inside city limits, where it is low. Casting spells in Roma Arcana takes 10 times as long as defined in the spell description; the caster must attract the attention of a god or spirit and make his wishes known.

Roma Arcana in the Multiverse

Roma Arcana is a Quantum-7 world. Aside from its off-limits status, it's hard to get to from Quantum-5, and not many Infinity Patrol agents have gone there. So far as anyone can tell, Centrum hasn't found it yet, and the Infinity Patrol wants to keep it that way; if Diocletian and Constantine turn up on schedule, their centralized rule would be just the sort of thing Interworld would want to encourage.

At the GM's discretion, an even stranger possibility may occur: Roma Arcana may "echo" the mysterious homeworld of the Cabal! The sorcerers and mystagogues of the Roman Empire could parallel the Cabal's past, developing comparable arts. The active gods are comparable to the denizens of the Astral, Iconic, and Spiritual Realms. This opens up many different possibilities. The Infinity Patrol could use Roma Arcana as a testing ground for ways of coping with the Cabal's powers, especially if they figure out its "echo" status. It might also give them hints about the Cabal's origins or help them find its homeworld. On the other hand, their actions in Roma Arcana might draw the Cabal's attention. Or the Cabal might already know about Roma Arcana and even have their agents in place. They might even have shaped its history, whether by magical "benevolent guidance" or as a subtle trap for paratemporal explorers.

A Time of Troubles

Why have our two consuls and the praetors come out
today in their red, embroidered togas;
why do they wear amethyst-studded bracelets,
and rings with brilliant glittering emeralds;
why are they carrying costly canes today,
superbly carved with silver and gold?

Because the barbarians are to arrive today,
and such things dazzle the barbarians.

– C. P. Cavafy,
"Expecting the Barbarians"

The Roman Empire controls Southern and Western Europe, Asia Minor and the Near East, and northern Africa (see map, p. 199). Most of its territory is within the *limes*, the sacred frontier drawn by Augustus Caesar in his will. To defend the *limes*, and to keep order within them, the Empire relies on its armies and on the help of the gods, against both natural and supernatural threats. The two used to work together, but the gods seldom bless Rome's armies now.

Foes and Menaces

Threats to Rome take many forms. Many are human, but some are not. Some human foes wield magic, and some nonhuman foes *are* magic – ghosts, spirits, or even gods.

The Parthian Empire

Rome's great rival empire centers in Persia. The Parthians boast of having been an empire since Rome was a collection of mud huts on the bank of the Tiber. They have organized armies of their own, based primarily on skilled horsemen. Parthian land isn't as fertile as Roman and can't support as big a population, but the skill and courage of Parthian cavalry keeps the Roman legions at bay and sometimes defeats them.

The Parthian Empire also has its own supernatural resources. Chaldea, the original home of astrology, lies within its boundaries, and skilled astrologers advise imperial officials. Priests of the ancient Zoroastrian religion call for aid from a hierarchy of spiritual powers.

The Parthians practice magical arts as well. Reflecting their religious beliefs, Parthians divide spells sharply into white and black magic. White magi seek divine aid for their spells. Very secretly, a few Parthians practice black magic, though it's officially illegal. Some black magi work, unofficially, as spies or assassins for the Parthian Empire, either within its boundaries or in foreign lands.

The Germanic Tribes

The Germans are not a civilized people; they wage war as individuals, not as organized forces. Men join a warband out of obligation to its leader, or because they expect success and want to share in the loot. There's no formal command structure. However, individual Germans are typically strong and skilled in battle. Roman soldiers entering the vast German forests often do not return.

Berserking is common among Germans. A few are skin-turners, owning magically empowered animal hides that let them change shape (see *Skin-Turners*, p. 209). German poets sometimes know how to enthrall listeners with their voices. Other forms of magic are rare.

Germans worship a pantheon that vaguely resembles the Roman gods, but have no organized priesthood; wealthy men build shrines and offer sacrifices.

The most aggressive German tribes are the Franks, along the borders of Gaul; the Alamanni, in central Europe; and the Goths, north of the Balkan provinces of the empire. German invasions are common and destructive, often reaching far inside the Empire.

The Druids

Rome put an end to the Druids centuries ago, both in Gaul and in Britain. The ancient Celtic gods were mostly identified with Roman ones and their worship moved into Roman-style temples. But now, as Rome's gods weaken and withdraw, some Celtic gods look for an older kind of worship.

Here and there, across the western Empire, memories of past lives trouble men of Celtic blood. Some discover their previous incarnations as druids. They start to recover their lost arts, but also remember their struggle against Rome. Some support a separate empire in the West; others want to reclaim entirely their old customs, kill the Romans and Romanized Celts in their lands . . . they even dream of sacking Rome.

Druidic magical arts rest on knowledge of the natural world, and are the most potent in the wilderness. Druids don't write out spells, they memorize them. Druid lore takes the form of Bardic Lore (p. 99).

Monsters

Romans view unnatural births as a sign from the gods. The number of such signs has increased. And worse, they're often not just deformed but dangerous. Unnaturally large, fierce predators (see *Lupus Magnus,* p. 231) appear throughout the empire. Travel through the wilderness, or even on the roads, involves risk.

Even larger creatures inhabit the seas. Huge serpents occasionally appear and crush ships in their coils. Mariners fresh from adventures on the Atlantic Ocean tell stories of the kraken, a tentacled monstrosity that pulls ships under if they sail above its resting place.

Still other monsters occasionally come from under the earth. Centuries ago, the Greek philosopher Empedocles discovered a cavern filled with huge beasts, far below the earth. (See *Empedocles' Quest*, p. 212.) Some of these beasts surface from time to time.

Spirits

Roman funeral rites and ancestor worship turn the spirits of the dead from threats into allies. But this doesn't always work. A dead person who was greatly wronged, or wasn't properly buried or burned, or whose living kin don't honor him, sometimes reappears as a ghost crying out for vengeance. With the growing popularity of sorcery, some people deliberately avoid having funeral rites, hoping to exercise power from beyond the grave, or even to return to the world of the living. Both ghosts and embodied undead creatures grow more common.

Under the protection of the gods, Roman engineers create great public works, such as roads, bridges, aqueducts, and sewers, taming the forces of nature. But the spirits of the earth always resent bondage. Now the gods have set them free to throw it off. Their magical powers over nature seldom destroy human works outright, but by wearing them away, they bring the world closer to untamed wilderness.

Imperial Assets

Rome's foundation is a threefold bond between gods, men, and the land. This pattern influences all of Roman civilization, from a single household to the empire as a whole. Rome relies on this in times of trouble.

Every area of land has spirits, and the land can allows occupation with their consent. These spirits expect the occupants of the land to make suitable offerings. But occupants also make offerings to other spirits: to the spirit of their own family, to their ancestors, and to their gods. These offerings create areas with heightened sanctity levels. The gods and spirits may aid the protection of areas sanctified to them.

Each inhabited place has a sacred perimeter called the *pomoerium*, often marked by a ditch or a line of stones. The land it encloses has normal sanctity. The land outside it has low sanctity. Customarily communities bury the dead there, to keep them from troubling the living. Somewhere inside the inhabited area is a holy place with high sanctity, devoted to the protection of sacred things and of valuable possessions. The gods usually protect this location, either through their own powers or by aid to its human defenders.

The Roman Empire has lost this protection by offending the gods. Its entire territory once had normal sanctity, but now has low sanctity. However, many households, cities, and fortresses still keep faith and can ask for the gods' aid.

Frontiers and Fortifications

The legions form the heart of Rome's military forces. Legionaries primarily are armored infantrymen, fighting with javelins and swords (see *Equipment*, p. 223), and among the best in the world. But they are also combat engineers, able to build a fortress, besiege a city, or assemble and fire a catapult. In a war, a legion can march all day and then build a fortified camp before night falls.

Legions number over 5,000 men, divided into "centuries" averaging 80 men. Nearly all the 33 legions are stationed at the *limes* (see *Order of Battle*, p. 200). The main force of each legion occupies a fortress averaging about 50 acres. Detachments, called vexillations from the *vexilla* (banner) that each one carries, occupy smaller forts along the length of the border, keeping watch for invaders. Auxiliary forces of cavalry and light infantry occupy other forts. Some 300,000 soldiers stand watch on the frontier.

Fortifications aren't just military bases; they're also religious centers. The *principia* (headquarters building) at the center of each site houses a shrine, the *sacellum,* where the legion keeps its eagles, its images of the imperial family, and the standards of its centuries. The shrine has high sanctity, and the entire camp has normal sanctity, in relation to the legion's gods. The standards themselves have ritual significance; going into battle without them means losing the protection of the gods. Guarding them is a position of trust. The men who hold it are also the treasurers for their legion, and shrines typically have cellars that hold the legion's treasury.

Plan of a Typical Legionary Fortress

The area inside the ditch is normal sanctity; the shrine in the ***principia*** *is high sanctity. Important buildings are the* ***principia*** *or headquarters, with a large meeting hall at the front, armories along the sides, and a central shrine flanked by offices at the back; the* ***praetorium****, or house of the commanding officer; and the hospital, with wards for the 60 centuries surrounding a central courtyard where medicinal herbs are grown. The long L- and U-shaped buildings are barracks; the centurions had separate rooms at the "base" of the L or U, and each "arm" is several yards thick. There were walkways between the barracks (or between the two "arms" of the U-shaped barracks).*

1. Watchtower
2. Barracks
3. Oven
4. Gate
5. Prefect
6. Praetorium
7. Stables
8. Granaries
9. Tribune
10. First Cohort Barracks

When the soil of the Empire had normal sanctity, legionaries fighting upon it gained the benefits of Higher Purpose. Now only the guardians of the standards have that benefit, when carrying the standards or protecting their shrine. Legions still pray to the gods of Rome before battle, but many soldiers have turned to the worship of Mithras (p. 206). As a soldier, Mithras helps fellow soldiers do their duty in battle, but he protects individual soldiers, not the legion as a body.

The Emperor

The emperor holds the highest rank in every hierarchy of Roman society: commander of the legions, chief administrator of the state, and head of the pontifical college, Rome's highest religious body. He also has the title of *pater patriae,* father of the country. In the eyes of the gods, every Roman is a dependent of the imperial household.

Over the past few decades, many different emperors have held the throne, sometimes for less than a year. There may be two or three claimants to the throne at a time. At best, emperors are military commanders who win the loyalty of their soldiers. At worst, the empire may be auctioned off to the highest bidder. Many emperors die by assassination, sometimes at the hands of their own guards, but most fall in battle. Emperors often are preoccupied with military threats and have little time for priestly duties. Officially, every emperor receives guidance from the Imperial Genius (p. 202), but most recent emperors have gained little benefit from it.

Cities of the Empire

All over the empire, city-states organize citizens. The official citizenry of each city-state includes nearby rural landowners, as well as people who actually live in the city. "Cities" range from country villages with a few priests and officials to metropolises with tens of thousands of residents.

Each city has an *ordo*, or city council, modeled on Rome's Senate, and one, two, or three pairs of magistrates. Cities also maintain cults for the official gods of the Empire, including the Imperial Genius, and for any gods who have specially favored their people.

Some cities are capitals of *provinces*, the larger divisions of Rome's conquered territory. Each provincial capital is the residence of a governor, normally a Roman senator. If one or more legions are headquartered in a province, the senior commander also acts as governor; in other provinces the governor is a civil servant. Each governor gets assistance from one or more procurators, imperial bureaucrats responsible for collecting taxes. A detachment of troops from the nearest legion suppresses rebellions, enforces imperial laws, and builds roads, amphitheaters, and other large projects.

Order of Battle

Each of Rome's 33 legions has a permanent headquarters, mostly along the frontier. (See the map on p. 199 for the location of each province.) The following list groups the legions by where they are stationed; modern names for the locations are in [brackets]. Each legion has a number. During the civil wars before the founding of the Empire, many of these numbers were duplicated. Instead of renumbering, the Romans changed the nicknames into official names, and this custom continued for later legions.

Designation	*Stationed in*
II Augusta	Isca [Caerleon], Britain
XX Valeria Victrix	Deva [Chester], Britain
VI Victrix	Eburacum [York], Britain
VII Gemina	Leon, Tarraconensis
VIII Augusta	Argentorate [Strasbourg], Germany
I Minervia	Bonna [Bonn], Germany
XXII Primigenia	Mogontiacum [Mainz], Germany
XXX Ulpia	Vetera [Xanten], Germany
II Italica	Loriacum [Enns], Noricum
III Italica	Castra Regina [Regensburg], Noricum
II Parthica	Albano, Italy
X Gemina	Vindobona [Vienna], Pannonia
XIV Gemina	Carnutum [Altenburg], Pannonia
I Adiutrix	Brigetio [Szony-Komaron], Pannonia
II Adiutrix	Aquincum [Budapest], Pannonia
VII Claudia	Viminacium [Kostolac], Moesia
XI Claudia	Durostorum [Silistra], Moesia
IV Flavia	Singidunum [Belgrade], Moesia
I Italica	Novae [Swislow], Moesia
XIII Gemina	Mehadia, Dacia
V Macedonica	Potaissa, Dacia
XV Apollinaris	Satala [Sadag], Cappadocia
XVI Flavia	Satala [Sadag], Cappadocia
XII Fulminata	Melite, Cappadocia
III Gallica	Danaba, Syria
I Parthica	Singara, Syria
III Parthica	Singara, Syria
IV Scythica	Zeugma, Syria
VI Ferrata	Caparcotna, Palestine
X Fretensis	Jerusalem, Palestine
III Cyrenaica	Bostra, Arabia
II Traiana	Nicopolis, Egypt
III Augusta	Lambaesis, Africa

Men of Destiny

The following people have positions of power, or ambitions to power, that will shape Rome's destiny over the coming decade. Ultimately, their actions may determine whether the Roman Empire survives. Player characters will feel the impact of their choices and may be in a position to influence them.

Caesarion: Known to all but a few of his contemporaries as Epiphanes, Caesarion XII is secretly a descendant of the son of Cleopatra and Julius Caesar. He lives in the Greek community of Massilia in Narbonensis, one of the provinces of Gaul. The family has many ties to worshippers of the Egyptian goddess Isis. As a member of the sacred bloodline of Caesar, Caesarion has divinely granted gifts and waits for the day when the Empire will need him to lead it.

Postumus: Marcus Cassianius Latinius Postumus is a Roman general in command of troops stationed on the Rhine. He builds up military and political connections to support his creation of a separate empire, with its capital in Gaul. These ties extend into Britain, Germany, and Hispania and include the moderate factions among the Celtic nationalists.

Shapur: The current Parthian emperor is a skilled general who plans to take advantage of Rome's weakness. Fifteen years ago, he invaded Roman territory for the first time; two years

ago, he began a second invasion. His armies have just sacked the city of Antioch, carrying off huge amounts of treasure and many slaves. Shapur, a Zoroastrian, has funded many new temples, protects the Jews, and encourages Zoroastrian magi to study Greek and Indian teachings.

Valerian: Publius Licinius Valerianus has held the imperial throne for the past five years. He once had a distinguished military career, though he has mainly been involved in Rome's internal power struggles over the past few decades. Approaching his 60th year, he remains active and vigorous. He has just led several legions east to the Parthian frontier to repel an invasion, leaving his son Gallienus as co-emperor in Rome.

Zenobia: The young queen of Palmyra, a Roman client kingdom in the Near East, is named Bat Zabbai in her native Aramaic, but usually goes by the Latinized form, Septimia Zenobia. She speaks fluent Greek and Latin and has a good literary education. Zenobia's skill at Enthrallment induced King Odaenathus to divorce his first wife and marry her. Now she is plotting against the king's older son, Herodes, and hopes to put her own recently born son, Vaballathus, on the throne. Her husband is satisfied as a Roman client, but Zenobia dreams of making Palmyra the capital of an independent empire, of which she would be the Augusta.

Reunion

Roma Arcana makes a good setting for a high fantasy campaign which focuses on the potential renewal of the empire. Caesarion and Zenobia play key roles in the treatment. The Palmyran queen's political ambitions, tactics, and abilities bear odd similarities to Cleopatra VII. She could actually *be* Cleopatra, returned to Earth once more by the favor of the infernal gods. Once she and Caesarion reveal their claims to imperial power, and learn of each other, a political alliance could benefit both of them. It may even be destined, bringing together Cleopatra's reincarnation and Caesar's heir, as co-rulers and as lovers. If Zenobia actually remembers her past life, or if Caesarion's advisor Geaticus (p. 229) learns the truth from the stars, one might knowingly seek the other out.

Roman Faith

Hail, Jupiter, best and greatest, all-powerful father, king of gods and men, or whatever other name you wish to be called . . .

– Traditional Roman prayer

Whether you are god or goddess to whom this grove is dedicated, as it is your right to receive a sacrifice of a pig for the thinning of this sacred grove, and to this intent, I or one at my bidding do it, may it be rightly done.

– Marcus Porcius Cato, ***De Agri Cultura***

Rome is a city of lawyers. Its people approach everything in legal terms, including religion. Roman religion is an exchange of promises between men and the gods. A man offering a sacrifice says *do ut des,* meaning, "I give so that you give." He serves the gods, and he expects the gods to reward his service. Romans still living by their ancient traditions do nothing important without making a sacrifice, looking for omens that show if the gods have accepted it, and then calling on divine help.

Roman religion is mainly collective. A household, military force, city, or the Empire gains help from gods and spirits by offering service in return. Individuals can also enjoy divine aid, but that's a special favor, not the god's main role.

Gods and Spirits

Roman religion draws no sharp line between gods and spirits. Gods are very powerful spirits, rulers of independent domains such as the weather or the sea. Other spirits rule smaller domains, or serve the gods. A vast array of spirits attends every god serving his will and obeying his commands.

The Latin word for the power of a god is *numen.* Much of that power is in the spirits who carry out the god's orders, so *numen* also means a spirit, or the god himself in the form of a spirit. Since the aid of spirits produce magical effects, *numen* also means supernatural power in general. A place that attracts spirits is therefore *numinous*. Any important or powerful god employs the service of vast numbers of spirits. However, few servitor spirits have distinctive personalities, or even individual names; they exist only to serve their special functions. No servitor spirit should have a ***GURPS*** character sheet.

Gods and spirits exist in three different domains: in the heavens, on the surface of the Earth, and under the Earth. Romans offer sacrifices to all three, on different occasions.

Celestial Gods

Most great gods live in the sky. Anything above the earth is in their domain: birds, weather, the planets, and even the stars. Because the stars govern human destiny, the celestial gods control the fortunes of a man's life. The man who has their favor can become great.

Customarily, sacrifices to the celestial gods occur on altars, in places open to the sky and visible to the gods. Temples of celestial gods mainly exist for storage of items useful in rituals, not for the rituals themselves. Omens from the celestial gods also come from the sky. This goes back to the ancient Etruscans, who practiced divination by observing the direction of lightning.

Terrestrial Gods

The Earth's surface is the domain of less powerful beings such as nymphs (p. 213), which GMs can classify as either small gods or unusually potent spirits. Most nymphs live in the wilderness. They don't receive much worship, but a prudent farmer sacrifices to the local deity before cutting firewood in a forest. Terrestrial gods usually confine themselves to a small area, such as a forest clearing or a river.

Infernal Gods

The interior of the Earth, or the underworld, is largely the realm of the dead. Dark gods rule the dead and everything else beneath the earth, including buried treasure and valuable minerals (see *Empedocles' Quest*, p. 212). Underworld deities are often harsh and vengeful. Mortals seeking vengeance may pray for their help, but most ask them *not* to do something, or give thanks for their mercy.

The infernal gods have no altars. A proper sacrifice to them consists of digging a pit and offering the sacrifice in it – below the earth's surface.

Ancestors and Household Cults

In addition to spirits of the sky, earth, and underworld, the Romans recognize human spirits. After a man dies, his spirit lives on, usually in the underworld. Roman families ritually honor their dead, both propitiating them so they will not become angry and trouble the living, and sacrificing to them in return for supernatural favors. See *Ancestor Worship* (p. 37) and the Ancestral Spirit lens (p. 112). The *paterfamilias*, or male head of the household, is the priest of his ancestors. His priestly duties also include honoring other spirits of his household.

The spirits of a family's ancestors, or *Di Manes*, are normally unseen and unheard. If treated with disrespect, they may appear as shades or complain to their descendants. A descendant may take one of the Di Manes as a Patron or Enemy and purchase advantages or disadvantages as "Granted by Ancestral Spirit" (-40%); the Di Manes often grant Luck or inflict Unluckiness. In addition, sacrificial offerings to the Di Manes (such as the *devotio*, p. 232) can bring one-time blessings if conducted with the proper ritual.

The Genius of a family is different from its Di Manes. It has the same relationship to a family that the spirit of an animal has to the species. It makes sure that the family procreates and that its descendants preserve the distinctive traits of their ancestors. The Genius will not make itself seen or heard, but the *paterfamilias* may acquire certain advantages based on a Pact with his Genius (typically based on Sense of Duty to his family and lineage). Typical advantages either enhance health and fertility, such as Fit, or bestow a superior ability, such as a Talent.

A household is also defined by the land it occupies. It gains the right to live there through its relationship with the spirits of the land, which it worships regularly as its *Lares*. Customarily each household honors twin Lares. They receive small daily sacrifices when the family sits down to dine. In return, the Lares make the land a normal-sanctity area for the household gods.

Once a year, typically, the owners of adjacent lands in the country meet at their boundaries and sacrifice to the Lares. This sacrifice ensures that the respective household gods are not enemies to each other. In city neighborhoods, each major intersection has a shrine to the Lares of all the families nearby that serves the same purpose. Sacrifice to the Lares can help guide a judge to make the right decision in a lawsuit.

Within each house, an inner area holds high sanctity for the household gods. This is the *penetralia,* guarded especially by the Penates (also called the Di Penates). Typically, it holds the family's food stores and treasury.

The Imperial Genius

Like other Roman men, the emperor is the priest of his own household gods, and especially of his own Genius. But the emperor's household is the largest in Rome. Beyond the thousands of slaves who officially belong to the Imperial Family, every Roman citizen counts the Emperor as a patron, under the title of *pater patriae,* "father of his country."

The standard Pact with the Imperial Genius is based on Sense of Duty to the Roman Empire and its people. In recent years, few emperors have gained benefits through this Pact.

Sacrifices

The basis of Roman religion is sacrifice (see *Burnt Offerings*, p. 31, and *Sacrificial Magic*, p. 165). Most offerings are slaughtered animals. Romans take special care to select a physically perfect victim, as most pleasing to the gods, and to avoid frightening it. If the animal balks on the way to the altar, the god has rejected the sacrifice. Successful sacrifice requires skill rolls against both Animal Handling and Religious Ritual. A sacrifice usually enhances success in performing a task, as defined under *Sacrificial Magic* (p. 165). In contrast to the usual rules, the value of any animal sacrifice accepted by the gods uses the animal's full HP, since the animal consents to be offered.

Worshippers may substitute a vow for a sacrifice. A man who seeks divine aid, but doesn't have a suitable sacrificial offering, can promise to make such an offering at some future time after the aid is granted. This isn't a Vow in ***GURPS*** terms, because characters will usually fulfill it within a year's time, often by a single action. If the seeker swears a binding oath to the gods (see *Thunderstones*, p. 28) and acquires a Destiny, the vow automatically counts as a sacrifice. Any other vow requires a reaction roll (see *Man Proposes, God Disposes*, p. 148).

In addition to the bonus from True Faith, a worshipper with a Vow who keeps it, or has Code of Honor (Roman) or Discipline of Faith (Ritualism), gets a lesser +1 bonus on the reaction roll; only one of these bonuses applies to any one religious vow.

A military commander seeking special divine aid can practice the *devotio*, ritually offering his life to the gods in exchange for victory. Before the battle starts, he ceremonially pledges his life to the Di Manes of the Roman people as a sacrifice. Then he personally leads his forces toward the foe, engaging in All-Out Attack when combat begins, with no thought for his own survival. For the duration of the battle, he has +1 to his skill in Leadership, Strategy, Tactics, and whatever weapons he uses – but not to his Shield skill. Both his own side and the enemy have +1 on reaction rolls; his army is more likely to follow him, and the other army is more likely to flee. If he survives, this indicates that the gods have honored his courage by giving him back his life.

Gladiatorial combat originated as a similar self-offering. Fighting with minimal armor (usually with no torso armor) expressed this, though it's mainly a thrill for the crowds. An exceptional gladiator might gain enhanced combat skills and crowd reaction rolls by knowingly offering himself.

Prayer

Prayer is an appeal to the gods to grant blessings to their worshippers. Correct wording of the prayer requires a roll against Religious Ritual. If this succeeds, the appropriate god hears the prayer. At this point, make a reaction roll for the god, as described under *Man Proposes, God Disposes* (p. 148). On a Very Good reaction, the god will grant visible aid in some form. Sacrificial offerings can influence a god's reaction, gaining +1 for each 12 1/2 HP sacrificed.

Religious ceremonies primarily gain divine aid for Rome, and require attendance by the Roman population in general. Ceremonies for individuals seeking private benefits are not the priesthood's primary function. Gaining the aid of a civic god for a private goal requires an Excellent reaction. Similar differences apply to prayers to a household god; gods grant prayers for the good of the family more often than prayers for private benefits.

Gods can give their worshippers access to short lists of spells. For example, a worshipper of Jupiter might learn Clouds, Command, Deflect Energy, Lightning, or Predict Weather. Each spell is a formula calling upon the aid of certain spirits that serve the god. Priests normally can learn the special formulae for their god if they choose. Any other worshipper can learn them if taught by the god (treat this as a 5-point Unusual Background). In a high-sanctity site such as a temple, or a temporarily consecrated site elsewhere, anyone who knows the spell can cast it. Elsewhere, only a person specially favored by the god with Power Investiture 1 or better can do so. Power Investiture is a rare advantage in Roma Arcana.

The spells granted by the Penates of a household provide help in guarding the *penetralia* against thieves and robbers. Possible spells include Clumsiness, Fear, Hinder, Magelock, Pain, Rooted Feet, Spasm, and Trace. Normally any household's Penates will grant only one or two such spells. The signifers of a legion may gain similar benefits in guarding the room with the legion's standards.

Divination

Romans practice several types of soothsaying. Some are distinctively Roman, or adopted by the Romans from the Etruscans, who ruled Italy before them.

The most highly regarded practice is augury, or divination from signs in the heavens. Celestial signs include unusual astronomical events, weather (especially lightning), and the flight of birds. Augurs also perform divination by watching the behavior of birds on the ground; the city keeps sacred chickens for this purpose. Treat Augury as a divinatory art, a branch of Fortune-Telling.

Plan of a Roman House

*(1) The main entrance (**vestibulum**) opening to the street. (2) A small room for a doorkeeper. (3) Family records and ancestral portraits. (4) Open courtyard (**atrium**) with a small pool (**impluvium**) set into the floor. (5) Bedrooms and sitting rooms. (6) Baths. (7) Wings extending out from the atrium. (8) Formal dining room (**triclinium**, named for the three couches used for guests at a banquet). (9) Reception room (**tablinum**) used as a family dining area or as a study for the head of the family. (10) Open garden area (**peristyle**) raising flowers and kitchen herbs and as an outdoor dining area. (11) Locked storage (**penetralia**) for food and valuables. (12) Kitchens. (13) Sitting rooms (**exhedrae**) looking out on the garden. (14) Servants' door; also used by family members who want to leave the house privately.*

Unusual natural or political events may be omens of the future. The *viri sacris faciundis* have custody of the three Sibylline Books, kept in the temple of the Capitoline Triad in Rome. With a successful Research roll, they may find an explanation of what a specific omen means. Investigation takes a full day.

The most often practiced form of soothsaying is *extispicy*, or examining the internal organs of sacrificed animals. This is also a branch of Fortune-Telling. Its practitioners, the *haruspices*, have no official priestly standing, but attend every sacrifice. The first question they always answer is, "Was the offering acceptable?"

Many Romans sometimes seek understanding in dreams. Those who have the skill of Dreaming can do this anywhere, needing only a night's undisturbed sleep. Untrained people can seek meaningful dreams by sleeping in a place sacred to a suitable god. To see if the god sends a dream, roll the god's reaction, as described under *Man Proposes, God Disposes*. On a Very Good reaction, the god sends a meaningful dream; on an Excellent reaction, the god sends a very clear dream (+5 to dream interpretation). The standard modifiers apply; in addition, seeking help in an area, the god favors or disfavors is worth +3 or -3, respectively. To interpret the dream, roll against Fortune-Telling (Dream Interpretation).

The appropriate ritual, as discussed under *Soothsaying* (p. 150), can influence all forms of divination, except consulting the Sibylline Books.

Priesthoods

The city of Rome organizes priests into colleges, each with distinct functions. Roman law assigns an order of precedence to the various colleges (see *Religious Ranks*, p. 223). The major colleges, to which the emperor automatically belongs, are the pontifices (who perform administrative duties), the augurs (who engage in augury), the *viri sacris faciundis* (who supervise foreign cults and guard the Sibylline Books), and the *epulones* (who sacrifice and offer feasts before major games). Several lesser priesthoods have more specialized duties. Rome also has 15 *flamines*, each assigned to worship a specific god.

Provincial cities have their own temples and priests. Normally each priest is a *flamen* assigned to a specific god worshipped in the city. Several freedmen in each city hold the special post of *flamen augustalis*, priest of the Imperial Genius.

A distinctive feature of Roman religious practice is delegated priesthood. If, for example, the head of a household has the duty of offering a sacrifice, he can also instruct someone else to do so in his place. The substitute must first announce that he acts for the original priest and give the priest's name; then he should carry out the ritual as instructed. The priest must describe the ritual in full detail (roll vs. his Teaching or Writing skill to determine if anything has been omitted). If he does, then roll vs. his Religious Ritual skill at -1 to determine if the ritual is effective. Each ritual performed by a substitute requires a new set of orders; a priest cannot give standing orders.

Sacred Grounds

The land within the boundaries of the Roman Empire (the *limes*) is low sanctity for its gods. Each city has a *pomoerium*, an area of land that officially belongs to it, enclosed by a physical marker such as a line of stones or a plowed ditch. The area within the *pomoerium* is normal sanctity for the gods of the city and the empire. A god's temples are high sanctity, whether within a city or not. The architectural design of a temple may aid in focusing the divine presence, granting skill bonuses to Religious Ritual and clerical magic within the temple and on its grounds (see *Symbol Drawing*, p. 220).

When a legionary camp or fortress is built, the ground becomes ritually hallowed in the same way, within the limits set by the perimeter walls. This ground has normal sanctity. The central shrine of the camp, within its *principium* (see map on p. 198), has high sanctity. One man from each century, its *signifer* or standard-bearer, guards the shrine, where the standards are kept, and also keeps accounts for the century's savings, which are stored in the shrine. Such men normally have a Higher Purpose.

Each household has a similar arrangement, on a smaller scale.

Rival Beliefs

The Roman Empire stood appalled:
She dropped the reins of peace and war
When that fierce virgin and her Star
Out of the fabulous darkness called.
– William Butler Yeats,
"Two Songs from a Play"

The gods of Rome have a lot of competition. In uniting much of the civilized world under their rule, the Romans made it possible for religious and magical practices to spread through their empire. Even in the city of Rome, many people give only the barest lip service to the civic cults, preferring to worship other gods of their own choice, or not to worship at all.

Mystery Cults

A mystery cult is any group that meets in private to worship its god. Some mystery cults hold public ceremonies, but these are always reserved for initiates. Membership is voluntary and attained by individual choice. Romans have mixed feelings about mystery cults, viewing some as sources of aid to the empire, but others as threats.

Several mystery cults are popular in the city of Rome and the western provinces. Bacchus, a god of wine and the wilderness (identified with the Greek Dionysus), is popular with the middle classes. Cybele, or Mater Deum Magna (the Great Mother of the Gods), a Phrygian goddess, appeals mainly to craftsmen. She has an official cult in Rome, established in AUC 549 during a war with Carthage, on the advice of the Delphic Oracle. Traders, seafarers, and courtesans often worship the Egyptian goddess Isis. Mithras, a god of soldiers, receives worship from civil servants; the Parthian Empire worships a god with the same name, but the two cults have little in common. The emperor Elagabalus celebrated the rites of the eastern god Baal in AUC 974 using his Roman name Sol Invictus, but the cult never became popular.

Initiation into a mystery cult establishes a relationship between the initiate and the god, granting the initiate Clerical Investment and Religious Rank 0. Initiates in each cult have the chance to gain supernatural powers, though most don't commit the time (or character points) to learn to work major miracles. A typical mystery cult has priests with Religious Rank 3, who have the exclusive right to admit new worshippers to the cult, but each cult has its own system of ranks and levels of initiation.

Here are three cults that may exist in a Roma Arcana campaign:

Groves of the Maenads

Bacchus is part of the Roman pantheon, as its god of wine. But his cult has always attracted devotees who aren't satisfied with civic festivals. They favor wilder ceremonies that sometimes frighten sober people.

As worshippers of the god of wine, the Bacchanals or Maenads emphasize altered states of consciousness. Initiates experience a condition of "divine drunkenness" in which they perform superhuman feats. In ***GURPS*** terms, they are powers (see *Superpowers as Magic,* p. 159) with a divine basis. Each Dionysian power includes several advantages, a Power Modifier that can be applied to those advantages, and a Talent for the use of those advantages (see *Other Powers* on p. B257). A new initiate gains a minimum of one level of one talent; if the initiate's character points aren't sufficient for this, any character points earned later must first go to paying for it.

Dionysian powers are a form of trance magic (p. 151) with a Preparation Required limitation. Only one power can be prepared at a time. Since the preparation involves drinking unmixed wine, Dionysian powers also have a Nuisance Effect (Diminished Self-Control, -3 to self-control rolls, -15%) due to intoxication. Finally, Dionysian powers do not work in no-sanctity areas and are at -5 to all rolls in low-sanctity areas; this is a -5% modifier. These limitations are included in the Power Modifier, which has several different levels: -70% if an hour's steady drinking is needed, -50% if the initiate can consume a large amount of wine in 10 minutes, and -40% if a single cup of strong wine, consumed in one minute, is enough.

In addition to being able to gain new powers, more experienced initiates can improve their abilities in two other ways: buying increased talents, and buying powers with decreased preparation time. A new initiate might need eight hours of steady drinking to feel the god's presence; a high-ranking initiate might need only a single taste of wine.

Drunkenness

This is the Dionysian's spiritual attunement to alcohol and its effects.

Drunkenness Talent: 5 points/level. You have a divinely granted talent for Sacred Drunkenness. You get +1 per level to use any Sacred Drunkenness ability. You can use earned points to acquire new Sacred Drunkenness abilities, even if you did not start with them. The following advantages can be Sacred Drunkenness abilities: Affliction (Irritating Condition: Tipsy or Drunk; Aura; Extended Duration; Melee Attack), Detect (Alcohol), and Wild Talent. *Power Modifier:* Dionysian Sacred Drunkenness. The advantage is a divine ability within the Sacred Drunkenness power. It has the standard limitations (see above), but it can benefit from Sacred Drunkenness Talent. *-40%/-50%/-70%.*

Many Bacchanals voluntarily accept the intoxicating embrace of a holy initiate or priest as a blessing from the god.

Frenzy

This is the Dionysian's enhanced strength, endurance, and tolerance of pain.

Frenzy Talent: 5 points/level. You have a divinely granted talent for Frenzy. You get +1 per level to use any Frenzy ability. You can use earned points to acquire new Frenzy abilities, even if you did not start with them. The following advantages can be Frenzy abilities: Doesn't Sleep; Fit; High Pain Threshold; Innate Attack: Dismemberment (Cutting; Follow-Up, Delivered by Grappling an Extremity, +0%; Immediate Crippling, +10%; All or Nothing, -10%); Lifting ST (Costs Fatigue, 1/minute, -5%); and Temperature Tolerance.

The dismemberment attack represents the legendary ability of maenads to tear people limb from limb. The attacker grasps one of a foe's extremities and applies an arm lock (or a similar leg, wing, tail, or head lock) with hysterical strength. The cutting (actually tearing) damage is added to the basic damage for the lock. If the total is sufficient to cripple the extremity, roll against HT *immediately*. On a failure, the extremity is literally torn from the body. Loss of the head normally kills, while loss of any other extremity causes bleeding. On a success, apply only the basic damage from the lock, not the added damage from tearing. *Power Modifier:* Dionysian Frenzy. The advantage is a divine ability within the Frenzy power. It has the standard limitations (see above), but it can benefit from Frenzy Talent. *-40%/-50%/-70%*.

Grace

Dionysian worship is largely expressed in dance, and initiates may gain a variety of abilities that enable them to perform amazing feats as dancers. Some of these have more adventurous uses as well; see the Wardancer template on p. 126.

Grace Talent: 5 points/level. You have a divinely granted talent for Grace. You get +1 per level to use any Grace ability. You can use earned points to acquire new Grace abilities, even if you did not start with them. The following advantages can be Grace abilities: Catfall; Double-Jointed; Enhanced Dodge (up to three levels); Perfect Balance; and Super Jump (one level). *Power Modifier:* Dionysian Grace. The advantage is a divine ability within the Grace power. It has the standard limitations (see above), but it can benefit from Grace Talent. *-40%/-50%/-70%*.

Wildness

This is the Dionysian's spiritual attunement to wild plants and animals.

Wildness Talent: 5 points/level. You have a divinely granted talent for Wildness. You get +1 per level to use any Wildness ability. You can use earned points to acquire new Wildness abilities, even if you did not start with them. The following advantages can be Wildness abilities: Animal Empathy; Binding (Area Effect; Persistent); Plant Empathy; Speak with Animals; Speak with Plants; and Terrain Adaptation. The Binding ability represents the power to cause the rapid growth of grapevines or other vines over any surface. *Power Modifier:* Dionysian Wildness. The advantage is a divine ability within the Wildness power. It has the standard limitations (see above), but it can benefit from Wildness Talent. *-40%/-50%/-70%*.

Mithraea

Mithras is a soldiers' god, as well as a god of the hunt and of fire and light, and he has a soldier's observance of rank and precedence. His initiates are promoted through seven degrees, corresponding to the seven planets, and each degree makes them eligible for different benefits. Each degree offers a specific advantage, and each degree after the first offers specific divinely granted spells that reflect the myth of Mithras and its own name, planet, or ritual role.

Worshippers of Mithras meet in *mithraea* for sacrificial feasts. Ideally, a *mithraeum* is in a cave, but in areas without natural caves, a tunnel or even an aboveground building decorated to resemble a cave can be used.

Raven (Mercury)

The rank of Raven does not offer access to spells. Ravens are servants to their seniors; they serve food and drink at feasts.

Gift of Mercury: Mercury, the messenger of the gods, makes the Raven fit, so that he can run long distances. Fit [5].

Many initiates are already Fit because of military training. They gain no other benefit from this rank.

Bridegroom (Venus)

The rank of Bridegroom is the first to grant access to spells. Bridegrooms are senior attendants at feasts, who light the sacred space. They also light others' way through the caverns of the *mithraeum*.

Gift of Venus: Venus offers the initiate supernatural powers. Power Investiture 1 (Preparation Required, 1 hour, -50%) [5].

Bridegrooms can learn the spells Light and Recover Energy.

Soldier (Mars)

The rank of Soldier has the duty of guarding the *mithraeum*, especially during feasts, and of putting candidate initiates to the test.

Gift of Mars: As a warrior, Mars grants courage and resolution. Will +1 [5]. This adds to the level of Will the initiate already possesses.

Soldiers can learn the spells Sense Foes, Shield, Stop Bleeding, and Truthsayer.

Lion (Jupiter)

The lion builds and guards the sacred fire at the sacrificial feast.

Gift of Jupiter: By staring into the flames of a fire on a hearth sanctified to Mithras, the initiate can see visions of the future, distant events, or hidden truths. Blessed (Only in Sites with High Sanctity to Mithras, -50%) [5].

Lions can learn the spells Ignite Fire, Shape Fire, and Test Food.

Persian (Moon)

The Persian is the "guardian of the fruit," entrusted with the inner secrets of Mithraism and with the task of instructing new initiates.

Gift of the Moon: The Moon inspires her initiates with an instinctive understanding of the behavior and emotions of animals. Animal Empathy [5].

Persians can learn the spells Quick March and Seeker.

Heliodrome (Sun)

The "messenger of the sun" acts as the high priest of Mithras at feasts, and leads the other initiates in honoring him. He represents the subservience of the sun and all the heavenly bodies to the rule of Mithras.

Gift of the Sun: The Sun renews and enhances the ability to call on Mithraic miracles. Power Investiture +1 (Preparation Required, 1 hour, -50%) [5].

Heliodromes can learn the spells Aura, Banish, and Continual Light.

Father (Saturn)

At feasts, the Heliodrome serves and honors the Father as the vessel of Mithras himself. At all other times, his duty is to command the worshippers of Mithras and speak on behalf of the god.

Gift of Saturn: Saturn teaches the worshipper to lead. Charisma 1 [5]. This adds to any levels of Charisma the initiate already possesses.

Fathers can learn the spells Armor, Command, and Resist Fire.

Temples of Isis

Isis, the mistress of many skills, grants her initiates a variety of Talents. As a rule, each initiate can acquire only one Talent. In addition, those with Magery can learn spells.

Talents

Initiates can gain the use of Talents from the following list of options: Allure, Business Acumen, Healer, and Mariner. Those with Magery 0 can also acquire levels of Magery. All of these Talents cost a base 10 points/level, except Allure, which costs 5 points/level. Initiates must buy all Talents with some level of Preparation Required to represent ritual invocation of the goddess.

Magic

Among other things, Isis is a goddess of magic, and her temples often serve as centers of learning the magical arts. These are based on Magery, not on Power Investiture; Isis doesn't grant magical power, but skill in using one's own gift. Purchase Magery with Preparation Required.

Colleges with spells commonly taught in temples of Isis are Air, Communication and Empathy, Enchantment, Healing, Illusion, Knowledge, Meta-Spells, Necromancy, Protection and Warning, and Water.

Sorcery

The Roman Empire has a variety of traditions of sorcery – the practice of magic as an art or skill. Some go back for thousands of years; others look to founders in recent times. Their approaches to the art are varied.

In general, Roman sorcery derives power from mana (called *numen* in Latin), but mana consists of spirits. Many spirits are servants of various gods and not available to run errands for sorcerers. High-mana places often have locations in the wilderness, far away from temples and cults, where many free spirits still exist. The ground within a city's *pomoerium* is a low-mana area.

Magic in Roma Arcana is either ritual magic, based on an underlying skill, or clerical magic, granted by a god or powerful spirit (see p. B242). Mages always have Ritual Magery. The underlying skill for magic is Ritual Magic instead of Thaumatology, unless explicitly stated otherwise for a particular tradition. Magery is rare in the Roman Empire. Roughly 1/200 of the population has Magery 0.

Egyptian Sorcery

The Egyptian goddess Isis (above) is a mighty enchantress and worshipped by many sorcerers. Her temples often maintain schools of sorcery. They will instruct anyone of good character with Magery 0, though they favor Isis worshippers. At the GM's discretion, a temple of Isis may reserve some powerful spells to initiates.

According to legend, Isis herself performed magical feats, instead of having spirit servants carry them out for her. The form of sorcery taught in her temples focuses the powers of the mage's own spirit. Its root skill is Thaumatology instead of Ritual Magic. Skills in the various magical colleges default to Thaumatology-6 (see p. B225) and the individual spells default to the colleges as techniques. Isis particularly favors spells of Enchantment, Healing, and Necromancy.

When Isis grants levels of Magery to her worshippers, it usually takes the form of One-College Magery in the college of Enchantment (-40%). Training in spells from other colleges aims at using them as resources in making enchanted objects (see *Enchanting*, p. 149). Students spend many hours learning spells they can never cast directly. The greatest moment in a student's career is his completion of his first enchanted object, with which he can cast a spell at will. Trained sorcerers often have many such objects; an adventurer with a priest, priestess, or sorcerer as a Patron may borrow them. Students who are not initiates sometimes experiment with casting spells directly.

Jewish Sorcery

Since the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, the Jews have followed a variety of spiritual paths, seeking a renewed connection with their God. Some have turned to a form of sorcery – not kabbalah, the Jewish tradition of meditative magic (p. 151), which doesn't exist yet, but an older approach. The sorcerer ritually calls up the angel Metatron, the chief administrator of the angelic hierarchy. Metatron then grants access to the services of one or more spiritual beings, each capable of producing the effects of a specific spell. These beings remain with the sorcerer until dismissed, but do not actively produce their respective magical effects until commanded to do so.

In terms of game mechanics, this is Modular Abilities (Spirit Trapping), with a base cost of 6 points/spell slot and 4 points/skill point. It has three limitations. Spells Only (-20%) restricts its use to gaining spells. Preparation Required: one hour (-50%) represents time spent calling up Metatron and naming the servitors needed. Pact: Discipline of Faith (Mysticism) (-10%) represents the hours the sorcerer spends in contemplation to maintain his contact with the angelic world. This is a total -80% limitation. A typical sorcerer uses spells at the 1-point level and pays 2 points per spell he can use. To select spells, he rolls against the skill of Ritual Magic (Jewish) to establish contact; each attempt takes one hour. After a successful roll, he gains whatever spells he has specified.

Actually casting the spells requires energy, which the sorcerer must provide from his own FP or HP. To do so, he needs Magery 0 or better. Spells cast with a Concentrate maneuver do not need this requirement.

Other Sorcery

Rome has no other major sorcerous traditions, but individual sorcerers such as Apollonius of Tyana and Simon Magus are famous for their skills. Such sorcerers cast their spells with the aid of spirits. Higher levels of Magery represent command over more spirits and more potent spirits. Sorcerers buy Magery with the limitation Pact (typically Vow, -5%, representing minor sacrifices and observances). A sorcerer can use spells at their default from a magical college skill; college skills default from Ritual Magic and cannot exceed the sorcerer's skill in Ritual Magic.

Black Arts

The Roman Empire considers some magical practitioners not only questionable, but actively hostile. They conceal their activities from both the authorities and the public. Treat any such character as having at least a -20-point Secret.

Druids

Druids aren't completely banned in the Roman Empire; from time to time a politician or general will consult a druid soothsayer. Romans still remember that Julius Caesar received instruction from the druids of his time. But druids inspired resistance to Roman control of Gaul and later of Britain. The Empire suppressed this resistance, killing many druids, breaking up the schools that transmitted their magical knowledge, and instituting Roman-style cults of the ancient Celtic gods. The old traditions now survive only in Ireland. However, over the past few decades, the spirits of the ancient druids have begun to return. As men and women of Celtic descent realize they have lived before and regain the memories of their earlier incarnations, they also typically regain a desire for vengeance against the empire that destroyed them.

The base of druidic magic is in knowledge. Traditionally druids were illiterate and passed on knowledge as oral traditions (see *Bardic Lore*, p. 99); fully trained druids had artificial memory (see *Eidetic Memory*, p. 128). Druids use these abilities to retain knowledge in various fields. Each field is the basis for a (Profession) Magic skill that defaults to it at -6 (see *Mysteries of the Trade*, p. 162). A druid may know Expert Skill (Hydrology) Magic, Geology Magic, Herb Lore Magic, Law Magic, Meteorology Magic, Naturalist Magic, and Psychology Magic. Each has a short list of spells that default to it (see *Ritual Magic* on p. B242). Actually casting spells requires Magery as well.

Skin-Turner Animal Forms

Bear

-2 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST+4 (No Fine Manipulators, -40%) [24]; DX+1 (No Fine Manipulators, -40%) [12]; IQ-4 [-80]; HT+3 [30].
Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: SM 0; Will+6 [30]; Per+4 [20]; Basic Move+1 [5].
Advantages: Claws (Blunt Claws) [3]; DR 2 [10]; Fur [1]; Not Hidebound [5]; Teeth (Sharp Teeth) [1]; Temperature Tolerance 2 [2].
Disadvantages: No Fine Manipulators [-30]; Semi-Upright [-5]; Wild Animal [-30].

Wolf

10 points

Attribute Modifiers: DX+2 (No Fine Manipulators, -40%) [24]; IQ-4 [-80]; HT+2 [20].
Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: SM 0; Will+5 [25]; Per+8 [40]; Basic Move+3 [15].
Advantages: Discriminatory Smell [15]; DR 1 [5]; Fur [1]; Night Vision 2 [2]; Not Hidebound [5]; Penetrating Voice [1]; Teeth (Sharp Teeth) [1]; Temperature Tolerance 1 [1].
Disadvantages: Quadruped [-35]; Wild Animal [-30].

Some druids also have the ability to inflict harm on their foes by satirizing them. Rapier Wit represents this, but its effects aren't humorous. Instead of just stunning the victim of the druid's mockery, the satire causes one of the other effects described for Affliction (see *Rapier Wit*, p. 130). If the druid achieves a critical success in the contest of Public Speaking vs. Will, the effect lasts until the victim makes a recovery roll against HT; this requires a day's rest. Because most druids can employ more than one type of satire, their Rapier Wit should have Selectivity (+10%). Very powerful druids buy the ability with Extended Duration (Permanent, +150%); the victim must then undertake a quest specified by the druid to free himself of the satire.

Necromancers

The art of necromancy begins with the ancient Etruscans. Etruscan art shows the dead attending the feasts of the living. The Roman dead are mostly less active; Roman ancestor worship both keeps them from troubling the living, and grants them compensation for staying in the underworld. However, the restless spirits of the dead often trouble other cultures in the Roman world. Necromancers, in Roma Arcana, use this to their advantage, gaining command of the dead to intimidate the living.

Becoming a necromancer requires a special process of magical initiation. In ***GURPS*** terms, this is acquisition of Spirit Powers Talent (p. 159). The necromancer's teacher then trains him to see or sense the dead (bought as Detect (Spirits), Medium, or See Invisible (Spirits); see *Shamanism*, p. 149). This only prepares a necromancer for his real powers.

The basic meta-trait Unmanifested Spirit (p. 134) describes a spirit that can perceive the material world but not speak to it or act upon it. Other spirit meta-traits grant various ways of acting on the material world. The necromancer has various forms of the Affliction advantage, with the advantage enhancement, representing his ability to give a spirit one of these meta-traits. Each form also has the limitations of Only Usable on Ghosts (-20%), Mana Dependency (-10%; see *Psionics as Magic*, p. 158,) and Preparation Required.

Example: Iturra, a Basque shaman, can lend a voice to the dead. He buys this as Affliction 1 (Advantage: Not Mute (Costs 1 FP, -5%) +210%; Mana Dependency, -10%; Only Usable on Ghosts, -20%; Preparation Required, 10 minutes, -30%) [25]. With a 10-minute ritual invocation, he grants a ghost the ability to speak at a cost of 1 FP per utterance. The effect lasts for one minute for each point by which the spirit fails a HT roll.

Skin-Turners

Skin-turners live among the Germanic barbarians. Being a skin-turner is an Unusual Background worth 10 points. People are not born as skin-turners; they must undergo an elaborate ritual, which includes hunting and killing an appropriate animal, preparing its hide into a garment, and forming a psychic bond with the animal's spirit. In general, a skin-turner undergoes this process only once in his life; he can't do it for anyone but himself.

Once he has the skin, the skin-turner can change shape any time he wishes, simply by putting it on. This is the advantage of Alternate Form with Skinbound (DR 2, -10%; Not Repairable, -7.5%; SM -2, -10%; Stolen by Stealth or Trickery, -10%), for a total limitation of -37.5%. (Note that Skinbound reduces the gadget limitations to half their normal value; see p. 131.) Biting cannot transmit the condition. The skin-turner has no compulsion to assume animal form and fully remembers his actions as an animal, but he acquires the quirk level of Bestial . . . a tendency to act somewhat like his animal form.

The animal form is physically a natural animal, with no special invulnerability to harm. However, it doesn't have the full Wild Animal meta-trait, because it is not Hidebound, and whatever IQ the natural animal would have, the animal form's IQ is only reduced to 6 – it retains some human self-awareness and grasp of cause and effect. This makes it much more dangerous than a natural animal!

The usual choices for skin-turners are bear and wolf. The template cost of the wolf form is 19 points; with the combined Skinbound limitations, the cost of the skin is 15 points. The template cost of the bear form is 10 points; with the combined Skinbound limitations, the cost of the skin is 9 points.

Astrology

Romans call astrology "the Chaldean art," after the country of its development (currently a border province of the Parthian Empire). Actual Chaldeans live in the eastern Roman Empire, but in Rome and the western Empire "Chaldean" usually means an astrologer. Conservative Romans distrust astrology as a foreign practice. However, astrological beliefs are an element in some mystery cults and philosophies (pp. 205-206).

Astrology is a divinatory art (see *Soothsaying*, p. 150). Looking at the night sky and interpreting what it means requires a roll vs. Fortune-telling (Astrology). Serious astrologers also study Astronomy and can calculate where the planets will be in the future, with some difficulty because of the limits of Roman numerals (see *Mathematics*, p. 220). An astronomer can use an orrery instead of performing calculations. Interpreting the meaning of future celestial signs still requires a Fortune-Telling (Astrology) roll.

Philosophy

Philosophy in the Roman Empire has several different schools: Stoics, Epicureans, Skeptics, Neoplatonists, and various minor schools. The main difference between philosophy and religion is in attitudes toward ritual. Philosophers of all the schools usually believe in one or many gods, but consider ritual observances pointless. The wise man, in their view, judges truth by the evidence of his own mind, not by relying on tradition. Philosophers of most schools disdain sacrifices.

The study of philosophy may be a pathway to unusual gifts through mastery of one's own mind. The *Philosopher* template (p. 218) suggests suitable abilities for a Stoic. Stoics believe that no one can avoid his own fate; many Stoics believe in astrology (above). The goal of stoicism is to school one's own will to accept fate.

The other school that's likely to provide unusual gifts is Neoplatonism. Its founder, Plotinus, born in AUC 958, lives in Rome as a friend of Gallienus, the imperial heir. Earlier in his life, he traveled to the Parthian frontier and studied Persian and Indian beliefs. Neoplatonism teaches intellectual contemplation of the divine; a Neoplatonist may gain the benefits of True Faith or have Magic Resistance.

Epicureans believe that the gods consist of a different kind of matter than mortals and are completely unconcerned with the actions of mortals. Their goal is to lead a balanced life of calm enjoyment, avoiding excessive pleasures that cause pain or craving. Epicureans believe in the theory of the four elements of earth, water, air, and fire, and some study a form of Esoteric Medicine based on balancing the elements within the body.

Skeptics regard all human knowledge as unreliable. Despite what the name suggests in modern English, ancient Roman skeptics are not necessarily opposed to religion. Sextus Empiricus, a leading Roman skeptic, believed that human claims to knowledge would be discredited and people would return to sacrificing to the gods.

Naturally, some people take the philosophers' disdain for ceremonies and traditions as a reason for doing whatever they please. Ordinary citizens often think philosophers are either ridiculous or dangerous. Some people also assume that a philosopher's learning automatically gives him magical powers. Being a philosopher may attract unwelcome attention from one's neighbors. On the other hand, philosophers mostly come from upper-class families who shield them from such attention.

The Anger of the Gods

With increasing numbers of Roman citizens turning away from the Roman pantheon to other spiritual paths, Rome often angered the gods. But for many years, the gods still preserved the empire against its foes. This changed in AUC 971, when a 14-year-old boy named Elagabalus bought the imperial throne. As a priest of Baal, Elagabalus tried to impose his faith on all Romans, to the exclusion of their customary beliefs. The Praetorian Guard murdered Elagabalus and his mother in AUC 974, but this wasn't sufficient to appease the gods' anger.

When established by Augustus Caesar in AUC 727, the entire Roman

Empire had the gods' protection. Roman military bases all along the *limes* maintained shrines to the gods. Within their sacred boundary, the entire empire was a normal-sanctity area. Military ceremonial before battle called the gods to Rome's aid; as long as a legion's *signifers* carried their standards, the entire legion gained the benefits of Higher Purpose as long as they fought on Roman ground. The power of the gods also suppressed other supernatural powers that were hostile or simply uncontrolled.

That protection is lost now. Individual legionaries may still have Higher Purpose, but the legion as a whole does not. Worship of Mithras is more important to most soldiers than the older faiths. Spirits of the natural world and the dead have more power than before; many low-mana areas are once again normal- or high-mana. Fearing these rival powers, people turn increasingly to sorcerers or outright necromancers for help. All these changes make it less likely that the gods will receive what they consider their due, and their power to give aid to Rome diminishes.

Christianity

In the Roma Arcana setting, the Christian faith falls into the area of "canonical doubt." That is, the setting as presented here does not specify where Christianity fits into a pagan world. GMs can decide this according to their own judgment, the preferences of their players, and the needs of their campaign. Rome's legal and military history at this time won't be obviously different, this early in the growth of the church. But here are some options:

Christianity never came into being in this timeline.

Christianity exists, but stays out of sight of hostile officials and worshippers of other gods.

Christianity exists, but in forms quite different from those officially recorded by the Catholic and Orthodox hierarchies.

Christianity came into being, but remained a Jewish sect, and has largely merged with Judaism again.

Christianity lost out to rival mystery cults.

Christianity was absorbed into the pagan pantheon of Rome (Septimius Severus, AUC 947-965, had a personal shrine with images of Abraham, Apollonius of Tyana, Christ, and Orpheus).

Like Apollonius of Tyana and Simon Magus, Jesus was understood as a sorcerer, and has followers who summon, banish, and command spirits – but don't worship him.

Rome's fall into chaos is a sign of the End Times predicted by Christianity, and the Apocalypse is soon to come.

Bestiary

In addition to real animals, adventurers may encounter various legendary creatures. Some are native to the Roman Empire; others come from distant lands such as India (see also the manticore, the mountain ant, and the unicorn on pp. 48-49).

Amphisbaena

The amphisbaena is a two-headed snake – not two heads growing out of one neck, but one head at each end of the body. Only one head can strike per turn, but it can switch heads freely if one is pinned. Its total length is about 5'. The HT roll for its venom is at +1 if the venom is immediately sucked out (roll vs. First Aid to do this properly).

ST 5; **DX** 13; **IQ** 2; **HT** 11.
Will 10; **Per** 10; **Speed** 6; **Dodge** 9; **Move** 4.
SM -2 (2 hexes); 10 lbs.

Traits: Cold Blooded (50°); Double-Jointed; Extra Head; Fangs; Toxic Attack 1d (Cyclic, 1 hour, 5 cycles; Follow-Up, Fangs; Resistible, HT-5); Vermiform; Wild Animal.
Emblematic Trait: Loner.
Skills: Brawling-15; Stealth-13.

Aspidochelon

Aspidochelones are the largest animals in the world, many times larger than any whale. Even the Atlantic Ocean can only support a small number of them. They're often mistaken for small islands; sailors tell stories of landing on an island, building a cooking fire, and having the "island" suddenly dive under the water when the heat penetrated its shell. An aspidochelon is shaped like a sea turtle and spends most of its time floating on the surface, feeding on passing schools of fish or even on whales. Some actually have layers of soils and small trees on their backs, heightening the illusion that they are islands. A full-grown aspidochelon is up to 700 yards long and nearly half as wide.

ST 3,000; **DX** 8; **IQ** 2; **HT** 12.
Will 10; **Per** 10; **Speed** 5; **Dodge** 8; **Move** 0 (Ground).
SM +15 (140,000 hexes); 4.5 billion lbs.

Traits: Doesn't Breathe (Oxygen Storage, ×300); DR 5; Enhanced Move 1 (Water Speed 10); Ichthyoid (Water Move 5); Wild Animal.
Emblematic Trait: Fearlessness +4.
Skills: Swimming-12.

Hippocampus

The horse of the sea, capable of being ridden or harnessed to a watercraft, but dangerous for an air-breathing rider to tame. It has a horse's head, with a long, flowing mane, set on a vertical fishlike body like that of a seahorse. As a creature of the open ocean, it cannot endure being penned up or confined.

ST 20; **DX** 9; **IQ** 3; **HT** 11.
Will 11; **Per** 11; **Speed** 5; **Dodge** 8; **Move** 0 (Ground).
SM +1 (3 hexes); 1,100 lbs.

Traits: Doesn't Breathe (Gills; Breathes Water Only); Enhanced Move 1/2 (Water Speed 12); Peripheral Vision; Ichthyoid (Water Move 8); Striker (Tail; Clumsy; Limited Arc, behind); Weak Bite; Wild Animal.
Emblematic Trait: Phobia (Enclosed Spaces).
Skills: Brawling-10; Mount-12.

Megalogryphon

The megalogryphon is a species of triceratops, brought to the Roman Empire from a vast cavern under the earth. They are not very trainable, but prized in the arenas. Roman generals occasionally experiment with them.

ST 50; **DX** 12; **IQ** 2; **HT** 16.
Will 10; **Per** 12; **Speed** 6; **Dodge** 10; **Move** 7.
SM +5 (40 hexes); 13,500 lbs.

Traits: Blunt Claws; Combat Reflexes; DR 2; DR 4 (Partial, Skull Only); Enhanced Move 0.5 (Ground Speed 10); Quadruped; Restricted Diet (Plants); Sharp Beak; Striker (Limited Arc, Front); Wild Animal.
***Emblematic Trait*:** Berserk.
Skills: Brawling-12.

Satyr

Satyrs aren't actually "beasts"; their IQ 7 puts them into the sapient range. But they have no language and lead mostly solitary lives, dwelling in the forest with little technology. Physically a satyr looks like a rather short, hairy man with the horns and hooves of a goat. Behaviorally they're famous for their sexual appetites and their pursuit of human women.

ST 7; **DX** 14; **IQ** 7; **HT** 10.
Will 12; **Per** 12; **Speed** 6; **Dodge** 9; **Move** 9.
SM -1 (1 hex); 40 lbs.

Traits: Acute Hearing 2; Bad Grip 1; Crushing Striker (Horns; Cannot Parry; Limited Arc); Hooves; Impulsiveness; Night Vision 4; Perfect Balance; Wild Animal.
Emblematic Trait: Lecherousness.
Skills: Jumping-14; Sex Appeal-12.

Strix

Nocturnal birds that feed on blood. They normally fly in small swarms. All the birds in a one-hex swarm will attack the same victim at once. For a greater threat, striges may appear in unnatural hordes (p. 53).

A one-hex swarm is about a dozen striges. They fly at Move 8. They inflict 1d impaling damage on the first turn. Armor protects with its normal DR. If any damage gets through, the striges remain attached and drink the victim's blood; treat this as a Follow-Up attack that causes toxic damage. They disperse after losing 6 HP.

Empedocles' Quest

Centuries ago, in AUC 324, the Greek philosopher Empedocles descended into the crater of Mount Etna, leading a small band of disciples. They discovered a hidden gateway to a vast underground realm filled with strange creatures, many far larger than any on the surface. Empedocles did not survive the adventure, but some of his followers returned, leading a few smaller beasts that they had captured.

Since that time, the Empedocleans have mapped out much of this underworld. Guided by them, expeditions go into it to bring back more strange beasts. Emperors present them in the Colosseum at the greatest games, such as the games that celebrated Rome's millennium; temples show their remains as evidence of the mythical age of giants; ambitious generals occasionally experiment with them on the battlefield. The danger of capturing them keeps them rare, but everyone in the Empire has heard of them.

Of course, these beasts are dinosaurs – or, more accurately, the ghosts of dinosaurs, haunting the depths of the earth. The crater at Mount Etna is a gateway to the afterlife, not of men but of ages before humanity. Empedocles' self-offering bought the secret of propitiating its guardians, so that his followers can bring its inhabitants back to the world of the living. And perhaps one day, some daring philosopher will find the cavern's other entrance, in an unknown island beyond the north wind, reserved by the gods for the blessed dead – whose number may include Empedocles himself.

Then out spake brave Horatius,
The Captain of the gate:
"To every man upon this earth
Death cometh soon or late.
And how can man die better
Than facing fearful odds
For the ashes of his fathers
And the temples of his Gods . . . ?

"Hew down the bridge, Sir Consul,
With all the speed ye may;
I, with two more to help me,
Will hold the foe in play.
In yon strait path a thousand
May well be stopped by three.
Now who will stand to either hand,
And keep the bridge with me?"
– Thomas Babington Macaulay, "Horatius"

Racial Templates

Humanity dominates Roma Arcana; there are no nonhuman civilizations. However, it has a variety of supernatural beings.

Larva

240 points

Larvae are spirits of the dead who have not been laid to rest. Roman funeral rites make larvae rare among the Roman dead. In some older peoples, such as the Basques of southern Aquitania and northern Spain, the dead return more often to force the living to pay them tribute. The usual form of tribute is the spilled blood of a sacrificial animal; 1 HP worth of blood once a month is sufficient. A larva that misses its monthly offering must roll vs. HT. On a failed roll, it must make aging rolls (that its, its Unaging advantage is suspended); on a critical failure, it suffers the effects of failed aging rolls for all attributes. It can recover from its latest set of aging rolls, but this requires human sacrifice, which is difficult to arrange in areas under Roman law. Eventually a larva will wither away, if its victim can resist its demands.

Larvae enforce their demands by appearing to the living and making gestures to indicate their demands. If the larva concentrates, it can engage in a Quick Contest of Will vs. Will; if it succeeds, its target's ability to experience pleasure is lost for 10 minutes per point of failure. If it succeeds by 5 or more, the target is depressed to the point of total apathy for the same period. The roll is at -1 per yard of distance between the larva and the target. Larva themselves suffer from this same joylessness, permanently – it can be seen on their haggard faces when they become visible – but they still cling desperately to their shadowy existence.

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: Will+2 [10].

Advantages: Affliction 1 (HT-0; Affects Substantial, +40%; Based on Will, +20%; Disadvantage: Killjoy, +15%; Extended Duration, 30×, +40%; Malediction, +100%; Must Become Visible, -10%; Secondary Disadvantage: Chronic Depression (6), +6%) [31]; Apparition [2]; Magical Spirit [80]; Unmanifested Spirit [149].

Disadvantages: Appearance (Unattractive) [-4]; Callous [-5]; Hidebound [-5]; Killjoy [-15]; Maintenance (One person; Monthly; Using Religious Ritual) [-2].

Quirks: Prefers to demand tribute from living blood kin. [-1]

Features: Can be bound, exorcised, or repelled by True Faith; Failed HT roll after missed maintenance period requires aging rolls.

Nymph

225 points

Nymphs appear in several varieties, one for each terrain type, though the Greeks and Romans were only familiar with a few of them: oreads on the mountains, dryads in the forests, naiads in the rivers, and nereids in the oceans. Each nymph is bound to a specific domain. An average nymph knows a number of spells that are suited to her special environment, but must materialize to cast them.

Attribute Modifiers: HT+5 [50].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: Per+1 [5].

Advantages: Appearance (Beautiful) [12]; Magery 1 [15]; Materialization (1 FP/minute) [22]; Unmanifested Spirit [149].

Disadvantages: Dependency (Mana; Hourly) [-25].

Quirks: Never wears clothing; Prefers the mana of her own domain; Protective of plants and animals in her domain. [-3]

Features: Appearance suggests the natural environment of her domain.

Ethnic Traits

Romans believe that each nationality has its own Genius, which gives it its own distinctive character. GMs may wish to support this idea by giving emblematic traits to the various nationalities. (This doesn't mean that every single person must have the emblematic traits of his culture.) The following traits are suitable:

Ethnicity	*Trait*
Basque	Daredevil [15]; Low TL -1 [-5]
British/Gaulish	Voice [10]
Egyptian	Devotion 1 [5]
German	Fit [5]
Greek	Versatile [5]
Jewish	Sage 1 [10]; Hidebound [-5]
Persian	Animal Empathy [5]
Roman	Social Chameleon [5]

Occupational Templates

Rome offers several distinctive occupations to adventurers. Some are specialized variants of standard fantasy occupations such as warrior or wizard; others reflect the Roman cultural milieu. Buy all skills at TL2. These templates are designed for use in a 150-point campaign; they reflect experienced characters with superior abilities.

Courtesan

125 points

Courtesans are one mark of aristocratic societies such as Rome: women who find marriage less advantageous than having the favor of wealthy and powerful men without formal ties. The physical aspects of the transaction may be the least important. Men seek out courtesans for a sympathetic ear, intelligent conversation, wit, good entertainment, or sophistication in art, fashion, and cuisine. The financial aspects are often handled discreetly, in the form of gifts and favors.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 11 [20]; IQ 11 [20]; HT 12 [20].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 12 [0]; Will 11 [0]; Per 12 [5]; FP 12 [0]; Basic Speed 5.75 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Appearance (Attractive) [4]; Allure 1 [5]; Wealth (Comfortable) [10]; and 25 points chosen from among Alcohol Tolerance [1], Allure [5/level], Charisma [5/level], Clerical Investment (Initiate of Isis) [5], Cultural Adaptability [10], Empathy [15] *or* Sensitive [5], Fashion Sense [5], Language Talent [10], Language [1-6], Resistant (Diseases) [3 or 5], Versatile [5]*, Voice [10], additional Allure [5/level], or improving Appearance (Attractive) [4] to (Beautiful) [12] or (Very Beautiful) [16].

Disadvantages: Social Stigma (Minority Group: Unchaste Women) [-10] and -10 points chosen from among Bully [-10†], Code of Honor (Professional) [-5], Compulsive Behavior (Carousing or Spending) [-5†], Jealousy [-10], Lecherousness [-15†], Overconfidence [-5†], or Selfish [-5†].

Primary Skills: Carousing (E) HT+1 [2]-13; Professional Skill (Courtesan) (A) IQ+2 [8]-13; Sex Appeal (A) HT+2 [4]-14‡**.

Secondary Skills: Savoir-Faire (High Society) (E) IQ+1 [2]-12. *Three* of Area Knowledge, Current Affairs, or Games, all (E) IQ+2 [4]-13; Makeup (E) IQ+3 [4]-14**; Singing (E) HT+3 [4]-15**; Dancing or Erotic Art, both (A) DX+2 [4]-13**; Connoisseur, Poetry, or Politics, all (M/A) IQ+1 [4]-12; Public Speaking (A) IQ+1 [4]-12; or Diplomacy, Literature, or Musical Instrument, all (H) IQ-2 [4]-11.

Background Skills: *Four* of Knife or Sewing, both (E) DX+1 [2]-12; Cooking, Gardening, or Gesture, all (E) IQ+1 [2]-12; Acting, Holdout, or Teaching, all (A) IQ [2]-11; Body Language or Observation, both (A) Per [2]-12; Accounting, Artist (Interior Decorating), or Poisons, all (H) IQ-1 [2]-10; or Detect Lies (H) Per-1 [2]-11.

* The Versatile advantage can be applied to Erotic Art.

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

‡ +1 from Attractive appearance.

** +1 from Allure.

Customization: Rumor often attributes supernatural allure to famous courtesans. A courtesan may have one or more Enthrallment skills (see p. B191) with Sex Appeal rather than Public Speaking as prerequisite (p. B216). Access to these skills should require an Unusual Background [10]: the favor of a god or powerful sorcerer or training by a mysterious cult – perhaps the secrets of the legendary Cleopatra's allure have been preserved. Such women may practice Discipline of Faith (Mysticism or Ritualism).

Job Description

The typical courtesan is mistress of her own house, where she receives discreet visits from prosperous men.

Prerequisites: Attractive; Sex Appeal 12+; Savoir-Faire 12+.

Job Roll: Worse prerequisite skill. On critical failure, falls out of favor with her patrons; no income until she establishes herself in another city.

Monthly Pay: $1,350. Adjusted for margin of success or failure.

Wealth Level: Comfortable. Supports Status 1.

Engineer

125 points

In the Roman Empire, engineers have two main specializations: civil and military. Military engineers serve with the legions, building fortifications or penetrating them. Civil engineers direct public works projects, such as aqueducts, baths, bridges, roads, and sewers. Many engineers have knowledge in both areas, either as legionaries on detached duty with civic projects or as retired legionaries with a second career. This template also provides options for naval architects.

Attributes: ST 11 [10]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 14 [80]; HT 10 [0].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 11 [0]; Will 14 [0]; Per 14 [0]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 5 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Administrative Rank 1 or Military Rank 1 [5]; Fit [5]; and 25 points chosen from Absolute Direction [5], Artificer [10/level], Business Acumen [10/level], Charisma 1 [5], Eidetic Memory (Preparation Required: 1 hour, -50%) [3] *or* Photographic Memory (Preparation Required: 1 hour, -50%) [5], Gadgeteer [25], Lightning Calculator [2], Patron [Varies], Perfect Balance [15], Single-Minded [5], Versatile [5], or increased Rank [5/level].

Disadvantages: Code of Honor (Professional) [-5] and -15 points chosen from Absent-Mindedness [-15], Duty [-2 to -15], No Sense of Humor [-10], Overconfidence [-5*], Sense of Duty (Workers) [-5], Social Stigma (Valuable Property) [-10], Stubbornness [-5], or Workaholic [-5].

Primary Skills: Engineer (Artillery, Civil, Combat, Mining, or Ships) (H) IQ+1 [8]-15. *One* of Forced Entry (E) DX+2 [4]-12; Architecture, Armoury (Heavy Weapons), or Expert Skill (Hydrology), all (A) IQ+1 [4]-15; or Mathematics (Surveying) (H) IQ [4]-14.

Secondary Skills: Administration (A) IQ-1 [1]-13. *Two* of Carpentry or Masonry, both (E) IQ [1]-14; or Mechanic, Teamster (Elephants, Equines, or Oxen), Soldier, or Traps, all (A) IQ-1 [1]-13.

Background Skills: *One* of Brawling (E) DX+1 [2]-11, Carousing (E) HT+1 [2]-11, or Hiking (A) HT [2]-10. *Three* of Gunner (Catapult) or Knot-Tying, both (E) DX [1]-10; Camouflage, Current Affairs (Science and Technology), First Aid, Gesture, Savoir-Faire (Military), or Seamanship, all (E) IQ [1]-14; Scrounging (E) Per [1]-14; Artillery (Catapult), Cartography, Leadership, Meteorology, or Prospecting, all (A) IQ-1 [1]-13; or Accounting, Archaeology, or Military Science, all (H) IQ-2 [1]-12.

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

Job Description

Engineers work for the government, or for wealthy men who are pursuing careers in government by paying for construction projects.

Prerequisites: Engineer 12+; Administration 11+.

Job Roll: Better prerequisite skill. On critical failure, lose job.

Monthly Pay: $675.

Wealth Level: Average. Supports Status 0.

Gladiator

125 points

As much an entertainer as a warrior, you earn your living by risking death in the arena. Most gladiators are slaves, which limits their options as adventurers . . . but free men sometimes fight in the arena, for money or to show off their courage and skill, and slaves may buy their freedom after successful careers. This template represents a former gladiator whose skills haven't yet faded. Documentary and archaeological evidence suggests that a few women may have fought in the arena; in this way, a woman can gain combat skills.

A former gladiator who was a slave during his career in the arena, as most were, should have Status -2.

Attributes: ST 11 [10]; DX 12 [40]; IQ 10 [0]; HT 12 [20].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 12 [0]; Will 10 [0]; Per 10 [0]; FP 12 [0]; Basic Speed 6 [0]; Basic Move 6 [0].

Advantages: Combat Reflexes [15]; Fit [5]; either +2 ST [20] or +1 DX [20]; and 15 points chosen from among Appearance (Attractive) [4], Blessed (Heroic Feats) [10], Charisma [5/level], Contact (From gladiatorial life) [Varies], Fearlessness [2/level], High Pain Threshold [10], Rapid Healing [5] *or* Very Rapid Healing [15], Shtick [1], Social Esteem (Feared) [5/level], Wealth (Comfortable) [10], or increase Fit [5] to Very Fit [15].

Disadvantages: -30 points chosen from among Bully [-10*], Callous [-5], Code of Honor (Arena) [-5], Compulsive Behavior (Carousing or Gambling) [-5*], Missing Digit [-2 or -5], One Eye [-15], One Hand [-15], Overconfidence [-5*], Status -2 [-10], or Truthfulness [-5*].

Primary Skills: Pick *one* of the following packages:

Bestiarius: Shield (E) DX+2 [4]-14; Spear (A) DX+1 [4]-13; Whip (A) DX+1 [4]-13.

Dimachaerus: Broadsword (A) DX+3 [12]-15.

Eques: Broadsword (A) DX [2]-12; Riding (Horse) (A) DX+2 [8]-14; Spear (A) DX [2]-12;

Mirmillo: Broadsword (A) DX+2 [8]-14; Shield (E) DX+2 [4]-14;

Retiarius: Net (H) DX+1 [8]-13; Spear (A) DX+1 [4]-13;

Secutor: Knife (E) DX+2 [4]-14; Running (A) HT+2 [8]-14;

Thracian: Shield (E) DX+2 [4]-14; Shortsword (A) DX+2 [8]-14.

Secondary Skills: Games (Arena) (E) IQ+1 [2]-11; Performance (A) IQ+1 [4]-11; Tactics (H) IQ [4]-10.

Background Skills: Intimidation (A) Will+1 [4]-11 and *one* of Brawling (E) DX [1]-12; Current Affairs (Sports) or First Aid, both (E) IQ [1]-10; Carousing (E) HT [1]-12; Gambling or Streetwise, both (A) IQ-1 [1]-9; or Sex Appeal (A) HT-1 [1]-11.

Techniques: Choose the option below which matches the primary skill package:

Bestiarius: Feint (H) Spear+2 [3]-16.
Dimachaerus: Dual-Weapon Attack *or* Off-Hand Weapon Training (H) Broadsword-2 [3]-13.
Eques: Bracing (H) Spear-2 [3]-10, No-Hands Riding (H) Riding-1 [3]-13, *or* Vaulting (H) Riding-1 [3]-13.
Mirmillo: Disarming (H) Broadsword+2 [3]-16, Feint (H) Broadsword+2 [3]-16, *or* Retain Weapon (H) Broadsword+2 [3]-16.
Retiarius: Feint (H) Net+2 [3]-15.
Secutor: Feint (H) Knife+2 [3]-16.
Thracian: Disarming (H) Shortsword+2 [3]-16, Feint (H) Shortsword+2 [3]-16, *or* Retain Weapon (H) Shortsword+2 [3]-16.

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

Job Description

Most gladiators are slaves and don't get to keep all their earnings. But some free gladiators return to the arena.

Prerequisites: Performance 11+ and a weapon skill 12+.

Job Roll: Worse prerequisite skill. On critical failure, loses a fight and is put to death.

Monthly Pay: $1,350. Adjusted for margin of success or failure.

Wealth Level: Comfortable. Supports Status 1.

Legionary

125 points

The legions are Rome's heavy infantry; Roman strategy and tactics rely primarily on their skills. Legionaries rigorously train for military duties, but also serve in administrative and law enforcement roles; most have craft skills as well. This template represents a plebeian who entered the legion as an ordinary soldier and is still in service.

Attributes: ST 12 [20]; DX 11 [20]; IQ 10 [0]; HT 11 [10].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-1/1d+2; BL 29 lbs.; HP 12 [0]; Will 10 [0]; Per 11 [5]; FP 11 [0]; Basic Speed 5.5 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Combat Reflexes [15]; Fit [5]; Military Rank 0 [0]; and 35 points chosen from Absolute Direction [5], Ambidexterity [5], Artificer [10/level], Charisma [5/level], Clerical Investment (Mithraic Initiate) [5], Danger Sense [15], Fearlessness [2/level], Legal Enforcement Powers [5], Military Rank [5/level], Wealth (Comfortable) [10], or increase Fit [5] to Very Fit [15].

Disadvantages: Duty (12 or less) [-10]; either Code of Honor (Soldier's) [-10] or Secret [-10]; and -15 points chosen from among Bully [-10*], Callous [-5], Compulsive Behavior (Gambling or Spending) [-5*], Fanaticism [-15], Intolerance [-5 or -10], Lecherousness [-15*], Missing Digit [-2 or -5], On the Edge [-15*], One Eye [-15], Overconfidence [-5*], Selfish [-5*], Sense of Duty (Century or Legion) [-5], or Wealth (Struggling) [-10].

Primary Skills: Broadsword (A) DX+2 [8]-13; Shield (E) DX+2 [4]-13; Hiking (A) HT+2 [8]-13.

Secondary Skills: Intimidation (A) Will+1 [4]-11; Observation (A) Per [1]-11; Savoir-Faire (Military) (E) IQ+1 [2]-11; Soldier (A) IQ+2 [8]-12; Thrown Weapon (Spear) (E) DX+1 [2]-12; and *one* of Gunner (Catapult) (E) DX+2 [4]-13; Carpentry, First Aid, or Masonry, all (E) IQ+2 [4]-12; Armoury, Artillery (Catapult), Leadership, Smith, Teaching, or Traps, all (A) IQ+1 [4]-11; or Musical Instrument (Trumpet) (H) IQ [4]-10.

Background Skills: Jumping (E) DX [1]-11; Survival (any) (A) Per-1 [1]-10; Swimming (E) HT [1]-11; and *three* of Brawling (E) DX+1 [2]-12; Carousing (E) HT+1 [2]-12; Scrounging (E) Per+1 [2]-12; Stealth (A) DX [2]-11; Administration, Armoury, Gambling, Meteorology, Navigation (Land) (A) IQ [2]-10; or Religious Ritual (H) IQ-1 [2]-9.

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

Customization: For a different emphasis, take Religious Rank in the Mithraic priesthood [5/level] and add some of the advantages and spells that become available at the higher Mithraic ranks.

Job Description

A rank and file legionary earns a low rate of pay – but it's more than the average farmer makes, and it's a fixed annual salary. Even if pay is delayed, he has a barracks to live in, and the emperor can't afford to let him starve. In peacetime, legionaries often serve as laborers, clerks, or law enforcers; in war, they face Rome's worst foes on the battlefield.

Prerequisites: Broadsword 12+; Shield 12+; Savoir-Faire (Military) 11+.

Job Roll: Best prerequisite skill. On critical failure, in peacetime, flogged, 1d injury; in wartime, wounded in battle, 3d injury.

Monthly Pay: $450.

Wealth Level: Struggling. Supports Status -1.

Magistrate

125 points

Roman magistrates, even while acting as judges, aren't neutral referees in the style of British and American judges; they actively pursue information that's needed to decide a case. Law restricts their methods – for example, free men may not be tortured, though a slave's testimony is legally valid only if he *has* been tortured. But they do the investigation that they judge necessary to reach a verdict. In the chaos of AUC 1011, magistrates may occasionally have to look into some unusual issues.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 11 [20]; HT 10 [0].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 13 [10]; Per 11 [0]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 5 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Administrative Rank 2 [10]; Legal Enforcement Powers [5]; Status 2 [5]*; Wealth (Decurial Wealth) [60]; and 25 points chosen from among Allies (Law Enforcement Staff) [Varies], Business Acumen [10/level], Charisma [5/level], Eidetic Memory (Preparation Required, 1 minute, -20%) [4], Higher Purpose [5], Independent Income [1/level], Single-Minded [5], Voice [10], or additional Administrative Rank [5/level].

Disadvantages: Duty (12 or less; Nonhazardous) [-5]; either Code of Honor (Roman) [-10] or Secret [-10]; and -35 points chosen from among Bloodlust [-10†], Curious [-5†], Fanaticism [-15], Hidebound [-5], Honesty [-10†], Jealousy [-10],

Secret [-5 to -30], Selfish [-5†], Sense of Duty (Family or City) [-5] or (Empire) [-10], Stubbornness [-5], or Workaholic [-5].

Primary Skills: Law (H) IQ+1 [8]-12. *Two* of Administration, Politics, and Public Speaking (A) IQ+2 [8]-13.

Secondary Skills: Religious Ritual (H) IQ [4]-11. *One* of Area Knowledge or Current Affairs (E) IQ [1]-11. *One* of Criminology, Hidden Lore (Conspiracies), or Interrogation, all (A) IQ+1 [4]-12; Psychology (H) IQ [4]-11; or Detect Lies (H) Per [4]-11.

Background Skills: Savoir-Faire (High Society) (E) IQ [1]-11. *One* of Architecture or Farming, both (A) IQ+1 [4]-12, or Finance (H) IQ [4]-11. *One* of Gardening (E) IQ+1 [2]-12; Connoisseur or Poetry, both (A) IQ [2]-11; or History, Literature, or Philosophy, all (H) IQ-1 [2]-10.

* +1 Status free from Wealth.

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

Job Description

As one of the two chief magistrates of your city, you preside over meetings of the city council, direct investigations of local crimes, and judge the accused.

Prerequisites: Status 2; Administration, Politics, or Public Speaking at 12+.

Job Roll: Prerequisite skill. On critical failure, disgraced, -2 Reputation in your city.

Monthly Pay: $90,000.

Wealth Level: Decurial.

Peregrin

175 points

Not a Roman at all, but an agent of the Infinity Patrol, sent to investigate this strange timeline. Roma Arcana is a rule-breaking world, since magic works there, and as such is closed to all but highly qualified agents and researchers (recommended for 200-point campaigns and up). The following template defines a Penetration Service agent *as he would appear from the viewpoint of a native of Roma Arcana*:

Attributes: ST 12 [20]; DX 11 [20]; IQ 12 [40]; HT 11 [10].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-1/1d+2; BL 29 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 12 [0]; Per 12 [0]; FP 13 [0]; Basic Speed 5.5 [0]; Basic Move 5.5 [0].

Advantages: Classical Greek *or* Classical Latin (Native) [6]; English (Native) [0]; High TL +6 [30]; Patron: Infinity Patrol (6 or less; Special Abilities, +100%; Minimal Intervention, -50%) [19]; Unusual Background [5]; Wealth (Wealthy) [20]; and 10 points chosen from among Charisma 1 [5], Cultural Adaptability [10], Eidetic Memory [5] *or* Photographic Memory [10], Fit [5], Language (Homeline or Roman Empire) [1-6], Language Talent [10], Magery 0 [5], or Resistant (Disease) [3 or 5].

Disadvantages: Duty (Investigate Roman customs, institutions, and arts; 15 or less) [-15]; Mundane Background [-10]; Secret (Visitor from another world) [-10]; and -15 points from Code of Honor (Gentleman's) [-10] or (Professional) [-5], Delusion (Magic doesn't work) [-5], Fanaticism [-15], Loner [-5*], Overconfidence [-5*], Pacifism (Cannot Harm Innocents) [-10] or (Self-Defense Only) [-15], Post-Combat Shakes [-5*], Weirdness Magnet [-15], Workaholic [-5], or -1 ST [-10].

Primary Skills: Acting (A) IQ+1 [4]-13; Observation (A) Per+2 [8]-14. *One* of Anthropology or Sociology (H) IQ+1 [8]-13.

Secondary Skills: Cartography (A) IQ [1]-11; Diplomacy (H) IQ [4]-12; History (Roman Empire) (H) IQ-1 [2]-11. *Two* of Connoisseur or Occultism, both (A) IQ+1 [4]-13; or Archaeology, Economics, Law (Roman), Linguistics, Military Science, or Political Science, all (H) IQ [4]-12.

Background Skills: Administration (A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Computer Operation/TL8 (E) IQ [1]-12; First Aid/TL8 (E) IQ [1]-12; Holdout (A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Survival (Woodlands) (A) Per-1 [1]-11; Writing (A) IQ-1 [1]-11. *One* of Knife (E) DX+2 [4]-13, Staff (A) DX+1 [4]-12, or Judo (H) DX [4]-11.

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

Philosopher

125 points

This template is specifically for an adherent of Stoicism, a philosophy that emphasizes schooling one's will to the tranquil acceptance of necessity. Stoicism appealed to the Roman aristocracy but found adherents at all levels of society, from slaves to the emperor Marcus Aurelius. Variations on this template could define the other influential schools of thought.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 12 [40]; HT 11 [10].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 14 [10]; Per 12 [0]; FP 11 [0]; Basic Speed 5.25 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: High Pain Threshold [10]; Unfazeable [15]; either Greek or Latin (Accented/Native) [5]; and 15 points chosen from among Allies (Disciples) [Varies], Cultural Adaptability [10], Eidetic Memory (Preparation Required: 10 minutes, -30%) [4] *or* Photographic Memory (Preparation Required: 10 minutes, -30%) [7], Higher Purpose [5], Indomitable [15], Longevity [2], Sage 1 [10], Single-Minded [5], Social Esteem (Respected) [5/level], or Visualization [10].

Disadvantages: Code of Honor (Professional) [-5] and -20 points from Callous [-5], Curious [-5*], Compulsive Behavior (Debating) [-5*], Delusions (Minor) [-5], Fanaticism [-15], Honesty [-10*], No Sense of Humor [-10], Overconfidence [-10*], Pacifism (Self-Defense Only) [-15], Sense of Duty [-2 to -20], Workaholic [-5], or Xenophilia [-10*].

Primary Skills: Astronomy (Observational) (A) IQ+2 [8]-14; Natural Philosophy (H) IQ+2 [12]-14; Philosophy (Stoicism) (H) IQ+2 [12]-14.

Secondary Skills: Observation (A) Per+1 [4]-13; Research (A) IQ [2]-12. *One* of Public Speaking, Teaching, or Writing, all (A) IQ+1 [4]-13.

Background Skills: Fortune-Telling (Astrology) (A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Meditation (H) Will-2 [1]-12. *One* of Architecture (A) IQ-1 [1]-11; Diagnosis, Expert Skill (any), Geography, History, Law, Linguistics, Mathematics, or Naturalist (H) IQ-2 [1]-10; or Esoteric Medicine (H) Per-2 [1]-10.

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

Sorcerer

125 points

This template describes a sorcerer who has learned his art through his own investigations.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 14 [80]; HT 10 [0].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 14 [0]; Per 14 [0]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 5 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Magery 0 [5] and 25 points chosen from among Charisma [5/level], Eidetic Memory (Preparation Required: 1 hour, -50%) [3] *or* Photographic Memory (Preparation Required: 1 hour, -50%) [5], Magery [10/level], Patron (Mentor; Special Abilities, +50%) [Varies], Single-Minded [5], Social Esteem (Feared) [5/level], or Wealth [10 or 20].

Disadvantages: A total of -15 points from Bully [-10*], Jealousy [-10], Loner [-5*], Megalomania [-10], Overconfidence [-5*], Post-Combat Shakes [-5*], Vow [-5 to -15], Wealth (Struggling) [-10], Weirdness Magnet [-15], Workaholic [-5], or Xenophilia [-10*].

Primary Skills: Research (A) IQ [2]-14; Ritual Magic (VH) IQ [8]-14; one college (VH) IQ [4]-13.

Secondary Skills: Meditation (H) Will-2 [2]-12; one college (VH) IQ-1 [2]-12.

Background Skills: Occultism (A) IQ-1 [1]-13; Teaching (A) IQ-1 [1]-13. *Two* of Fortune-Telling, Hidden Lore, or Poetry, all (A) IQ-1 [1]-13; Artist (Body Art or Illusion), Naturalist, Philosophy, Symbol Drawing, or Thanatology, all (H) IQ-2 [1]-12; Esoteric Medicine (H) Per-2 [2]-12; or Dreaming or Exorcism, both (H) Will-2 [1]-12.

Spells: Any four spells at default+1 [2].

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

Job Description

Sorcerers usually are self-employed, providing magical help or instruction to anyone who asks for it.

Prerequisites: Magery 0; Ritual Magic 14+.

Job Roll: Ritual Magic. On critical failure, encounter hostile supernatural being; make Fright Check at -6.

Monthly Pay: $1,000. Adjusted for margin of success or failure.

Wealth Level: Comfortable. Supports Status 1.

Surgeon

125 points

Having limited access to healing magic, Romans often must turn to surgeons for treatment of injuries. Many surgeons first learn their craft in the army, and this template assumes some military experience.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 14 [80]; HT 11 [10].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 14 [0]; Per 14 [0]; FP 11 [0]; Basic Speed 5.25 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: High Manual Dexterity 2 [10] and 20 points chosen from Acute Vision [2/level], Ambidexterity [5], Military Rank [5/level] *or* Courtesy Rank [1/level], Single-Minded [5], or Wealth (Comfortable) [10] or (Wealthy) [20].

Disadvantages: *One* of Code of Honor (Professional) [-5], Sense of Duty (Patients) [-5], or Vow (Hippocratic Oath) [-5]; and -15 points chosen from among Callous [-5], Impulsiveness [-10*], Overconfidence [-5*], Pacifism (Self-Defense Only) [-15], Stubbornness [-5], or Workaholic [-5].

Primary Skills: First Aid (E) IQ+2 [4]-16; Surgery (VH) IQ+2 [8]-16†.

Secondary Skills: Administration (A) IQ-1 [1]-13; Physiology (H) IQ-2 [1]-12; Teaching (A) IQ-1 [1]-13. *One* of Hiking (A) HT [2]-11, Riding (Horses) (A) DX [2]-10, or Seamanship (E) IQ+1 [2]-15. *One* of Artist (Body Art), Epidemiology, Forensics, Natural Philosophy, or Naturalist, all (H) IQ-2 [1]-12; or Esoteric Medicine (H) Per-2 [1]-12.

Background Skills: Savoir-Faire (Military) (E) IQ [1]-14; Sewing (E) DX+2 [1]-12†; Shield (E) DX [1]-10; Shortsword (A) DX [2]-10; Soldier (A) IQ-2 [1]-12; Thrown Spear (E) DX [1]-10.

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

† +2 from High Manual Dexterity.

Job Description

Surgeons set broken bones, pull teeth, clean and sew up wounds, and sometimes attempt riskier procedures. Sometimes their patients thank them.

Prerequisites: Surgery 14+.

Job Roll: Surgery.

Monthly Pay: $1,000. Adjusted for margin of success or failure.

Wealth Level: Comfortable. Supports Status 1.

Advantages, Disadvantages, and Skills

This advantage has a special interpretation in Roma Arcana:

Eidetic Memory

see p. B51

Roman orators and scholars are trained in the technique of artificial memory. This form of the first level of Eidetic Memory can be learned. To develop an artificial memory, the orator visualizes a building, called a "memory house" or "memory palace," until he can recall every room in it in detail. To memorize something specific, such as the facts in a legal case, he visualizes physical objects that remind him of what he wants to remember and arranges them in some location in the memory house. Then, to recall them, he imagines himself in that room looking at those objects.

A memory house remains stored in the user's memory, whether or not he is actively visiting it. The Mind Probe advantage, or spells with comparable effects, can search another person's memory house. Two people who share a Mind Link can visit each other's memory houses.

The following disadvantages have modified versions in Roma Arcana:

Code of Honor

see p. B127

Those educated in Roman traditions will commonly adhere to a distinctively Roman definition of honorable conduct:

Code of Honor (Roman): Encompasses three key virtues. *Virtus* (manliness) means facing hardship, pain, or peril without complaint or hesitation. *Pietas* (piety) means showing respect for one's ancestors and elders and Rome's traditions. *Fides* (trustworthiness) means keeping one's promises. Most Romans who adhere to this Code of Honor will be Pious; some may have a Vow. Suicide is not dishonorable and is sometimes the only honorable way to avoid disgrace. *-10 points.*

Other peoples may have their own barbarian codes of honor. In general, treat these as a Pirate's Code of Honor.

Gladiators have their own distinctive standard of conduct:

Code of Honor (Arena): Fight to win, without concern for personal feelings; obey the rules of the arena and the decisions of the sponsor; show no fear or pain; stand by your teammates. *-10 points.*

Compulsive Behavior

see pp. B128-129

An additional pattern of compulsive behavior is common in the Roman Empire, especially among Greeks:

Compulsive Debating: You love to question and debate. Whenever you encounter people discussing an issue, you want to join in and offer them the benefit of your theories on the matter. If you fail your self-control roll, you do not consider whether you actually know anything about the matter or whether it's safe to voice your ideas for this audience. In fact, it never occurs to you that people might not want to know what you think. This will earn a +1 reaction roll among the uneducated, but -1 among those who recognize your style of argument – or those you have previously singled out for humiliation through your superior logic. *-5 points.*

Social Stigma

see pp. B155-156

Several important groups in the Roman Empire have distinctive Social Stigmas:

Eunuchs are a Minority Group; people react to them disdainfully. Because it's not legal to castrate a Roman citizen, nearly all eunuchs are also slaves.

Jews are Second-Class Citizens. They have citizenship, and the law protects their right not to sacrifice to the Imperial Genius, but they're generally considered strange.

Slaves are Valuable Property. Slavery does not imply a low Social Status; a slave in the Imperial household can have an administrative job that makes him rich and even powerful, but he remains a slave. But routine slave jobs are much like those of freedmen, with Status -2.

Women are Second-Class Citizens. Legally a woman is a minor throughout her life; when she leaves her father's household, she must have a guardian (called a *tutor*). But this has been a legal formality since the early Empire.

The following skills have modified versions in Roma Arcana:

Accounting

see p. B174

Roman numbers are a nonpositional system, workable enough for recording results but clumsy and inconvenient for actual calculation. Make Accounting rolls at -3 for written calculations, or -5 for mental arithmetic. If you have Lightning Calculator, you are exempt from these penalties; you can keep track of positional relations mentally.

Fortune-Telling

see p. B196

In Roma Arcana, divination provides a source of real knowledge. Several methods are in common use:

Astrology, or the Chaldean art, interprets the stars and planets as signs of human destiny. Roll against Astronomy either to observe where the planets are at a given time, or to predict where they will be later; the latter skill is mathematically based, and Mathematical Ability helps.

Augury includes several traditional Roman techniques for reading the will of the gods from events in the sky. Such events include weather, especially lightning strikes; the flight of birds, especially unusual birds; and as an extension of this, the pecking behavior of sacred chickens.

Extispicy, or haruspication, is the reading of omens in the internal organs of sacrificed animals, especially their livers. Small sculptured models of livers with various sectors labeled are available for practitioners.

Oneiromancy is practiced by priests in many temples. A worshipper will spend the night sleeping in the temple, hoping for a dream sent by the god for a priest to interpret.

Mathematics/TL

see p. B207

Applied mathematics involving computation is hampered by the limitations of Roman numerals and of the Greek alphabetic system most mathematicians prefer; see *Accounting*. Pure mathematics is unaffected. Most mathematicians, pure or applied, study mainly geometry, which has no notational problems.

Riding

see p. B217

In Roma Arcana, the stirrup does not exist. Stirrupless riding has some special rules:

Mounting a horse takes two turns, or one turn with a roll against Acrobatics, Jumping, or Riding at -3.

Staying mounted after an attack that causes knockback is impossible; the rider automatically falls off.

Lance skill is unavailable.

Symbol Drawing

see p. B224

Some Roman architects learn a specialized form of this skill: Symbol Drawing (Sacred Architecture). This defaults to Religious Ritual-4. When the architect designs the temple, he rolls against Symbol Drawing. On a success, add half the margin of success (round down) to all future Religious Ritual rolls honoring the god to whom the temple is dedicated. Add the same amount to all future spell rolls appealing to the god's power. The effect is not simply a matter of the temple's ornamentation or inscriptions, but a result of the design.

The following techniques are available in Roma Arcana:

Bracing

Hard

Default: Spear-4.

Prerequisite: Riding skill; cannot exceed Spear skill.

This is the ability to clasp the body of a mount firmly with one's knees, in order to stay mounted despite an impact, while holding a long spear in a couched position, like a lance. This spear attack does not count as a melee attack, and the Move and Attack penalty does not apply. Treat the damage inflicted the same as a lance (see p. B272). On a critical failure, the knockback from the attack applies to the attacker; roll vs. Bracing at -4 per yard of knockback to stay on the horse.

Testudo

Hard

Default: Soldier-4.

Prerequisite: Shield skill.

The *testudo*, one of the Roman legions' showier maneuvers, requires a substantial number of men. Several ranks of men close up to each other and raise their shields over their heads, locking them together. Roll against their average ability score for this technique. On a success, treat this as being under full cover (see p. B407) for attacks from above. It does not protect against attacks from other directions, and the soldiers must not dodge, parry, or attack while holding the testudo.

If a group has performed the testudo, other soldiers can attempt to jump onto the upper surface of the shields, with a Jumping or Acrobatics roll, and run on them. This may get an assault force over a low wall. Roll against the average Testudo skill of the men performing the *testudo* (based on ST instead of IQ) to see if they maintain it against the extra weight; if they fail, the men on top must roll vs. DX or fall – flat on the shields on an ordinary failure, to the ground on a critical failure.

Vaulting

Hard

Defaults: Acrobatics-3, Jumping-3, or Riding-3.

Prerequisite: Riding skill; cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

This skill allows a rider to leap into the saddle – from ground to horseback – in a single turn.

Wealth and Status

Rome has an economy based mainly on currency instead of barter, especially in the cities. Economic success leads to higher Status, by an indirect route. Wealthy men are expected to serve the Empire, as priests, soldiers, or administrators. Holding certain positions confers Status. Those specific positions form part of several standard ladders of promotion, the *cursus honorum*. ***GURPS*** defines these as systems of Administrative, Military, and Religious Rank, with Rank and Status closely related under specific legal definitions.

Money

Rome's monetary system consists of coins made of copper, silver, and gold. The later empire suffers from ongoing inflation, largely a result of debasement (alloying silver or gold with cheaper metals, or sandwiching cheap metal between thin coats of precious metal). Coins are of varying and fluctuating value. Over time, prices will rise to four times their previous level. Government salaries won't keep up; to keep the legions happy, emperors pay increasingly frequent bonuses from their personal wealth, and issue rations, the *annona*, to soldiers who can't afford food prices. Most campaigns won't focus on this, so no detailed rules are given for currency debasement or price inflation.

The commonest unit of account (the coin used to quote prices) is the *sesterce*. Smaller coins are the *dupondius* (half a sesterce), the *as* (a quarter sesterce), and the *quadran* (a quarter as). The silver *denarius* and the recently introduced *antonianus* or double denarius are more valuable and rarer; the gold *aureus* is extremely rare. (Legionary salaries are silver, and legionary bonuses are gold.) For ***GURPS*** purposes, their values and exchange rates are listed below:

Wealth

Following the guidelines on p. B26, starting wealth is $750 or 375 sesterces. No more than 20% of this applies to adventuring gear; the rest represents land, buildings, furniture, tools and equipment, and similar things. A legionary's retirement bonus is $54,000, making him wealthy – if he lives to collect the money.

The restriction doesn't apply to anyone who is Poor, or to anyone who leads a mobile life. Soldiers on combat duty move in a hurry; typically, all their wealth will be in movable possessions.

The Roman system of Status imposes legal wealth requirements for admission to various statuses. For convenience in character creation, take intermediate wealth levels that meet exactly those requirements:

Decurial Wealth: Sufficient for admission to a magistracy in a provincial city, followed by membership in that city's ordo. Legally defined as 100,000 sesterces ($200,000). Grants one level of Status free. *60 points.*

Equestrian Wealth: Sufficient for appointment to an equestrian military post or other office. Legally defined as 400,000 sesterces ($800,000). Grants two levels of Status free. Effectively the same as Multimillionaire 1. *75 points.*

Senatorial Wealth: Sufficient for appointment to a Roman quaestorship, following by membership in the Senate. Legally defined as 1,000,000 sesterces ($2,000,000). Grants three levels of Social Status free. *85 points.*

Higher levels of wealth are multiples of Equestrian Wealth: Multimillionaire 2 (100 points) is $8,000,000, Multimillionaire 3 (125 points) is $80,000,000, and so on.

Decurial Wealth gives +1 Status; Equestrian Wealth gives +2; Senatorial Wealth gives +3. Multimillionaire 2 and above do not give additional Status.

Status

Law strictly regulates Roman Status. The Romans split society into several "orders," each with its own legal duties and privileges. These orders have strict rules for membership. For the higher orders, restrict membership to specific military or administrative offices.

The emperor is above all the orders, occupying Status 8. Most emperors have officially designated heirs, who have Status 7. The heir may rule in the emperor's stead if the emperor departs for the field in a major war.

Senators are the highest order, with Status 5 or 6. Senatorial Wealth is legally required for admission to the Senate; it grants three levels of Status free. Sons of Senators start out at Status 3 (free from wealth) and follow a standard career path, starting at age 19 or 20. They serve first in a minor magistracy in Rome, and then as laticlavian tribune in a legion. After this come major magistracies in Rome: *quaestor,* concerned with financial matters; *aedile,* maintaining public buildings and supervising markets; *praetor*, with criminal jurisdiction; and *consul,* presiding over the Senate. A quaestor officially joins the Senate and gains Status 5. A consul gains Status 6 and can command a legion as legate or govern a senatorial province as proconsul. Interspersed with all this, a senator may hold various priesthoods.

Equestrians, or *equites*, are the next highest order, with Status 4. Admission to this order legally requires Equestrian Wealth; it grants two levels of Status free. Sons of equestrians mainly follow a military career path, with several years each as prefect of a cohort of auxiliary infantry, angusticlavian tribune of a legion, and prefect of a wing of auxiliary cavalry. This may precede service as a legion's camp prefect, or entry into the civil service as a procurator. Success in this role can lead to appointment as prefect of a civilian department; equestrians head most of these departments. Sons of equestrians start out at Status 2 and gain Status 4 with their first military posts.

Roman Currency

Coin	Aurei	Denarii	Sestertii	Asses	Value
Aureus	1	25	100	400	$200
Antonianus	–	2	8	32	$16
Denarius	–	1	4	16	$8
Sesterce	–	–	1	4	$2
Dupondius	–	–	1/2	2	$1
As	–	–	–	1	$0.50
Quadran	–	–	–	1/4	$0.125

Provincial cities have their own local nobility. Decurial Wealth is required for admission. Sons of this nobility start out at Status 1. If elected as magistrates of their municipal governments, they gain Status 2 and admission to the *ordo*. If elected as *duoviri*, or chief magistrates, of their municipal governments, they gain Status 3.

Ordinary citizens, or plebeians, are Status 0. Plebeians in Rome can have Status 1-3 if they have sufficient wealth; plebeians elsewhere who have Decurial Wealth normally run for local office.

Freedmen, or former slaves whose masters gave or sold them their freedom, are Status -2. Their rights are somewhat restricted. A freedman cannot enlist in the army, except in emergencies, and a freedwoman cannot marry a senator. However, their children become ordinary plebeians. A freedman who serves in the *vigiles* in the city of Rome (a combination fire-fighting force and nighttime street patrol) can transfer to the army after 10 years with a good record. One priesthood is not only open to freedmen, but reserved to them: the worship of the Imperial Genius (p. 202).

Slavery is not a Status level, but a Social Stigma (p. 219).

The cost of living for each Status includes many expenditures that don't directly benefit the person who has that Status. He has to maintain a household of the proper size, often including some number of slaves. If elected or appointed to a magistracy, he has to sponsor gladiatorial contests or other public entertainments.

Rank

Rome has systems of Administrative, Military, and Religious Rank. A Roman, especially one born to high Status, could be promoted through all three simultaneously. He wouldn't gain Status bonuses from all three; only a few specific ranks grant extra Status. The emperor holds high rank of all three kinds, as a by-product of his Status.

Each rank is open only to men of the right social class. Social classes have the labels S (senator), E (equestrian), D (decurion of a provincial city), P (plebeian), or F (freedman).

Administrative Rank traditionally is defined in terms of magistracies. A magistrate was an elected official who held some combination of judicial and executive powers. Under the Empire, most magistracies have become less important, with real power going to prefects who report to the emperor. The provinces have governors and their staffs, and the cities have elected magistrates of their own.

Administrative Ranks

Rank	Examples
8	(Emperor), Praetorian prefect (E)
7	Consul (S), provincial governor (S), Egyptian prefect (E), city prefect (S), grain prefect (E)
6	Praetor (S), provincial procurator (E), prefect of *vigiles* (E)
5	Aedile (S), provincial procurator (E)
4	Provincial procurator (E), provincial city duovir (D)
3	Quaestor (S), provincial procurator (E), provincial city aedile (D)
2	Minor magistrate (S); provincial city quaestor (D)
1	Scribe (P)
0	Messenger (P)

Roman military forces employ many separate systems of ranks. The elite Praetorian Guard, the legions, the auxiliaries, barbarian allies under Roman command, the urban cohorts commanded by the city prefect, and the Roman fleets all have their own command structures. The following table covers the forces that guard Rome's frontiers: the legions, the auxiliaries, and the fleets.

Military Ranks

Rank	Examples
8	Legate of the army (S), (Praetorian prefect), (Emperor)
7	Legate of a legion (S), fleet prefect (E)
6	Camp prefect (E), laticlavian tribune (S), navarch (P)
5	Angusticlavian tribune (E), prefect of cavalry (E), trierarch (P)
4	*Primus pilus* (P), prefect of infantry (E), *beneficarius* (P)
3	Centurion of the first cohort (P), princeps of auxiliaries (P), steersman (P)
2	Centurion (P), ship's petty officer (P)
1	*Signifer* (P), *optio* (P), *tesserarius* (P), *custos armorum* (P), decurion (P), lead rower (P), sailor (P)
0	Soldier (P), rower (P), marine (P)

Religious rank begins with membership in a college of priests. There's no standard system of promotion between colleges. Priesthood is an adjunct to a political and military career; only the *flamen dialis*, the *rex sacrorum*, and the Vestal Virgins serve full-time. The Vestal Virgins take precedence socially over everyone but the emperor (Status 7), but no one else gains Status from holding a priesthood. However, the various colleges have a long-established system of seniority.

Religious Ranks

Rank	*Examples*
8	*Rex sacrorum* (Courtesy Rank)
7	(Emperor as *pontifex maximus*)
6	*Flamen dialis* (S), *rex sacrorum* (S), Vestal Virgin (S)
5	Pontifex (S)
4	*Flamen martialis, flamen quirinalis,* augur (S), provincial *flamen* (D)
3	*Vir sacris faciundis* (S)
2	Minor *flamen* (P), epulon (S)
1	Minor priest (S/E), *flamen augustalis* (F)
0	*Paterfamilias* (S/E/D/P/F)

Jobs

The various occupational templates cover jobs available for adventurers. But a sample of other jobs provides a sense of pay scales in the Roman Empire.

Praetorian Guard

Soldiers of the Praetorian Guard are the Empire's elite service. Officially, they guard the Emperor; in actuality, most guard the city of Rome. Two detachments guard imperial property at Carthage and Lugdunum, especially the Lugdunum mint.

Prerequisites: Status 0; ST 12+; HT 12+; Shortsword 12+.

Job Roll: Politics. On critical failure, flogged, injured for 1d damage, -1 Reputation in Praetorian Guard.

Monthly Pay: $750.

Wealth Level: Average. Supports Status 0.

Centurion

A centurion commands a "century" of 80 men in a legion. In a major war, he leads them into battle; in peacetime, he may command a vexillation that mans a border or assist a provincial governor.

Prerequisites: Military Rank 2; Leadership 12+.

Job Roll: Leadership. On critical failure, in peacetime, career ends; in wartime, injured for 4d damage.

Monthly Pay: $12,500.

Wealth Level: Wealthy. Supports Status 2.

Primus Pilus

The senior centurion of a legion's first cohort stands above the other centurions; in battle, only the legate and laticlavian tribune outrank him. He normally holds this job for one year, before promotion to camp prefect and equestrian Status.

Prerequisites: Military Rank 3; Leadership 14+.

Job Roll: Leadership. On critical failure, in peacetime, career ends; in wartime, injured for 4d damage.

Monthly Pay: $50,000.

Wealth Level: Very Wealthy. Supports Status 3.

Procurator

A procurator is a magistrate serving under the governor of a province. He primarily collects taxes, but also serves as a judge in many legal cases.

Prerequisites: Status 4; Administration 12+; Accounting 11+.

Job Roll: Administration. On critical failure, permanently ineligible for promotion.

Monthly Pay: $10,000, $16,500, $33,000, or $50,000 at Rank 3-6.

Wealth Level: Wealthy at Rank 3; supports Status 2. Very Wealthy at Rank 4-6; supports Status 3.

Equipment

Romans have access to TL2 equipment and any TL1 equipment that hasn't been replaced by something better. Most equipment is readily available in the marketplaces of Roman cities. Soldiers can requisition equipment with military applications through their legions. "Military applications" include combat engineering, surgery, and administrative record-keeping as well as fighting. Prototype TL3 equipment is not normally available, but an artificer might create it if adequately funded.

Combat Gear

Items with an asterisk are defined in the ***Basic Set***; they're listed here to identify the specific items in common use in this setting.

The following equipment is customary in the Roman legions of this period:

Baton:* Centurions carry a length of dried grapevine and legally may use it to strike a disobedient soldier. Treat it as a baton if used in actual combat. It gives +1 to Intimidation against anyone with Cultural Familiarity (Roman Empire). 1 lb.; $20.

Greaves:* Bronze greaves. 17 lbs.; $270.

Helmet:* 6 lbs.; $150. Customarily worn with a tall crest that increases the wearer's apparent height, giving +1 to Intimidation rolls. 1 lb.; $10.

Lorica squamata:* Scale armor for the torso. 35 lbs.; $420.

Pilum:* A javelin, thrown at the enemy just before a charge; each legionary carries two. 2 lbs.; $30.

Plumbata: A lead-weighted dart, designed to attach to the back of a shield; a legionary can carry up to half a dozen. Thrown by hand, not with a spear thrower (Damage thr-1 impaling; Acc 1; Range ×2.5/×3.5; RoF T(1); ST 6; Bulk -2). 1 lb.; $20.

Scutum:* A medium shield, of an oval shape. 15 lbs.; $60.

Spatha:* A thrusting broadsword with an iron blade. 3 lbs.; $600.

Studded leather skirt:* 4 lbs.; $60.

Gladiators may have experience with the following equipment:

Galerus: A specialized piece of armor worn on one arm, made up of bronze plates attached to a leather sleeve. Gives DR 4 to the arm where it's worn. Can be used in an unarmed parry; there is no penalty for parrying a weapon, but if the parry succeeds by less than three points the damage from the attack is applied to the parrying arm (reduced by the DR of the galerus). 7 lbs.; $105.

Gladius:* A shortsword with an iron blade. 2 lbs.; $400.

Hasta:* A long spear used by *equites* and auxiliary cavalry. 5 lbs.; $60.

Knife:* A large knife with an iron blade. 1 lb.; $40.

Net:* A melee net, carried by a *retiarius*. 5 lbs.; $20.

Trident: Carried by a *retiarius*; see Chapter 6 (p. 141) for statistics. 10 lbs.; $40.

Whip:* A whip used by *bestiarii* to control animals. 2 lbs.; $20.

Tools and Apparatus

In addition to the equipment described in the ***Basic Set,*** various other items are available in the Roman Empire. This list includes various items for adventurers, scholars, or mages and provides rules for using the equipment.

Abacus: A frame with sets of beads supported by dowels or wires that aids calculation; decimal notation is built into it. Accounting and Applied Mathematics rolls have no penalty if performed on an abacus. 2 lbs.; $50. An improvised abacus made from pebbles and a flat surface is free but performs computations at -2 to skill.

Balance: The symbol of justice since ancient Egypt; used by merchants to weigh items they sell. The items go in one pan and lead weights in the other. A small balance, good for weighing portable items, is 1 lb., $25; a set of lead weights good for up to 2 lbs. weighs 2 lbs., $10.

Dolabra: A digging tool with an iron head, which has a point at one end and a 3" wide axe blade opposite it. Used to cut through brush or break rock. Roman legions use it to clear the ground for their camps. 7 lbs.; $18.

Hand Mill: A small rotary hand mill carried by soldiers and other travelers to grind grain for bread or porridge. To find the amount of flour a user can grind in an hour, square his ST and divide by 10. An average man needs 2 lbs. of ground grain per day. 5 lbs.; $20.

Ladder: Useful for scaling walls during a siege (see the rules for climbing on p. B349). The longest practical ladder is 36' long and can reach the top of a 30' wall. 55 lbs.; $90.

Orrery: A complex device with multiple gears and wheels that shows the motions of the sun, the moon, and other celestial bodies. Powered by a man turning a handle. A small model shows only the position of the sun and moon and gives +1 to Astronomy; a large model shows all the planets and gives +2. Small orrery: 15 lbs.; $1,750. Large orrery: 150 lbs.; $21,000.

Wax Tablet: Used with a stylus to take notes and perform calculations; its surface can be smoothed and reused. A small tablet is 2 lbs.; $10. A large tablet is 10 lbs.; $50.

Burdigala

Burdigala is my native soil, where skies are temperate and mild, and the well-watered land generously lavish.
– Decimus Magnus Ausonius

Description

Burdigala [Bordeaux], built on the west bank of the Garumna [Garonne] River, just south of the Gironde Estuary in southwestern Gaul, is the site of a bridge across the Garonne, which flows north past the city. Its 20,000 inhabitants occupy a roughly square area of 300 acres. Of this, large and small gardens (more often productive than ornamental) and vineyards take up about 50 acres. The temperate climate supports Mediterranean-style agriculture, based on wheat, vineyards, and olives; its wine is especially famous. The site is not fortified, but consecrated marker stones trace the *pomoerium*.

The majority of the inhabitants has Gaulish ancestry and identify themselves as Gauls. After the conquest, many Gauls were enslaved, but their descendants have gone from slave to freedman to plebeian to provincial nobility. Tensions exist between the Romanized Gauls and the old Gallic families, but both still identify themselves as "Gauls." Sizeable minorities include Greeks, who traded from Burdigala for centuries; Romans, who moved in with Caesar's conquest of Gaul; and Basques who have settled. Smaller ethnic groups also live in Burdigala, the Jews forming the biggest number.

The city is a major trade center, being both a river port and a seaport. One of the major trade routes to Britain passes through it. Major roads run north to Mediolanum Santonum [Saintes], a center of oyster harvesting; northeast to Lugdunum, Gaul's greatest city and the site of a mint, named for the sun god Lugh; southeast to Tolosa [Toulouse], which has gold mines, and Narbo [Narbonne], on the route to Italy; and south to the Iberian peninsula. The import of tin from Britain began in AUC 351. Burdigala's most important exports are wine and ceramics, industries that naturally support each other.

Burdigala is also famous as a center of learning. It contains many teachers of rhetoric, including some with literary reputations. People from all over Gaul send their sons there to study.

Given the city's size, the basic IQ or Area Knowledge roll to find a particular service is at +1 (see *Services*, pp. 97-103). Finding a service connected with the wine trade or with literary knowledge is at a further +2.

Who's in Charge?

Burdigala is a center of imperial authority, capital of its province, and a self-governing town. There is little military presence; the nearest legions are in Britain and on the German frontier. Most of the time, the city is left to its own devices.

The Province

Aquitania is an imperial province, whose governor serves at the emperor's pleasure. Since no legion is stationed there, the post is held by a senator of praetorian rank (Administrative Rank 6), assisted by a procurator (Administrative Rank 5). The governor spends half of the year traveling between the cities of Aquitania to hear legal cases.

The governor's staff mostly consists of men on detached duty from Legio I Minervia. Two centurions command a double vexillation of 160 men. They escort the governor when he travels, enforce the law, patrol the roads, and work on construction projects. Those who can read and write help keep official records, especially of tax payments.

The City

Burdigala is a *municipium*. This entitles the city to two pairs of magistrates: a pair of duovirs (Administrative Rank 5) who act as judges and chief administrators, and a pair of aediles (Administrative Rank 3) who are responsible for public works and games. Aedile is an expensive post, responsible for games and public works, requiring a property qualification of Decurial Wealth (p. 221). Those who serve as aediles become members of the *ordo* or town council at the end of their terms, making them eligible to serve as duovirs. The *ordo* rank as provincial nobility (Status 2, one level free from Wealth).

The magistrates' offices are in the *basilica* or town hall, which stands next to the forum. A large hall is available for trials and for meetings of the *ordo*. Smaller rooms serve as offices and as halls of records. Each magistrate provides his own clerical staff from his household slaves and freedmen.

For major public issues, the magistrates may call public meetings in the forum. Most meetings serve only to announce what the *ordo* have decided, but if the people protest loudly enough, the magistrates may change their minds.

Temples and Cults

Burdigala has several temples devoted to civic worship. Most are next to the forum, or close to it. Several sites in or near the city are also devoted to mystery cults.

Burdigala's patron goddess is Minerva Burdigia. She's popular with all the major groups in the city; the Greeks identify her with Athena, and the Gauls with Brigid. Sacrifices to her bring success in knowledge, crafts, or strategy and tactics; she occasionally grants Knowledge spells.

The Gauls also pay special reverence to Dis Pater. Despite his Roman name, they consider him the ruler of the Celtic underworld, the original ancestor of the Celtic races. He grants Necromancy spells or Invisibility.

An even more distinctively Celtic deity is Epona, a goddess of horses. She has no Greek or Roman equivalent. Her temple is small, but regularly attended by young men from good families – and by charioteers seeking luck in races. She repays sacrifices by granting aid to a man's horses, in a race or a battle.

Also standing next to the forum is a temple of the Imperial Genius, with half a dozen priests. Its main holiday is the emperor's birthday. Offerings for the Imperial Genius have been falling off; the past decade hasn't inspired much faith.

One of the city's largest temples is devoted to a mystery cult, the worship of Isis. It stands near the waterfront district, looking down on the Garumna, conveniently placed for the many seafarers who come there to offer sacrifices. Other mystery cults congregate outside the city. A *mithraeum* sits on the other side of the river, in a small, aboveground building. Farther outside the city, the owners of two large estates maintain a grove sacred to Bacchus in a stand of trees that separates the cultivated parts of their lands; the druids once used this land to worship indigenous gods.

Several Jewish congregations meet in the city, in private houses owned by wealthy Jewish merchants.

*(1) **Basilica** (city hall) and Forum; (2) temple of Dis Pater; (3) temple of Minerva Burdigia; (4) temple of the Imperial Genius; (5) temple of Epona; (6) school of rhetoric and library; (7) indoor marketplace; (8) residence of the provincial governor; (9) imperial tax offices and records; (10) temple of Isis; (11) school of sorcery; (12) building of Claudia Nigella, used for wine and pottery dealers and for guild meetings; (13) amphitheatre, used mainly for chariot races; (14) main public bathhouse. F indicates locations of public fountains.*

Schools

Burdigala is a famous center of learning. Many teachers of rhetoric and literature live there. Most emphasize the Greek classics, but a few study more unusual subjects such as the remnants of ancient Celtic bardic traditions. Anyone at Status 0 or higher can afford to hire a teacher.

The temple of Isis maintains a school of sorcery. Most of its teachers worship Isis, but anyone who can prove knowledge of the mystic arts is welcome. None of the city's Jewish sorcerers officially is part of the school, for religious reasons, but some are willing to guest lecture.

A different sort of school operates in connection with the city's amphitheatre. Its main subject is handling, driving, and caring for horses,

especially those in the chariot races. But gladiators also appear in the arena, and for a fee, a free man or woman can study combat skills. The arena's surgeons have considerable experience with combat wounds; some accept students or apprentices.

Adventurers Wanted!

As the Empire falls into disorder, its cities increasingly rely on their own resources. The legions are too busy with border incursions and imperial power struggles to aid them. Burdigala has come up with a novel solution to the problem. A group of private citizens has formed a new college to fund special, unofficial operatives in the protection of the city against external and internal threats. These *arcani* (precursors of Imperial secret agents of the same name a few decades in the future) will perform impossible missions without official sanction – but some unusual resources are available to them.

The hidden sponsors, collectively, amount to a Patron. They have assets worth over 1,000 times starting wealth (10 points); they will provide modest equipment (+50%) and have special abilities (+50%), but have a policy of minimal intervention (-50%); and they get involved on a 9 or less (×1). Thus, having them as a Patron is worth 15 points.

Anyone considered for this special force needs exceptional abilities. *Arcani* should be built on 150 points, and should not have any disadvantages that would make them look untrustworthy to their prospective patrons. They don't have to be law-abiding – their duties may require breaking the law – but they have to keep their word and be willing to face danger. Spending 15 points on the required Patron advantage leaves a base of 135 points for character creation.

Sponsors of the Arcani

The various sponsors of the *arcani* include the following people:

Claudia Nigella, age 50, is the widow of a prosperous merchant and has taken over managing his wine and pottery export business. She has endowed a large indoor marketplace next to the waterfront, as a gift to the city; of course, she manages it and chooses which merchants get space in it. An alcove in her building houses a small shrine to Isis, in whose cult she has long been an initiate.

Ieremias ben Iosephus, age 32, is a religious teacher and scholar in the Jewish community, but his main interest is in sorcery. Most of the city's Jews, and many non-Jews, turn to him when supernaturally troubled.

Marcus Junius Falco, age 44, served in the first cohort of the Legio I Minervia in Germany before his promotions to *primus pilus* and then to camp prefect. This gave him equestrian rank and made him eligible for a civil service career, and he drew from his old connections to gain the procuratorship of Aquitania. Like most soldiers, he's a Mithraic initiate, but never rose very high in religious rank; he's more devoted to Minerva Burdigia, and he likes knowing that his adopted city and his old legion share a patron. In his limited spare time, he grows grapes on a small estate near the city.

Threats and Storylines

It's twenty-five marches to Narbo,
It's forty-five more up the Rhone,
And the end may be death in the heather
Or life on an Emperor's throne.
But whether the Eagles obey us,
Or we go to the Ravens – alone,
I'd sooner be Lalage's lover
Than sit on an Emperor's throne!
– Rudyard Kipling, "Lalage"

The following potential foes can be part of the cast of characters for a group of adventurers in Burdigala. Many can be used in other locations, if the GM prefers a campaign set in Rome, Alexandria, or the eastern empire. The adventure seeds typically weave together two or more of these specific adversaries to produce a more complex plot.

Human Foes

Bahjam

240 points

Bahjam is one of the Parthian Empire's best secret agents, thanks to a combination of highly developed skills and knowledge of magic. His primary duty is to travel through the Roman Empire and send back information, but he occasionally takes a more active role as an assassin. He maintains a cover identity as a Palmyran merchant and goldsmith. A middle-aged man, but still handsome and fit, he hasn't been back to the Parthian Empire in more than 20 years. From his point of view, this is just as well – as a worshipper of Angra Mainyu, the evil god of Zoroastrianism, he was in constant danger before being recruited and sent abroad. He occasionally encounters priests of Ahura Mazda, but they can't officially act against him as long as he stays on Roman soil.

ST 9 [-10]; **DX** 13 [60]; **IQ** 11 [20]; **HT** 11 [10].

Damage 1d-2/1d-1; BL 16 lbs.; HP 9 [0]; Will 11 [0]; Per 13 [10]; FP 1 [0].

Basic Speed 7.00 [20]; Basic Move 7 [0]; Dodge 10; Parry 9 (Knife).

5'6"; 135 lbs. (SM 0).

Social Background

TL: 2.

CF: Parthian Empire [0]; Roman Empire [1].

Languages: Aramaic (Native) [6]; Greek (Native) [6]; Latin (Accented) [4]; Persian (Native) [0].

Advantages

Appearance (Attractive) [4]; Eidetic Memory (Preparation Required, 1 minute, -20%) [4]; Fit [5]; Magery 1 (One College Only: Black Magic, -10%; Pact: Ritual worship of Angra Mainyu, -5%) [14]; Security Clearance [5]; Single-Minded [5]; Wealth (Comfortable) [10].

Disadvantages

Code of Honor (Professional) [-5]; Enemy (Zoroastrian magi; Watchers; 6 or less) [-4]; Post-Combat Shakes (12) [-5]; Secret (Parthian spy and assassin; Possible Death) [-30].

Quirks: Careful; Dislikes fire; Homosexual; Makes up stories about his past; Proud. [-5]

Skills

Acting-13 (IQ+2) [8]; Body Language-13 (Per+0) [2]; College of Black Magic-13* (IQ+2) [12]; Fast-Draw-14 (DX+1) [2]; Holdout-13 (IQ+2) [8]; Jeweler-12 (IQ+1) [8]; Knife-15 (DX+2) [4]; Merchant-12 (IQ+1) [4]; Observation-13 (Per+0) [2]; Poisons-12 (IQ+1) [8]; Ritual Magic-13* (IQ+2) [12]; Savoir-Faire (High Society)-12 (IQ+1) [2]; Sex Appeal-11 (HT+0) [2]; Shadowing-13 (IQ+2) [8]; Sleight of Hand-12 (DX-1) [2]; Theology (Zoroastrian)-9 (IQ-2) [1]; Wrestling-14 (DX+1) [4].

Techniques: Hide (College of Black Magic)-13* [5]; Darkness (College of Black Magic) -13* [3]; Icy Weapon (College of Black Magic)-13* [4]; Night Vision (College of Black Magic)-13* [6]; Silence (College of Black Magic)-13* [2].

* +1 from Magery.

Zoroastrian Magic

The Persian Empire has its own distinctive approach to magic. All spells are divided between two colleges: White Magic and Black Magic. White Magic includes spells from the colleges of Air, Communication and Empathy, Fire, Food, Healing, Knowledge, Movement, and Plants, as well as most Animal spells, Light spells, and Making spells. Black Magic includes spells from the colleges of Body Control, Earth, Illusion, Mind Control, Necromancy, Protection and Warning, and Sound, as well as Breaking spells, Darkness spells, and the Animal spell Shapeshifting. Spells of Enchantment and Meta-spells fall into both colleges; neither college can use Gate spells.

Most Persians worship Ahura Mazda, the god of truth and light. A few secretly worship Angra Mainyu, the god of darkness and lies. Each god favors some of his worshippers with Magery with two special limitations: One College Only (-10%, for one college out of two) and Pact (-5%, for regular weekly observances). They can then learn spells in the appropriate college, as techniques based on the skill for that college.

Persians consider these two sets of abilities to be utterly distinct. Followers of Ahura Mazda become magi (the plural of "magus") and practice magic; followers of Angra Mainyu become goetes (the plural of "goes," pronounced "go-ease") and practice goetics. In ***GURPS*** terms, both are magic and require Magery.

Brontophonos

182 points

Brontophonos is the proprietor of an exhibition of rare beasts, which has now come to Gaul. He reveals little about his past. Even the name he uses isn't his real name – it means "Thundervoice," reflecting his loud declamations about his menagerie. He's definitely not a Roman citizen, though. The GM should feel free to improvise on the background his character sheet suggests – for example, giving him a different native language. He's always interested in new exotic specimens, but he only pays for living animals!

Brontophonos' caravan has three wagons. He himself drives the lead wagon, pulled by a rare megalogryphon, a huge horned beast brought up from the underworld (p. 212). It holds a small room for his two slave *bestiarii* and large cages for his major specimens; currently one is empty and the other holds a rare Indian manticore (p. 48). The second wagon is driven by Brontophonos' assistant, a strange-looking woman with almond-shaped eyes who speaks only a few words of Greek. He calls her Topaza, which is not her real name, but which she can pronounce! (Use the Wardancer template, p. 126, to define Topaza's abilities, if needed.) That wagon holds valuable property and small quarters for Brontophonos, Topaza, and the slave driver of the third wagon. The third wagon holds feed and many cages for smaller animals, including a very large python, several mountain ants, another rare Indian animal (p. 48), and a satyr that Brontophonos recently captured in Greece.

ST 11 [10]; **DX** 12 [40]; **IQ** 13 [60]; **HT** 10 [0].

Damage 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 11 [0]; Will 9 [-20]; Per 13 [0]; FP 10 [0].

Basic Speed 6.00 [10]; Basic Move 6 [0]; Dodge 10*; Parry 8 (Knife)*.

5'10"; 160 lbs. (SM 0).

Social Background

TL: 2.

CF: Human [0].

Languages: Armenian (Native) [0]; Arabic (Accented) [2]; Chinese (Accented) [2]; Gothic (Accented) [2]; Greek (Accented) [2]; Latin (Accented) [2]; Persian (Accented) [2]; Sanskrit (Accented) [2].

Advantages

Animal Friend 3 [15]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Cultural Adaptability [10]; Fearlessness 1 [2]; Language Talent [10]; Longevity [2]; Resistant to Animal Venoms (+8) [5]; Serendipity 1 [15]; Wealth (Very Wealthy) [30].

Perks: Penetrating Voice. [1]

Disadvantages

Bad Sight (Farsighted) [-25]; Compulsive Lying (12) [-15]; Miserliness (12) [-10]; Pacifism (Self-Defense Only) [-15]; Social Stigma (Minority Group) [-10]; Weirdness Magnet [-15].

Quirks: Broad-minded; Likes animals, especially exotic animals; Never learns any language beyond Accented level; Will not sell his animals for gladiatorial shows. [-4]

Skills

Accounting-11 (IQ-2) [1]; Animal Handling (Big Cats)-15† (IQ+2) [1]; Animal Handling (Saurians)-15† (IQ+2) [1]; Area Knowledge (Roman Empire)-14 (IQ+1) [2]; Artist (Scene Design)-11 (IQ-2) [1]; Biology (Zoology)-12 (IQ-1) [2]; Camouflage-13 (IQ+0) [1]; Carpentry-13 (IQ+0) [1]; Cloak-11 (DX-1) [1]; Fast-Draw (Knife)-12 (DX+0) [1]; Fast-Talk-12 (IQ-1) [1]; Gesture-13 (IQ+0) [1]; Holdout-12 (IQ-1) [1]; Knife-12 (DX+0) [1]; Knot-Tying-13 (DX+1) [2]; Lasso-12 (DX+0) [2]; Linguistics-11 (IQ-2) [1]; Merchant-13 (IQ+0) [2]; Mimicry (Animal Sounds)-13 (IQ+0) [4]; Mimicry (Bird Calls)-12 (IQ-1) [2]; Observation-13 (Per+0) [2]; Public Speaking-14 (IQ+1) [4]; Scrounging-13 (IQ+0) [1]; Stealth-13 (DX+1) [4]; Teamster (Bovines)-15† (IQ+2) [1]; Teamster (Saurians)-15† (IQ+2) [1]; Tracking-13 (Per+0) [2]; Traps-14 (IQ+1) [4]; Veterinary-14† (IQ+1) [1]; Whip-13 (DX+1) [4]; Wrestling-12 (DX+0) [2].

* +1 from Combat Reflexes.
† +3 from Animal Friend.

Camilla Rufa

150 points

Camilla Rufa is the daughter of an auxiliary assigned to the governor's office in Burdigala and a Gaulish woman. When her father received reassignment to the German frontier, he left his family behind. Despite the money he occasionally sent, Camilla grew up poor with a mother who didn't have much time to spend raising her. As an adolescent, she became friends with a rough crowd. Eventually some of them took up armed robbery, and Camilla talked them into letting her go along and discovered a natural talent for violent crime.

Now she's the leader of a small band of brigands who ambush merchants and other travelers on the roads. She's not attractive, with strong features and a freckled, weather-beaten complexion, but she has a commanding personality and striking reddish-blonde hair that fits her cognomen. Her impressive mounted combat skills don't hurt! She particularly favors riding close to a foe, hanging over the far side of her horse, and throwing darts over its back or under its belly.

ST 10 [0]; **DX** 13 [60]; **IQ** 11 [20]; **HT** 11 [10].
Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 13 [10]; Per 11 [0]; FP 11 [0].
Basic Speed 6.00 [0]; Basic Move 6 [0]; Dodge 10*; Parry 10 (Spear)*.
5'6"; 130 lbs. (SM 0).

Social Background

TL: 2.
CF: Roman Empire [0].
Languages: Gaulish (Broken) [2]; Latin (Native) [0].

Advantages

Ambidexterity [5]; Charisma 1 [5]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Contact (Sextus Claudius Scaevola, Fence, Merchant-15, Usually reliable, 9 or less) [4]; Daredevil [15]; Wealth (Comfortable) [10].

Perks: Alcohol Tolerance; Penetrating Voice; Weapon Bond (Favorite Knife). [3]

Disadvantages

Appearance (Unattractive) [-4]; Code of Honor (Pirate's) [-5]; Compulsive Generosity (12) [-5]; Enemies (Provincial Government, Hunters, 6 or less) [-10]; Overconfidence (12) [-5]; Sense of Duty (Comrades) [-5]; Social Stigma (Second-Class Citizen) [-5].

Quirks: Bowlegged; Flirts with attractive men, including robbery victims; Swears by Epona. [-3]

Skills

Area Knowledge (Aquitania)-12 (IQ+1) [2]; Camouflage-12 (IQ+1) [2]; Carousing-12 (HT+1) [2]; Dancing-12 (DX-1) [1]; Knife-13 (DX+0) [1]; Leadership-12† (IQ+1) [2]; Riding (Horses)-14 (DX+1) [4]; Savoir-Faire (High Society)-11 (IQ+0) [1]; Spear-13 (DX+0) [2]; Stealth-12 (DX-1) [1]; Thrown Weapon (Dart)-15 (DX+2) [4].

Techniques: Bracing-13 (Spear+0) [5]; Hang from Saddle-12 (Riding-2) [2]; Vaulting-14 (Riding+0) [4].

* +1 from Combat Reflexes.
† +1 from Charisma.

Chlodowic

150 points

To all appearances, Chlodowic is a classic mighty-thewed Germanic warrior, taking advantage of Rome's disarray to loot and rape. But he's actually more dangerous than that: a skilled warrior and an intelligent leader with a concept of tactics. Given time, he could become a serious threat to the western provinces, particularly to their shipping routes and coastal cities.

ST 13 [30]; **DX** 11 [20]; **IQ** 11 [20]; **HT** 13 [30].
Damage 1d+1/2d+1; BL 34 lbs.; HP 13 [0]; Will 11 [0]; Per 11 [0]; FP 13 [0].
Basic Speed 5.75 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0]; Dodge 9*; Parry 11 (Two-Handed Axe/Mace)*.
6'4"; 200 lbs. (SM 0).

Social Background

TL: 1.
CF: Germanic Lands [0].
Languages: Frankish (Native/None) [-3]; Latin (Accented/Broken) [3].

Advantages

Absolute Direction [5]; Appearance (Attractive) [4]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Fearlessness 2 [4]; Fit [5]; Hard to Kill 2 [4]; Reputation 1 (Successful Pirate, Among Germanic Peoples, 10 or less) [1]; Striking ST +2 [10]; Temperature Tolerance 1 (Cold) [1].

Disadvantages

Code of Honor (Pirate's) [-5]; Innumerate [-5]; Intolerance (Civilized People) [-5]; Lecherousness (12) [-15]; Low TL -1 [-5]; No Sense of Humor [-10]; Social Stigma (Uneducated) [-5].

Quirks: Likes wine better than beer; Prefers women who fight back. [-2]

Skills

Bardic Lore-9 (IQ-2) [1]; Boating (Unpowered)-11 (DX+0) [2]; Brawling-11 (DX+0) [1]; Carousing-13 (HT+0) [1]; Crewman (Seamanship)-12 (IQ+1) [2]; Intimidation-10 (Will-1) [1]; Leadership-13 (IQ+2) [8]; Meteorology-12 (IQ+1) [4]; Navigation (Sea)-15† (IQ+4) [4]; Shiphandling-11 (IQ+0) [4]; Stealth-10 (DX-1) [1]; Survival (Island/Beach)-12 (Per+1) [4]; Survival (Woodlands)-11 (Per+0) [2]; Swimming-13 (HT+0) [1]; Tactics-10 (IQ-1) [2]; Thrown Weapon (Harpoon)-12 (DX+1) [2]; Tracking-10 (Per-1) [1]; Two-Handed Axe/Mace-14 (DX+3) [12].

* +1 from Combat Reflexes.
† +3 from Absolute Direction.

Geaticus the Chaldean

275 points

Geaticus is called "the Chaldean" because of his practice of astrology, the Chaldean art of divination. His ancestry is probably not Chaldean, though no one knows for sure. Geaticus is a sorcerer of a quite unusual kind: he has no magical talent at all, not even Magery 0. Rather, he uses his profound knowledge of astrology to identify favorable heavenly aspects, mana-charged moments at which nonmages can cast spells. His long-term plans are grandiose; frustrated by the need to wait for the planets to aid his spells, he wants to discover magical techniques for changing their motion, so that he can cast spells at his own convenience. His early experiments have produced an increased number of heavenly portents such as comets. He may appear as an adversary with deeply convoluted plots, or simply as an eccentric contact.

ST 9 [-10]; **DX** 11 [20]; **IQ** 18 [160]; **HT** 9 [-10].

Damage 1d-2/1d-1; BL 16 lbs.; HP 9 [0]; Will 16 [-10]; Per 18 [0]; FP 9 [0].

Basic Speed 5.00 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0]; Dodge 8.

5'8"; 110 lbs. (SM 0). Long gray hair.

Social Background

TL: 2.

CF: Roman Empire.

Languages: Akkadian (Accented) [2]; Chaldean (Accented) [2]; Gaulish (Accented) [2]; Greek (Accented) [2]; Latin (Native) [0]; Persian (Accented) [2]; Punic (Accented) [2].

Advantages

Absolute Direction [5]; Absolute Timing [2]; Acute Vision 1 [2]; Appearance (Attractive) [4]; High Manual Dexterity 1 [5]; Independent Income 5 [5]; Language Talent [10]; Lightning Calculator [2]; Longevity [2]; Mathematical Ability 1 [10]; Musical Ability 1 [5]; Photographic Memory (Preparation Required, 1 minute, -20%) [8]; Reputation 4 (Brilliant mathematician; among mathematicians; 10 or less) [3]; Signature Gear (Magical Items) [40]; Single-Minded [5]; Status 1 [5]; Temperature Tolerance 1 (Cold) [1]; Wealth (Very Wealthy) [30].

Disadvantages

Callous [-5]; Delusions (He'll be able to control the heavens) [-10]; Fanaticism [-15]; Loner (12) [-5]; Megalomania [-10]; No Sense of Humor [-10]; Skinny [-5]; Unnatural Features (Semi-translucent flesh) [-1]; Weirdness Magnet [-15]; Xenophilia (12) [-10].

Quirks: Conceals his having once been a Mithraic initiate; Does not drink wine; Talks in astronomical metaphors. [-3]

Skills

Administration-17 (IQ-1) [1]; Architecture-17 (IQ-1) [1]; Astronomy-18* (IQ+0) [2]; College of Air-17 (IQ-1) [4]; College of Communication and Empathy-16 (IQ-2) [2]; College of Enchantment-15 (IQ-3) [1]; College of Knowledge-19 (IQ+1) [12]; College of Light and Darkness-15 (IQ-3) [1]; College of Movement-16 (IQ-2) [2]; Current Affairs (Business)-18 (IQ+0) [1]; Engineer (Clockwork)-18* IQ [2]; Finance-17* (IQ-1) [1]; Fortune-Telling (Astrology)-18 (IQ+0) [2]; Mathematics (Applied)-17* (IQ-1) [1]; Mechanic-17 (IQ-1) [1]; Musical Instrument (Flute)-17† (IQ-1) [1]; Natural Philosophy-17 (IQ-1) [2]; Philosophy (Pythagorean)-16 (IQ-2) [1]; Research-17 (IQ-1) [1]; Ritual Magic (Astral Spirit Conjuration)-19 (IQ+1) [12]; Symbol Drawing (Sacred Architecture)-16 (IQ-2) [1]; Writing-17 (IQ-1) [1].

Spells

Teleport (College of Movement)-15 [10].

* +1 from Mathematical Ability.

† +1 from Musical Ability.

Gnaeus Ambrosius Silvanus

150 points

In his adolescence, Silvanus began having peculiar dreams, filled with scenes of violence. His family, prosperous citizens of a town in Aquitania, called on the help of physicians, priests, and even an exorcist, fearing that their son was going mad, but nothing helped. After several years, the young man left home to live in the wilderness. He eventually wandered into a high-mana area that had once been a sacred grove. There, he was able to teach himself the Art of Memory (see *Eidetic Memory*, p. 219), which he used to help regain memories of a previous life, including the memory of having learned the Art of Memory in that life. In fact, he had been one of the druids of Gaul who died after the Roman conquest.

Now, decades older, he has taught himself some of the druids' lost magical arts. He still doesn't recall the whole of any previous life, but he remembers enough of the vain war against the Romans to be eager for revenge and freedom. As the Roman army fails to preserve public safety against civil war, brigandage, invasion, and worse threats, he finds increasing numbers of willing followers.

ST 10 [0]; **DX** 10 [0]; **IQ** 13 [60]; **HT** 11 [10].

Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 13 [0]; Per 13 [0]; FP 11 [0].

Basic Speed 5.25 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0]; Dodge 8; Parry 10 (Staff).

5'8"; 145 lbs. (SM 0).

Social Background

TL: 2.

CF: Roman Empire [0].

Languages: Gaulish (Native) [6]; Latin (Native) [0].

Advantages

Absolute Direction [5]; Charisma 1 [5]; Clerical Investment [5]; Eidetic Memory (Preparation Required, 1 minute, -20%) [4]; Fit [5]; Higher Purpose (Free Gaul from Roman rule) [5]; Magery 0 [5]; Outdoorsman 1 [10]; Racial Memory (Passive) [15]; Reawakened [10]; Status 1 [5].

Disadvantages

Bad Sight (Farsighted) [-25]; Fanaticism [-15]; Odious Personal Habit (Talks in riddles) [-5]; Secret (Plots rebellion against Roman rule) [-20]; Sense of Duty (People of Gaulish descent) [-10].

Quirks: Chauvinistic; Proud. [-2]

Skills

Acting-12 (IQ-1) [1]; Archaeology-11 (IQ-2) [1]; Area Knowledge (Aquitania)-13 (IQ+0) [1]; Bardic Lore-13 (IQ+0) [4]; Boating (Unpowered)/TL2-10 (DX+0) [2]; Camouflage-14* (IQ+1) [1]; Detect Lies-12 (Per-1) [2]; Dreaming-11 (Will-2) [1]; First Aid-13 (IQ+0) [1]; Fishing-14* (Per+1) [1]; Herb Lore-13 (IQ+0) [8]; Herb Lore Magic-12 (IQ-1) [4]; Hidden Lore (Riddles)-13 (IQ+0) [2]; Hiking-10 (HT-1) [1]; Law (Celtic Ritual)-11 (IQ-2) [1]; Leadership-13† (IQ+0) [1]; Meteorology-14 (IQ+1) [4]; Meteorology Magic-12 (IQ-1) [4]; Mimicry (Bird Calls)-12* (IQ-1) [1]; Naturalist-13 (IQ+0) [4]; Navigation (Land)-13* (IQ+0) [1]; Observation-12 (Per-1) [1]; Occultism-12 (IQ-1) [1]; Poetry-12 (IQ-1) [1]; Public Speaking-14† (IQ+1) [2]; Religious Ritual-12 (IQ-1) [2]; Savoir-Faire (High Society)-13 (IQ+0) [1]; Singing-11 (HT+0) [1]; Staff-11 (DX+1) [4]; Stealth-11 (DX+1) [4]; Survival (Woodlands)-13* (Per+0) [1]; Teaching-12 (IQ-1) [1]; Theology (Druid)-12 (IQ-1) [2].

Spells

Fog-10 [2]; Identify Plant-13 [2]; No-Smell-13 [2]; Predict Weather -12 [4].

* +1 from Outdoorsman.

† +1 from Charisma.

Nonhuman Foes

Aristodoulos

320 points

In life, Aristodoulos was an exorcist, specializing in casting out the spirits of the restless dead, and secretly a necromancer, calling upon the dead for secret information or binding them to his service. He was at work on a great enchantment to turn himself into a lich, but died of a sudden illness before it was complete. Contrary to city law, his remains were entombed within the city limits, in a hidden chamber under his house, now occupied by his widowed niece Chrysippe and her two youngest children – she was intimidated by the insistence of his slave Phoenix, who killed himself shortly after the entombment. Chrysippe had Phoenix's body placed in the city graveyard but kept Aristodoulos' tomb secret, fearing that she would be punished if it were revealed. Now Aristodoulos is one of the restless dead, able to use his hard-won knowledge to struggle against the barriers between life and death. Any Roman would classify him as a larva, but he doesn't fit the standard template for larvae (p. 213).

ST 9 [-10]; **DX** 9 [-20]; **IQ** 14 [80]; **HT** 9 [-10].

Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 16 lbs.; HP 9 [0]; Will 18 [20]; Per 10 [-20]; FP 9 [0].

Basic Speed 4.50 [0]; Basic Move 4 [0]; Dodge 7.

5'10"; 0 lbs. (SM 0).

Social Background

TL: 2.

CF: Roman Empire [0].

Languages: Greek (Native) [0]; Latin (Accented) [4].

Advantages

Absolute Direction [5]; Affliction 1 (HT-0; Affects Substantial, +40%; Malediction, -1/yard, +100%; Unluckiness, +10%) [25]; Affliction 1 (Affects Substantial, +40%; Costs 10 Fatigue, -50%; Heart Attack, +300%; Melee Attack, Reach C, Cannot Parry, -30%; Temporary Disadvantage, Not Invisible, -36%) [33]; Magical Spirit [80]; Not Mute [22]; Possession (Only Blood Relatives, -30%; Spiritual, -20%) [50]; Unmanifested Spirit [149].

Disadvantages

Appearance (Monstrous; Universal, +25%) [-25]; Bully (6) [-20]; Callous [-5]; Chronic Pain (Frustration at his disembodied condition, Mild, 1 hour, 12 or less) [-5]; Disturbing Voice [-10]; Hidebound [-5]; Lifebane [-10]; Miserliness (12) [-10]; No Sense of Humor [-10]; Obsession (Regain a physical body) [-10]; Secret (Hidden tomb) [-30].

Quirks: Proud; Uncongenial; Uses his powers to pay off old grudges. [-3]

Skills

Area Knowledge (Burdigala)-14 (IQ+0) [1]; Area Knowledge (The Underworld)-14 (IQ+0) [1]; Exorcism-19 (Will+1) [8]; Expert Skill (Thanatology)-16 (IQ+2) [12]; Fortune-Telling (Spiritualism)-15 (IQ+1) [4]; Hazardous Materials-13 (IQ-1) [1]; Hidden Lore (Spirit Lore)-16 (IQ+2) [8]; Intimidation-17 (Will-1) [1]; Literature-12 (IQ-2) [1]; Occultism-15 (IQ+1) [4]; Research-13 (IQ-1) [1]; Ritual Magic-15 (IQ+1) [12]; Savoir-Faire (High Society)-14 (IQ+0) [1].

Garumna

295 points

The Romans bridged the Garumna River, and under the dominion of the Roman gods, its nymph had to submit. But now that dominion has failed, and she's angry and wants her waters to flow free. She hasn't destroyed the bridge yet, but boatmen and people who live by the river's banks tell of unnerving visions of a naked, enraged woman with green hair, dark eyes, and a fish's tail.

ST 9 [-10]; **DX** 11 [20]; **IQ** 9 [-20]; **HT** 15 [0]*.

Damage 1d-2/1d-1; BL 16 lbs.; HP 9 [0]; Will 11 [10]; Per 10 [0*]; FP 15 [0].

Basic Speed 6.5 [0]; Basic Move 1 [0]; Dodge 9.

5'6"; 135 lbs. (SM 0).

Social Background

TL: 1.

CF: Celtic [0].

Languages: Gaulish (Native/None) [-3]; Greek (Accented/None) [2]; Latin (Broken/None) [1].

Advantages

Animal Friend 2 [10]; Green Thumb 2 [10]; Magery 3† [20]; Nymph [225].

Disadvantages

Bloodlust (6) [-20]; Callous [-5]; No Legs (Semi-Aquatic, When Materialized; Water Move 6) [0]; Vow (Remove all human artifacts from her banks) [-10].

Quirks: Will spare the life of anyone who addresses her in verse. [-1]

Skills

Intimidation-11 (Will+0) [2]; Wrestling-12 (DX+1) [4].

Spells

Create Water-14 [12]; Fog-14 [12]; Purify Water-14 [12]; Seek Water-14 [12]; Shape Water-14 [12]. All include +3 from Magery.

* Includes modifier from Nymph racial template.

† Includes Magery 1 from Nymph racial template.

Lupus Magnus

20 points

Despite Roman colonization, much of Gaul is still forested, a land of beasts more than men. Now the country folk tell of a more terrifying beast: a huge wolf such as Hercules might have fought when he lived on earth. Its bite inflicts 1d-1 cutting damage. Some accounts credit it with more than bestial cunning, and superstitious people say that it's actually an evil sorcerer wearing a wolf's body.

ST 14 [20*†]; **DX** 12 [24*]; **IQ** 5 [-100]; **HT** 12 [20].
Damage 1d/2d-1; BL 39 lbs.; HP 14 [0]; Will 11 [30]; Per 13 [40]; FP 12 [0].
Basic Speed 6.00 [0]; Basic Move 6 [0]; Dodge 10‡.
8'3" long; 412 lbs. (SM +1).

Advantages

Combat Reflexes [15]; Discriminatory Smell [15]; DR 1 [5]; Night Vision 2 [2]; Sharp Teeth [1]; Single-Minded [5]; Temperature Tolerance 1 [1].

Disadvantages

Quadruped [-35]; Wild Animal [-30].

Quirks: Uncongenial. [-1]

Skills

Brawling-14 (DX+2) [4]; Stealth-12 (DX+0) [2]; Survival (Woodlands)-12 (Per-1) [1]; Tracking-16** (Per+3) [1].

* -40% for No Fine Manipulators.
† -10% for Size.
‡ +1 from Combat Reflexes.
** +4 from Discriminatory Smell.

Adventure Seeds

What kind of adventures can the *arcani* of Burdigala have? Here are some suggestions. They're listed in a specific order, so that each one builds on an earlier one, but an ingenious GM can mix them up and add other challenges.

Brigands

Camilla Rufa and her henchman have been raiding mercantile traffic on Aquitania's highways. The legionary vexillations patrol the roads, but the brigands can see them coming and go elsewhere. The arcani could disguise themselves as targets, either carrying goods out of Burdigala or bringing them in from a nearby city. If they choose the latter course, they may end up traveling with Brontophonos – and get to see Topaza's unarmed combat skills. Having Silvanus accompany the brigands is also an option.

House of Night

One of Burdigala's neighborhoods is gaining a reputation for being haunted. In fact, it *is* haunted; the house of Aristodoulos is in that neighborhood. Use this scenario when it's time to introduce supernatural horror. For added menace, the neighborhood could acquire an unnatural horde of striges.

Wolf Hunt

The Great Wolf of Aquitania has begun to threaten the province. The governor has sent soldiers out to hunt for it, but so far without success. The arcani's special skills might be better for this job. But there's a complication: Brontophonos has learned about the wolf, and is offering a reward for it, if it's captured alive. The arcani can either compete for that reward, or take the simpler path of trying to kill the wolf.

Mutiny

The governor's troops haven't been paid in over a year, and they're growing restless. The arcani may have the connections to learn of a planned mutiny, or they may hear of it through Falco, one of their Patrons. Either way, their assignment is to preserve the public safety by any means necessary – going to the mint at Lugdunum and bringing back coin to pay the soldiers, or organizing the citizens to resist a military takeover, or personally dealing with the ringleaders.

Hammerfall

Encouraged by the disorder of the empire, the German tribes invade Gaul. Massive numbers of Alamanni pour over the eastern border, while Frankish ships raid the seaports of the western coast. One of their leaders, Chlodowic, brings several ships to sack Burdigala. His companions include some notable warriors; to make them more of a challenge, the GM may make one of them be a skinturner. Local adversaries such as Camilla Rufa or Silvanus may turn into reluctant allies under the German threat.

War of the Three Emperors

On the German frontier, the Praetorian prefect, Postumus, has distributed a large amount of wealth captured from German invaders to his troops, who have proclaimed him emperor. Postumus has many supporters in Gaul and Britain and some in Spain, enabling him to establish an independent empire there. The Romans cannot dislodge him. However, in Narbonensis, Caesarion is moving to claim the imperial throne by right of descent and establish himself as the savior of the empire. Behind the scenes, Geaticus the Chaldean encourages Caesarion's ambitions. Both rivals have supporters in Burdigala, Caesarion among the worshippers of Isis and the Greeks, Postumus among the Mithraists and among Gauls who like the idea of having their own empire. Will the Patrons of the arcani split up over the issue, or will they continue to put the survival of their own city first? And what happens if the Parthians become interested and send Bahjam to decide who gets the throne?

Glossary

ab urbe condita: From the founding of the city (of Rome). The year AUC 1 corresponds to 753 B.C. To find the Roman equivalent for any year after that, subtract the year B.C. from 754, or add the year A.D. to 753. Thus, 1 B.C. was AUC 753, and the next year, 1 A.D., was AUC 754.

arcanus: A covert operative, or a person with secret knowledge including magical secrets.

beneficarius: The chief administrator of a warship.

cursus honorum: A standard sequence of religious, military, and administrative offices that makes up a career of public service. Each social class is eligible for different offices that make up a different *cursus honorum*.

devotio: A special military ritual in which a commander offers his own life to the gods in exchange for victory in battle.

Di Manes: The spirits of a family's ancestors. The name means roughly "good folk" and is used partly to avoid offending the dead, like calling the Furies "the kindly ones."

eques (plural equites): (1) A member of the equestrian social class, originally made up of citizens rich enough to serve in the cavalry. (2) A gladiator trained for mounted combat in the arena.

flamen: A priest of the city of Rome assigned to serve one god exclusively. The *flamen dialis* served Jupiter, the *flamen martialis* served Mars, the *flamen quirinalis* served Quirinus (Romulus, the founder of Rome, deified after his death), and 12 minor *flamines* served less important gods. Provincial cities have *flamines* for their own gods and for the cult of the Imperial Genius.

limes: The official frontier of Roman rule, established by Augustus Caesar in his will.

mithraeum: A cave or building devoted to worship of Mithras.

navarch: The senior captain of a squadron of warships.

numen (plural *numina*): Supernatural power; a god or spirit. Roughly equivalent to mana.

optio: The second in command of a century, after the centurion.

ordo: The council of a provincial city, modeled on Rome's Senate.

pater patriae: Father of the country, a title of the emperor.

paterfamilias: The senior male member of a household, with legal authority over his family and the household property, including slaves.

pomoerium: The official boundary of a city, defined by religious ritual; marked by a line of stones or other physical sign.

pontifex maximus: The office of head of the pontifical college, always held by the emperor.

primus pilus: The senior centurion of the first cohort of a legion; effectively third in command in the field.

rex sacrorum: A full-time priest who carried out the religious functions once performed by Rome's king.

signifer: The soldier assigned to carry his century's standard into battle; also customarily assigned to guard and account for legion funds.

testudo: A group combat technique of raising shields overhead and locking them together, named from the Latin word for "tortoise."

trierarch: The captain of a warship.

tutor: A legal guardian assigned to an adult woman, whose consent is required for any important legal decisions she makes.

vexilla: A banner carried by any military force on detached duty from a legion.

vigiles: A force operating within the city limits of Rome, mainly as fire fighters and nighttime street patrol, made up of freedmen.

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GURPS Third Edition

Many of the supplements to the previous edition of ***GURPS*** contained fantasy material. Much of this is usable with any system, and most of the rest can be adapted to ***GURPS*** *Fourth Edition* with ease. The following supplements are especially recommended as sources of inspiration:

Discworld Roleplaying Game. Stand-alone ("***Powered by GURPS***") RPG based on the humorous fantasy of Terry Pratchett. Released first as ***GURPS Discworld.*** Supported by ***Discworld Also.***

GURPS Cabal. Horror-conspiracy setting in which the Earth – in fact, the entire *universe* – is controlled by a secret alliance of powerful wizards and demigods. Contains a variety of alternate and modified magic systems.

GURPS Celtic Myth. Britain and Ireland, from prehistory up to the 5th century, with special emphasis on folklore and myth.

GURPS Dragons. Dragons and other serpentine and reptilian races, both as monsters and as civilized beings. Includes *Fourth Edition* rules.

GURPS Faerie. Dwellers "under the hill" and their cousins in folklore.

GURPS In Nomine. Roleplay agents of Heaven or Hell, or pagan gods and spirits with no ties to either side. A ***GURPS*** treatment of extremely powerful supernatural beings as player characters.

GURPS Magic Items 1, Magic Items 2, and ***Magic Items 3.*** Treasuries of magical artifacts.

GURPS Places of Mystery. Locales with unusual histories, from all over the world and every historical period.

GURPS Shapeshifters. Beings that can change form, from werewolves to far-future constructs of liquid metal.

GURPS Spirits. Entities that embody abstract concepts such as "nature" and "divine will."

GURPS Technomancer. Alternate Earth where magic awakens in 1945, changing the world.

GURPS Undead. The living dead – ghosts, mummies, zombies, etc.

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