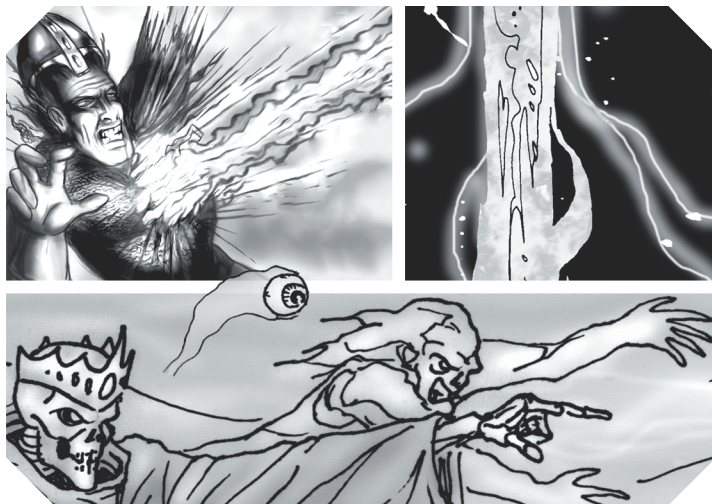


GURPS®

Fourth Edition

MAGIC™

ARTILLERY SPELLS™



Written by
SEAN PUNCH

Illustrated by
**GLENN KRISTOFFERSEN,
NEIL MELVILLE,
and DAN SMITH**

GURPS System Design ■ STEVE JACKSON

GURPS Line Editor ■ SEAN PUNCH

Assistant **GURPS** Line Editor ■ JASON “PK” LEVINE

GURPS Project Manager ■ STEVEN MARSH

Executive Editor ■ MIRANDA HORNER

Production Artist and Indexer ■ NIKOLA VRTIS

GURPS FAQ Maintainer ■ VICKY “MOLOKH” KOLENKO

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Director of Sales ■ ROSS JEPSON

Page Design ■ PHIL REED and JUSTIN DE WITT

Art Direction and Prepress Checker ■ NIKKI VRTIS

Reviewers: Peter V. Dell’Orto, Christopher R. Rice, and William H. Stoddard

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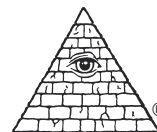
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– Robert A. Heinlein, <i>The Moon is a Harsh Mistress</i>	
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INTRODUCTION

In a lot of high-powered fantasy gaming (especially *computer* gaming), a key role of magic-wielders is slaughtering hordes of lesser opponents. Slang for magic capable of this – and its users – is “artillery.” It’s easy to see why: Such spells devastate areas and enemies indiscriminately, and though rarely effective against hard targets, particularly “bosses,” they make short work of “cannon fodder.”

Few spells in *GURPS Magic* do this well, however. Many can harm multiple foes, but the damage is too low to penetrate Damage Resistance or to injure quickly enough to turn the tide of battle (e.g., Fire Cloud, Hail, Rain of Acid, Rain of Ice Daggers, Spark Cloud, and Stench), or diminishes too sharply with distance to deliver *effective* “crowd control” (the principal

drawback of Ball of Lightning, Concussion, Explosive Fireball, and Explosive Lightning).

This is by design: If one spellcaster can do the job of a squad of warriors, who’d play a warrior? On the other hand, in a high-points campaign where fighters regularly boast Extra Attacks, Heroic Archer, Weapon Master, sufficient skill for routine Rapid Strikes, and exotic moves like those in *GURPS Martial Arts* and *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 11: Power-Ups* – as well as great gear, such as armor heavy enough to make wading into a mob with Whirlwind Attack (relatively) safe – it can be disappointing to play a wizard who must spend a turn or more concentrating on each opponent.

Fortunately, magic-wielders in such campaigns possess impressive resources of their own – notably high levels of Magery, along with a lot of energy stored in abilities (either FP beyond normal limits or Energy Reserve) and equipment (Powerstones or, in *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy*, power items). *GURPS Magic: Artillery Spells* arms casters with new ways to exploit these assets to deliver fantasy fire support.

To avoid the classic RPG problem of every wizard learning the same few spells – and to provide options for battling all kinds of enemies – this catalog offers numerous ways to blast the battlefield. Savvy casters will learn more than one! And artillery magic isn’t just for the heroes of high-powered fantasy. Many possibilities here suit the arch-villains of lower-powered fantasy (giving adventurers something to fear), malicious cultists in tales of supernatural horror (providing ceremonial castings for protagonists to disrupt), and other NPC adversaries.

Get ready to blow stuff up!

ABOUT GURPS

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

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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.

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

This supplement requires the *GURPS Basic Set* and *GURPS Magic*. To limit access to artillery magic, the GM might define such spells as the exclusive secrets of particular schools of magic, as defined in *GURPS Thaumatology: Magical Styles* and exemplified in *GURPS Magical Styles: Dungeon Magic*.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sean Punch set out to become a particle physicist in 1985 and ended up as *GURPS* Line Editor in 1995. In that capacity, he has written, edited, or contributed to some 150 *GURPS* releases, revised the game into its fourth edition (2004), and been a regular contributor to *Pyramid* magazine. From 2008, he has served as the lead creator of the *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy* series, which led to his design of the *Dungeon Fantasy Roleplaying Game*, released in 2017. Sean has been a gamer since 1979, but devotes most of his spare time to Argentine tango (and occasionally tending bar). He lives in Montréal.

Everything Else

Melee spells, of which there's just one offered here (Plague Touch, p. 11), are almost the opposite of artillery in that they have no range and affect one person by touch. Such a spell *could* make its victim explode or emit harmful emanations, but it's hard to imagine a thaumatologist smart enough to invent spells being dim enough to develop a curse that puts the caster within at most staff's length of a mass-damage effect – why not cook up a Regular spell? The most likely justification is thematic: The magic delivers something traditionally spread by contact, like infection or flames. Still, a built-in ability *not* to kill the wizard is advisable.

Enchantment spells (pp. 13-14) can do almost anything. For an *item* to be artillery in its own right rather than an artifact that casts artillery spells, visualize it not as a cannon but as a bomb: a single-use item that expends its magical might in an explosion or other mass destruction.

Special spells are too weird to classify. None appear here, but if a spell causes mass harm without an area or individual as its subject, with no attack roll, and no item as its intermediary, it's Special. **GURPS Magic** tends to class Regular spells that affect only the caster as Special. Do this if you prefer – but the discussion under *Regular* (pp. 4-5) remains applicable.

Blocking and *Information* spells aren't suitable as artillery. It's tempting to imagine Blocking spells that deliver mass-damage effects on the defensive, but enabling magic-wielders to wound multiple foes by reflex – without so much as using up a maneuver – isn't balanced. And Information spells might gather knowledge that can do harm in the strategic or social sense, but physical injury makes little sense.

A CONGREGATION OF COLLEGES

Almost anything could prove harmful at sufficiently excessive power levels, so spells that lay waste to areas or injure multiple foes suit *most* colleges – though not all. College influences not only prerequisites but also *how* the magic does damage (often suggesting interesting side effects). Below are some ideas. To state the obvious: Everything here is meant to affect more than one victim!

Air: Concussive shock; crushing pressure; poison gas; suffocating vacuum; tearing winds.

Animal: As general artillery, conjured swarms. More specialized are devastating Body Control-like effects that affect animals only.

Body Control: Deathtouch-style direct injury, mainly – but special effects can vary.

Communication and Empathy: Telepathic mind blasts.

Earth: Collapsing architecture; falling or flying rocks; stinging sands; *unnatural* disasters such as conjured avalanches, earthquakes, and volcanoes.

Enchantment: One-shot objects that do wide-ranging damage when activated – almost anything is possible!

Fire: Blazing ground, burning explosions, incendiary clouds, pillars of flame, and other fiery spectacles; lava and volcanoes (again); scorching heat *without* open flame.

Food: Not especially suitable, although a “mass” version of Poison Food could be loosely interpreted as artillery against an army.

Gate: Folding space or warping time in harmful ways; portals that admit destructive forces or the attacks of destructive *beings* from other dimensions.

Healing: Bona fide *healing* is unsuitable, but don't forget this college includes spells for sterilizing and surgery – effects that would be harmful if applied to a mass of people without regard for their condition.

Illusion and Creation: Dangerous creations or phantoms numerous or widespread enough to menace many people at once. (True *illusions* lack the necessary teeth.)

Knowledge: Simply not appropriate for artillery, but its spells might be prerequisites for spells of *other* colleges, justifying intricate magical “targeting systems.”

Light and Darkness: Focused sunlight; searing fantasy “lasers”; even bright ordinary light, for creatures of darkness. Dangerous shadow is the realm of Necromantic spells.

Making and Breaking: Weaken, Shatter, Rive, Explode, and Disintegrate variants that cause destruction in ways that endanger anyone nearby – or that cut out the middleman and cause explosions directly.

Meta-Spells: Twisting mana in ways that endanger wizards, supernatural beings, or *all* beings.

Mind Control: Making multiple subjects behave dangerously, whether through direct control or by manipulating perceptions. Damaging attacks on the mind fall into the realm of Communication and Empathy.

Movement: Collisions and falls; flying objects; flying *subjects*; telekinetic blows; teleporting bad things onto people or people onto bad things.

Necromantic: Conjuring minor demons, shadows, or zombie hands (which burst out of the ground) to attack everyone in an area. Directly blighting people falls under Body Control. Blasting all undead or spirits in an area fits, however.

Plant: Falling nuts or boughs; flying splinters; stinging leaves; thorns; toxic pollen; whipping branches. Any harmful effect that affects plants only.

Protection and Warning: Force Dome and Force Wall – being ultimate as they are – lead to excellent force balls, force blades, force fists, etc.

Sound: Harmful vibrations; resonant attacks; shockwaves; sounds loud enough to do actual damage.

Technological: Energy spells that turn energy, especially *fuel*, into artillery; Radiation spells that irradiate or shoot death rays. Machine spells that destroy technology only also qualify.

Water: Acid; dehydration; devastating cold; drowning; jagged ice; steam.

Weather: Destructive winds; freezing; hail and ice storms; lightning in all its forms (bolts, balls, and strange phenomena not found in nature).

BY THE NUMBERS

The artillery spells in **GURPS Magic** don't hint at a design system, and imposing one after the fact would lead to “rules” that consist mainly of exceptions and special cases! What follows are *guidelines* for GMs who want to assign more-or-less balanced statistics to homemade spells. These notes aren't intended for Enchantment spells, which don't have casting times, energy costs, etc. in the ordinary sense; for advice on those, see *Enchantment Spells* (pp. 13-14).

CHAPTER TWO

DEVASTATION!

These artillery spells are sorted by college. There are no Food or Knowledge spells; see *A Congregation of Colleges* (p. 6) for more on this. Each college that *does* appear comes with a brief introduction discussing the upsides, downsides, and special effects of its artillery.

The GM decides on the availability of these spells. They *might* be general knowledge in high-powered settings. However, they could as easily be the jealously guarded secrets of schools like those defined in *GURPS Thaumatology: Magical Styles* – or taught only to wizards who pay steep training fees, *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy*-style.

As befits secret and high-powered spells, all of these examples are Very Hard.

Magery and . . .

Several spells become more effective artillery if the GM applies *Magery and Effect* (*GURPS Magic*, p. 9). Exactly how this rule works isn't always obvious, so suggestions appear for each college with relevant spells. Like the rule, this advice is optional – the GM may ignore it or apply it only in certain cases. When using it, it's fairest if it holds for magic enabled by *all* spellcasting advantages; e.g., high Power Investiture increases maximum effect for clerics, just as high Magery does for mages.

*High Magery
turns many spells
into effective artillery.*

AIR SPELLS

"Air-tillery" mostly takes the form of lethal pressure or destructive winds, either of which inflicts crushing damage – although toxic gases (*area-effect* blood, contact, or respiratory agents; see *Delivery*, p. B437) also fit. For additional spells, see Improved Concussion (p. 25) and Improved Explosive Lightning (p. 29).

Magery and Air Spells

Falling Sky (below): Five levels of effect. Magery 6+ allows even higher damage.

Shape Air: Treat every *two* points of energy as a level of effect, meaning this spell has five levels. Magery 6+ allows additional knockback-only damage (and distance).

Cloud of Doom (VH)

Area

Produces a greenish cloud of contact poison. Anyone in the area must roll vs. HT-4 *every second* to avoid 1d toxic injury; DR has no effect. After losing 1/2 of their HP this way, victims are nauseated (see *Afflictions*, p. B428) until the injury is healed above that threshold.

Cloud of Doom cannot injure those with Immunity to Poison or Sealed. Resistant to Poison grants its bonus to the HT rolls. Doesn't Breathe and Filter Lungs (and holding one's breath) are ineffective – the gas needn't be inhaled to be harmful!

The cloud is hazy but not especially dense: Vision and ranged attack rolls through it have a flat -1 (*not* per yard). The gas doesn't persist for long enough for displacement or dissipation by wind to become an issue.

Duration: 5 seconds.

Base cost: 5. Minimum radius two yards. Cannot be maintained.

Prerequisites: Magery 4 *and* at least 10 Air spells, including Devitalize Air and Stench.

Falling Sky (VH)

Area

Instantaneously raises air pressure to extreme levels, crushing everything within the area. This damages anything an ordinary explosion would affect (thus, Pressure Support has no effect), and counts as large-area injury (p. B400). Anyone this spell *injures* must also roll vs. HT.

Modifiers: -1 per *full* five points of injury; +1 for ordinary earplugs, or +5 for Protected Hearing.

Failure inflicts a Hearing penalty equal to margin of failure; failure by 10+, or critical failure, causes deafness. Either effect lasts (20 - HT) minutes, minimum one minute. After that, roll vs. HT each turn to recover. Critical failure on a recovery roll indicates a permanent injury (*Duration of Crippling Injuries*, p. B422): Hard of Hearing if the penalty was -1 to -9, Deafness if deafness occurred. Protected Hearing cuts duration to two seconds and makes recovery automatic. Any failure on the initial HT roll also stuns the victim; roll vs. HT each turn to recover.

Unlike an explosion, there's no damage drop-off with distance from the center and no special effect in enclosed spaces. Effects are uniform within the area and end abruptly at its edges.

This spell is ineffective in vacuum, underwater, in solid earth, etc. – there *must* be a gaseous atmosphere of some kind.

Duration: The spell lasts an instant, but deafness and stun persist as noted above, and injury remains until healed.

Base cost: 2 to 10; the blast inflicts 1d crushing damage per *two* energy points put into the base cost. Minimum radius two yards.

Time to cast: 1 second per two energy points of base cost.

Prerequisites: Magery 4 *and* at least eight Air spells, including Concussion and Destroy Air.

Slasher (VH)

Area

Propels a *cutting* weapon through the area as if wielded by an invisible mad slasher. It must start in the caster's hand. When the spell is cast, the blade takes wing and whirls through the air too quickly for the eye to follow.

Everybody in the area is attacked each turn, on their turn, at skill 15. The victim can try a Hearing roll at -2 to detect the weapon's whine; success permits any active defense, while failure allows only a dodge. All defenses are at -4 for an unseen attacker. Also roll 1d for the attack's origin: 1-3 is front, 4 is right-hand side (*another* -2 to defend), 5 is behind (no defense), and 6 is left-hand side (-2 to defend).

A hit damages a random hit location. Use the weapon's usual swung cutting attack as if swung with ST 15, for a basic swing damage of 2d+1.

It's possible to break or grab the animated weapon. This requires a Hearing roll at -2 first. Success allows an attack on the blade at a basic -6 *plus* the usual -3 to -5 for weapon size (see *Striking at Weapons*, p. B400). The weapon cannot defend. Breaking it ends the spell. Grabbing it doesn't; it may try to break free each turn with ST 15.

The caster can animate several weapons at once: a blade in either hand, even a fistful of knives (one hand can hold weapons weighing up to BL). Find energy cost from total weight. This *doesn't* give more attacks or damage. It *does* mean that disabling a single weapon won't prevent attacks, and it may increase the odds of a hit: add the bonus under *Rapid Fire* (p. B373) to skill, reading "shots" as "weapons." If the weapons aren't alike, choose which hits each target – or is neutralized by enemy action – at random.

Example: A wizard animates six small knives (total 3 lbs.): two fine-quality and four good-quality. This makes base cost 6. The knives have skill 15 + 1 (for six knives) = 16. A hit has a 2 in 6 chance of inflicting swing-3 + 1 (for fine quality), or 2d-1 cutting and a 4 in 6 chance of 2d-2 cutting. Two must be neutralized to reduce skill to 15, and all six to prevent attacks.

Unlike many Area spells, this one can be cast on one hex (radius one yard), making it efficient for defending narrow passages.

Duration: 5 seconds or until all the weapons are destroyed, whichever comes first.

Base cost: 2 per pound of total weapon weight. Minimum weight 1 lb. Cannot be maintained.

Time to cast: 1 second per yard of radius.

Prerequisites: Magery 4 *and* at least 10 Movement spells, including Dancing Object and Winged Knife.

NECROMANTIC SPELLS

Necromancy has a ghastly reputation, but it does most of its bad things to one good person at a time. The closest it has to artillery is Turn Zombie (which blasts a narrow class of targets) and Mass Zombie (which conjures an army). Yet many of its injurious effects are easily extended to groups.

Below is one example. For others, see Plague Touch (p. 11) and Punishment Circle (pp. 19-20). Hell Zone (p. 16) counts as well, in settings where Summon Demon is the only widespread Planar Summons spell.

Spirit Incursion (VH)

Area

Conjures evil spirits related to those called by Skull-Spirit (*GURPS Magic*, p. 151). But instead of a single entity that serves obediently for 24 hours and is free to roam, this spell brings an indeterminate number of spirits that stay for mere seconds, are bound to a place, and don't distinguish friend from foe. Each turn, every *living* creature (only!) in the area suffers 1 HP of toxic injury, which bypasses all DR.

Attempts to battle the entities this spell conjures are pointless – the magic brings a steady stream of spirits that partially materialize where the victim cannot see them, take a "bite," and then vanish into the Spirit World. Neutralizing a small number would change nothing. However, Repel Spirits excludes these beings unless Spirit Incursion can beat it in a Quick Contest, while Astral Block prevents them from partially materializing to attack. Either situation means people inside the area of the defensive spell are safe.

Duration: 10 seconds.

Base cost: 3. Same cost to maintain. Minimum radius two yards.

Time to cast: 1 second per yard of radius.

Prerequisites: Magery 4 *and* at least 10 Necromantic spells, including Skull-Spirit.



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One day, I shall explode like an artillery shell and all my bits will be found on the writing table.

– Gustave Flaubert

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