

GURPS

Fourth Edition

DUNGEON FANTASY™ 14

Psi



Written by **SEAN PUNCH**

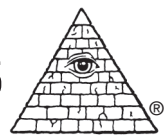
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*Where there's psi,
there are Elder Things.*

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INTRODUCTION

Psi and magic can achieve many of the same effects . . . However, they are different.

– *GURPS Basic Set*

GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 3: The Next Level brought with it *psionics*, powers of the mind. Mostly, these aren't the science-fiction abilities of bald-headed future-folk, but the cheesy bolts of mental force found in "kitchen-sink fantasy" that shamelessly rips off the trope. Mostly.

As *Dungeon Fantasy 2: Dungeons* strongly insinuated with the mindwarper, there's *some* manner of connection between psionics and Things from Beyond Time and Space. These creatures, customarily dubbed "Elder Things," are definitely bald-headed and may hail from some (horrid!) future somewhere. Where there's psi, the Elder Things aren't far behind – not to mention Astral Things, which may or may not be the same Things.

The GM decides where psi stands in his campaign. Psi *isn't* magic, so it's hard for spells to cope with, which might upset the proverbial applecart. Then again, spells can't interfere with Chi Mastery, Druidic Arts, or Holy Might, as *Dungeon Fantasy 1: Adventurers* takes pains to point out – and this is equally true of Ninja Training, from *Dungeon Fantasy 12: Ninja*. Even the powers that *Dungeon Fantasy 9: Summoners* describes for spellcasters aren't entirely susceptible to magic. If all that is fine, then psi shouldn't present a problem.

And this seems like a good place to mention that psi comes with a unique balancing factor: Its abilities bring trouble, courtesy of the aforementioned Things. Not *every* time, but frequently enough to encourage mentalists to be circumspect.

Even the GM who doesn't permit the *heroes* to wield psi can surely use a few freaky threats and monsters that magic can't dismiss with ease!

PUBLICATION HISTORY

The Psionics power from *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 3: The Next Level* – about half a page of material – is repeated here in greatly expanded form. A few abilities are loosely cribbed from *GURPS Psionic Powers*, too. And of course psi powers are built from traits described in *GURPS Powers*. However, this is a self-contained work; you don't *need* any of those supplements to use this one!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sean "Dr. Kromm" Punch set out to become a particle physicist in 1985, ended up the *GURPS* Line Editor in 1995, and has engineered rules for almost every *GURPS* product since. He developed, edited, or wrote dozens of *GURPS Third Edition* projects between 1995 and 2002. In 2004, he produced the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition* with David Pulver. Since then, he has created *GURPS Powers* (with Phil Masters), *GURPS Martial Arts* (with Peter Dell'Orto), and the *GURPS Action, GURPS Dungeon Fantasy, and GURPS Power-Ups* series . . . and the list keeps growing. Sean has been a gamer since 1979. His non-gaming interests include cinema, cooking, and wine. He lives in Montréal, Québec with his wife, Bonnie, and their two cats, Banshee and Zephyra.

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Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata pages for all *GURPS* releases, including this book, are available on our website – see above.

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.

Things Psi Can't Do

There's a lot of hearsay about psionic capabilities. Like stories about magic, Squid Cults, and so on, much of this is hooey. Most rumormongers miss the fact that while psi distorts time, space, and probability, it can't do so in a *predictable* way. The rest overlook that psi is the science of Elder Things – even if co-opted by mortals – and reflects otherworldly research interests. Feats beyond the reach of the Psionics power include:

Crossing dimensions. Psionics can detect interdimensional passageways via Psychic Sensitivity 3, find traces of extradimensional activity using Psychometry, peer into other realms with Transdimensional Sight, and aid mentalists projected into such places with Psychic Replica. It can't transport people between planes. Well, except when Elder Things do it.

Healing. Elder Thing thinking applied to “psychic surgery” yields abomination. It seems that only divine energies can reliably heal; psi isn't any more capable of it than

wizardly magic. (While some users of Chi Mastery restore themselves via Regeneration, that's direct body control, unrelated to supernatural forces.)

Seeing the future. Certain abilities (like Battlesense and Intuition) *seem* to see the future, but they cheat. For instance, Battlesense reads minds, while Intuition looks at the past. Psi's very nature changes the future. Attempts to use it to take a peek change outcomes so much that the visions can't be trusted!

Stealing energy. It's perverse, but so-called “psychic vampires” aren't *psis*. Their abilities are akin to Necromantic ones (see *Summoners*, pp. 12-15). Psi typically consumes energy (the FP cost to use abilities), more rarely breaks even, and never lets users come out ahead by stealing somebody else's vigor.

Teleportation. Like magic, the Psionics power seems to be subject to some form of cosmic resistance against teleportation. Again, except when Elder Things use it (those cheaters!).

Levitation 1 lets you hover along at Move 1 if you're within 5' of a horizontal surface; mostly, it's good for avoiding pressure-activated traps. Levitation 2 raises your Move to your Basic Speed and lets you rise to 10' – useful in combat outdoors or in cavernous rooms. Levitation 3 (the maximum) improves your Move to *twice* your Basic Speed, still with a 10' ceiling.

Advantages: Flight (Low Ceiling 5', -25%; PM, -10%; Slow, Move 1, -45%) [8] at level 1, Flight (Low Ceiling 10', -20%; PM, -10%; Slow, Move is Basic Speed, -25%) [18] at level 2, or Flight (Low Ceiling 10', -20%; PM, -10%) [28] at level 3.

Madness

28 points for level 1, plus 5 points for each additional level

Prerequisites: Unusual Background (Psionic), plus Psi Talent 2+ for level 2 or Psi Talent 4+ for level 3.

You can give anyone with a mind (IQ and Will 1+) visions that make it hard for him to focus. This requires 1 FP/use, like any psi attack; a Concentrate maneuver; and a Quick Contest of Will with your subject. Your roll is at -1/yard (like a Regular spell) at level 1, takes the range penalties from the *Size and Speed/Range Table* (p. B550) at level 2, or uses *Long-Distance Modifiers* (p. B241) at level 3, the maximum. Your Psi Talent aids your roll; your target's Mind Shield benefits his.

If you *win*, your victim is slightly crazy for *minutes* equal to your margin of victory. He must make a Will roll before each success roll he tries. If he succeeds, he's distracted and at -2 on his task. If he fails, hallucinations block his sensory input and his penalty on all tasks grows to -5 for the effect's duration. He must keep making Will rolls before success rolls, though! *Critical* failure on any of them means he freaks out: treat him as “unconscious,” except that he doesn't fall over.

Advantages: Affliction 1 (Based on Will, +20%; Hallucinating, +50%; Malediction 1, +100%; No Signature, +20%; PM,

-10%) [28] at level 1. Replace Malediction 1 with Malediction 2, +150% at level 2, or with Malediction 3, +200% at level 3.

Mind Blast

29 points for level 1, plus 5 points for each additional level

Prerequisites: Unusual Background (Psionic), plus Psi Talent 2+ for level 2 or Psi Talent 4+ for level 3.

You can stun an opponent – anything with a mind (IQ and Will 1+) – by paying 1 FP, taking a Concentrate maneuver, and rolling a Quick Contest of Will with him. Your roll is at -1/yard (like a Regular spell) at level 1, takes the range penalties from the *Size and Speed/Range Table* (p. B550) at level 2, or uses *Long-Distance Modifiers* (p. B241) at level 3, the maximum. Your Psi Talent aids your roll; your target's Mind Shield benefits his.

If you *win*, your victim is stunned for three seconds. He may roll vs. Will every three seconds to recover. Victory by 5+ knocks him out for *minutes* equal to *triple* the margin (no effect on foes that can't be knocked out in the first place).

Advantages: Affliction 1 (Based on Will, +20%; Extended Duration, 3x, +20%; Malediction 1, +100%; No Signature, +20%; PM, -10%; Secondary Unconsciousness, +40%) [29] at level 1. Replace Malediction 1 with Malediction 2, +150% at level 2, or with Malediction 3, +200% at level 3.

Mind Control

30 points for level 1, 45 points for level 2

Prerequisites: Telesend, plus Psi Talent 2+ for level 1 or Psi Talent 4+ for level 2.

You can control minds by paying 1 FP, taking a Concentrate maneuver, and *winning* a Quick Contest of IQ vs. your victim's Will. You're subject to the modifiers for range, multiple subjects, etc. described for the Mind Control advantage on p. B68. Your Psi Talent aids your roll; your target's Mind Shield benefits his.

Grimace and Glare

Psis may *voluntarily* spend extra FP to make their abilities work better. These can come out of personal FP, **Energy Reserve (Psionic)**, or the ER of a **Bonded Creature**. They *cannot* come from power items!

Their victims may spend FP to resist. These may come from personal FP – or from **Energy Reserve (Psionic)**, if they have it. Neither non-psionic ER nor power items help.

I Must Lift This Stone!

A psi can boost the level of his abilities, perhaps even gaining the “over-level” effects under *Boosters* (p. 25). Before attempting the actual feat, pick the desired level and roll against Will at -1 per 5% level increase (maximum 100%), rounded up, but at +1 per level of **Psi Talent**. This costs 1 FP *immediately* and counts as a use of psi. Any success means the ability works at the elevated level for one use if instantaneous (like an attack) or for one minute otherwise. Ordinary failure burns the FP to no effect. Critical failure means a roll on the *Psionic Encounters Table* (pp. 37-41).

Example: Ulli has Will 16, Psi Talent 3, and Psychokinetic Lash 3. He could boost Psychokinetic Lash to 4, or by 33%, at -7; to 5, or by 67%, at -14; or to 6, or by 100%, at -20. Adding Talent, his modified Will rolls would be 12, 5, or -1 (impossible!), respectively. Any of these stunts would add 1 FP per attack.

I Command Thee!

Whenever a psi needs extra oomph to offset range modifiers, deal with high-resistance foes, etc., he may pay FP for a bonus to his ability’s success roll. Each FP gives +1 to *that one roll*, to a maximum of +4 (4 FP). That’s it – no extra rolls, getting eaten, etc.!

I Resist Thee!

Whenever *anyone* wants to resist psi, he may pay FP for a Will bonus. Each FP gives +1 to *that one roll*, to a maximum of +4 for 4 FP. Again, that’s it!

Recognition

see *Dungeons*, p. 9

The skill to recognize and know the characteristics of psionic monsters is **Hidden Lore (Psi)**. The equivalent for Elder Things is **Hidden Lore (Elder Things)**. Ordinary Occultism will suffice for the latter, inasmuch as it will reveal “That there is an Elder Thing,” but it *won’t* identify abilities or weaknesses – not even on a critical success.

Negotiation and Trickery

see *Dungeons*, p. 10

Where a reaction roll is called for from monsters, remember that Elder Things *don’t* much care about Appearance, Charisma, Voice, etc. They’re far too alien. However, the reaction bonus from **Psionist** *does* work, meaning that a mentalist is often a better bet than a bard.

With ordinary monsters, most actual social tasks amount to applications of Influence skills or something similar: Acting, Diplomacy, Fast-Talk, etc. In *all* cases, a successful use of **Mind Reading** gives +2 to the roll to make a deal or trick a monster – and +4 to Detect Lies rolls made to tell whether the creature is lying – *if* the psi can understand the creature’s language (the **Your Tongue Is My Tongue** and **Mr. Universe** power-ups are handy here!).

Remember that **Hypnotism**, known to many mentalists, can be used for trickery – and gets +2 from a use of **Telesend**. Successfully using **Mind Control** gives results identical to a bard’s Enthralment skills for this purpose.

COMBAT

In battle, psis who specialize in resisted abilities should hang back to where they have a modified roll of 16 after applying **Psi Talent** and whatever range modifiers affect their favorite attack, since *The Rule of 16* (p. B349) makes getting closer somewhat

pointless. This lets them capitalize on their power’s range! Those who like **Psychokinetic Lash** or **Pyrokinetic Bolt** add **Psi Talent** when rolling to hit, and may want the **Gazer** perk.

Anyone fighting *against* psionic foes should charge in close if they can kill the enemy psis quickly, or else hang back to where the psis suffer crippling range penalties and pelt them with missile fire. Or shank them in the back.

Exploiting Weaknesses

see *Dungeons*, p. 10

To exploit the physical *or* supernatural flaws of Elder Things, delvers need **Hidden Lore (Elder Things)** – no other specialty will do. And be aware that while Elder Things often resemble evil spirits, they cannot be turned by True Faith (Turning).

“Onward to Victory!”

see *Dungeons*, p. 11

Psis using the **Coordinator** power-up get +4 to the Leadership, Strategy, and Tactics rolls for these stunts. That trait doesn’t make the mentalist a better general, but it *does* let him beam encouragement directly into his friends’ minds and silently pass along what he sees before enemies can react.

Recognizing Magic

see *Dungeons*, p. 11

Recognizing psi in combat works much like recognizing magic in battle, except that the roll is against **Hidden Lore (Psi)**. Someone who witnesses a psionic gift he possesses knows what’s going on automatically.

Speed Is Armor!

see *Dungeons*, p. 12

A psi using **Levitation** has a third dimension in which to retreat and enjoys an *extra* +1 to his active defenses when he does.

They're led by an elemental with the Abyss lens, which double-teams the psi. Each monster emerges from the void a yard from its target, staring directly into his eyes. While these aren't especially tough enemies, remember that they're Diffuse and thus slow to take down, and that Enigma has Terror that affects everyone while Discord can cause pain in an area, so the potent Corrosion Attacks of Nothingness and Abyss might strike home with greater ease!

6, 6 – Wormhole.*

One *small* article (1 lb. or lighter) in the psi's possession vanishes for good. It won't be his power item or anything in hand, but it may be coins, a dagger, etc.; roll randomly. Multiple instances steal several items. If the psi has nothing suitable, reroll. Lost objects go down a wormhole and now Elder Things have them Outside Time and Space. If the Things come across the ex-owner later, they'll flaunt his former property to torment him. Such an encounter (e.g., seeing one's lucky hat perched atop an Unspeakable Horror) is grounds for an extra -1 to Fright Checks!

Timing

The encounter occurs *when the GM feels it would be fun*. While this might be right away, that need not be the case. Optionally, roll 1d (and keep *this* result secret, too):

- 1 – Immediately! Out of combat, the instant the ability activates. In combat, the moment the last foe falls and before healing or regrouping is possible.
- 2 – When the psi next uses any of his gifts. If *that* use generates an encounter, *both* threats appear at once!
- 3 – When the party next pauses to scout, disarm a trap, read an inscription, etc.*
- 4 – Partway through the party's next battle.*
- 5 – When the party next makes camp. Roll randomly for whose watch gets hit.*
- 6 – On the trek back to town, the next adventure, etc.*

* If multiple incidents with this timing accrue before a suitable juncture, they all go off at once when triggered: a battle is suddenly deluged with monsters, the camp is besieged, or the journey home is perilous.

*Everything that has
transpired has done so
according to my design.*

*– The Emperor,
in Return of the Jedi*

Duplicate Results

Except as noted, if the same result comes up more than once – for whatever reason – monsters show up in greater numbers (a full set per result), ongoing effects add duration, and effects that inflict HP or FP multiply damage by the number of instances (e.g., two swarms of astral piranha deliver injury equal to 2d + *twice* Psi Talent, while two doses of negative Odic flux cause 40 HP of wounds).

Target

Everything here troubles the whole party, but since the psi is the delver who received a discount on his cool powers, he should get it first and worst. That said, if the group has several mentalists, the GM is within his rights to abuse them all equally. Elder Things aren't fair and won't spare anyone, but they especially go after psis. Having lots of psis in one place is a *terrible* idea!

PSIONIC MONSTERS

These monsters are intended for campaigns that use *Psi*, but the GM can throw them into *any Dungeon Fantasy* adventure. Be aware that some of these creatures are liable to give parties without mentalists a hard time. Others are fairly balanced but not as sensible (or fun!) if there are no psis to bother.

The question of how most of these entities show up is deliberately left unanswered. While Astral Things stay on the Astral Plane and no-brainers lurk in the same places as other zombies, the rest just “appear,” “enter the material world,” “materialize,” or “step out of the void.” They can leave the same way. Elder Things are doubtless behind it all, exploiting instantaneous portals (pp. 26-27) to position assassins in the heroes' path or send creatures to silence an annoying psi.

Aloakasa as-Sharak

This rare variety of as-Sharak (*Dungeons*, p. 21) has vowed to hunt psis. It resembles its sorcerer brethren in most regards, but has psionic capabilities instead of magical ones. When it appears in response to psionic activity (only), its unique Higher Purpose gives it +1 on all rolls to battle the individual who accidentally summoned it.

ST: 18	HP: 18	Speed: 6.50
DX: 14	Will: 14	Move: 6
IQ: 10	Per: 14	
HT: 12	FP: 12	SM: 0
Dodge: 10	Parry: 12	DR: 2

Bite or Front Claw (16): 1d+2 cutting. Reach C.

Mind Stab (18): Mind Stab 2 (p. 9), with effective Will 18.

Unlike standard as-Sharak cone attacks, this affects only a single target but can be used more than once a day, limited only by FP supply.

Hind Claw (14): 1d+3 cutting. Reach C, 1.

Weapon (16): Shamshir (3d+1 cutting *or* 1d+3 impaling). Reach 1.

Traits: Combat Reflexes; Doesn't Breathe; Doesn't Eat or Drink; Doesn't Sleep; Higher Purpose (Punish psis who disturb the peace); Immunity to Metabolic Hazards; Indomitable; Injury Tolerance (No Blood, No Vitals); Night Vision 5; Psi Talent 4; Psychic Sensitivity 3; Supernatural Durability (Can only be killed by supernatural damage); Unusual Background (Psionic).

Skills: Brawling-16; Broadsword-16; Mental Strength-16; Stealth-14.

Class: Demon.

Notes: Some wear armor; if so, add armor DR to natural DR 2.

Treat a shamshir as an ordinary cavalry saber (p. B271); this may be psiphilic, capable of carrying Mind Stab! Powerful leaders with extensive Psionics abilities (anything in Chapter 1) are rumored to exist. Unwilling to negotiate. Truly evil.

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There are special people in this world. We don't ask to be special. We're just born this way.

– Cassie Holmes, in Push

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- There is no logical way to the discovery of these elemental laws. There is only the way of intuition.*
– Albert Einstein
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