DUNCEON FANTASY 17



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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.

Introduction

Adventurers tend to be remarkable, those one-in-a-million, uniquely capable people who can face destiny singlehanded. For everyone else, there's strength in numbers.

- GURPS Boardroom and Curia

Most dungeon delvers are vaguely aware that they leave behind a society when they go off in search of peril and treasure. After all, someone in a position of relative safety has to forge the swords, brew the potions, resurrect the dead, and convert loot into ale, big hats with fancy plumes, and more gear. For the most part, though, adventurers don't care. And they're right not to.

Mostly. Because while adventurers devote most of their attention to undertaking dangerous expeditions beyond the reach of civilization, aspects of that civilization can have a significant impact on them. The societies from which dungeon-delving heroes arise, or at least those where they reside between quests, may contain organizations which aren't suited to violent adventuring, but have interests which can only be served by engaging a band of rough-andready fighters, spellcasters, and others to head out and do what they do best. These associations may include circles of wizards, criminal syndicates, dark conspiracies, noble families, and, yes, alliances of professional craftsmen. Such groups – we'll call them collectively guilds – become particularly relevant to dungeon delvers when they can say here's what we want you to do for us and here's what we can do for you.

GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 17: Guilds deals with a variety of organizations which may be the catalysts of adventures.

After all, not everything that happens in a dungeon-fantasy world has to be the result of a meeting an old man in a tavern. Instead of throwing rumors and old maps at adventuring bands and hoping for the best, the GM can use guilds to motivate delvers to go on missions for a variety of reasons. Heroes can undertake dungeoneering expeditions to support their tribe, temple, or league. Even for delvers who aren't members of any kind of association, guilds can hire or offer to reward adventurers who fulfill quests with a variety of currencies: legal protection, unusual training, special gear, supernatural services, and so on. It's not just an adventure; it's a job.

Publication History

This is the first edition of *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 17: Guilds.* It draws a few rules from *GURPS Social Engineering: Pulling Rank* and *Pyramid #3/58: Urban Fantasy II,* but the vast majority of this material is completely new.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Matt Riggsby has been playing RPGs since the only game in town came in three poorly typeset tan booklets in a white box, using cheap dice which slowly converted themselves from icosahedrons to spheres. Having been educated in the lore of lost civilizations, he still kills things and takes their stuff while working a day job for loremasters of healing. The marching order for the rest of his party includes a sorceress, a seventh-level rogue, and a pack of dogs.



CHAPTER ONE

GUILD RULES

Guilds are neither monsters nor weapons nor loot, so the rules most beloved of delvers don't cover them. Including them in dungeon-crawling fantasy means considering how they fit into the genre (especially how the GM can use them in the campaign), defining their attributes, and working out how members (and nonmembers temporarily associated with them) can call on them for aid.

WHERE GUILDS FIT

In a campaign where the emphasis is on killing monsters hiding in caves, and where social interactions are something that happens to other people, what is the place of social organizations? As with a great deal else in a *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy* campaign, guilds boil down to a potential source of resources (material or otherwise) and a potential threat. Guilds, therefore, are described with three attributes: who they are, what they want, and what they can provide.

Who They Are

This section describes the guild's purpose, its structure, and the nature of its membership. While some guilds may be composed primarily of non-adventurers, most do have some room for at least temporary dungeon-delving employees. For example, merchant houses can hire warriors as guards, mercenary companies can bring along clerics and wizards for support (or innkeepers to provide supplies!), and thieves who keep their activities a secret can find low-level work just about anywhere. For adventures focused on fighting other people rather than monsters, the membership provides an idea of what kind of opposition heroes can face when going up against a guild.

A guild's membership may also include PC dungeon delvers. A number of traits can indicate a delver's relationship with a guild (see *Join The Club*, below), notably Rank and Status. These traits give access to benefits the guilds provide (see *Membership Benefits*, pp. 7-8) beyond what adventurers might get as ordinary hirelings.

What They Want

This part explains the things which motivate the guild to engage the services of heroes, and what those services might entail. These define the kinds of quests which guilds are most likely to send people on. In most cases, guilds which sponsor quests (see *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 2: Dungeons*, p. 4) will do so in pursuit of those goals *instead of* a cut of any loot adventurers may win along the way. If, say, the Devotees of the Volcano Temple want to get the Lost Crystal of Extreme Hotness back and are willing to underwrite a party of delvers in pursuit of it, they're not too concerned with mere gold

and silver. This information also indicates the kinds of activities adventurers are likely to disrupt if they set out to oppose a guild.

What They Can Provide

This outlines the nature of rewards the group can hand out, which may be exclusive to them and go well beyond cash. These may include such things as:

- Assistance with adventuring expenses and routine support tasks.
- Supernatural support such as spellcasting and recharging power items at reduced cost.
- Access to information on quest destinations and likely opposition.
 - Improved prices for selling loot.
 - Discounts on types of gear relevant to the guild's mission.
 - Difficult-to-obtain gear.
- Discounts on training provided by the guild (or access to training if not available elsewhere).

See *Sample Assistance* (pp. 8-9) for details on specific types of requests that a group can fulfill.

Naturally, different guilds are better at providing some goods and services than others, so modifiers to skill rolls, variant costs, and differences in overall availability may apply.

And in the name of the Lollypop Guild, We wish to welcome you to Munchkinland.

- Edgar Harburg, "Munchkinland Operetta"

JOIN THE CLUB

Dungeon fantasy does not, as a genre, go in for social entanglements and long-lasting relationships. However, a number of traits can suggest connections to a guild, or at least a point of contact whereby a guild can approach an adventurer and start asking for delving-related services, or a prospective hero can approach a guild for aid in undertaking a quest.

Claim to Hospitality

see p. B41

As explained on p. 16 of *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 11: Power-Ups,* this advantage allows the adventurer to locate members of his group while in town; doing so calls for a roll of 14 or less on 3d. Success lets him stay with a colleague for up to a week, saving the \$150 cost of living (*Dungeons*, p. 4).

CRAFT GUILD

Rank: Craft Rank 0-5.

In Charge: Artificers and similar non-adventuring people. *In the Ranks:* More artificers and non-adventuring types. *On Payroll:* Almost anyone! *Influencing the AR:* Merchant.

The craft guild is an association of independent craftsmen who come together to represent their interests to officials, ensure product quality, provide social services to their members, and train the next generation of skilled workers.

WHO CRAFT GUILDS ARE

Most guild members aren't adventuring types. While a handful of really interesting guilds might be made up of artificers – imagine a professional association of mad scientists – most have the kinds of tedious skills which adventurers don't: weaving, carpentry, pottery, and so on. Each guild member runs a small, independent workshop. Leaders within the guild are typically elected from among senior craftsmen and hold power commensurate with their ability to intimidate or satisfy the concerns of other members. They may argue and bicker, each one making sure that his rights are being respected and that he's not being called on to shoulder more than his fair share of any burden, but when it gets to the point of hiring adventurers, the interests of the guild membership usually run in the same direction.

Craft guilds are bureaucratic, or at least dependent on following proper procedures, but procedures can be short-circuited if it makes monetary sense. Local guild establishments have a maximum Rank of 4, or 5 at national level. The appropriate skill to influence craft-guild ARs is Merchant.

Service and Wizards' Guilds

Groups organized like craft guilds may provide skilled services instead. Such guilds may serve such trades as astrologers and allied fortune tellers, bankers, bards (in the form of theatrical guilds or councils of lore masters), doctors, and, most importantly for adventurers, wizards. Service guilds have similar concerns: protecting their own position and sometimes looking to expand their reach and knowledge. However, the benefits are somewhat different. Such groups produce few physical items, so for the most part, new gear and special orders are out. They can give discounts on whatever services they offer. For a wizards' guild, this puts augury and spellcasting on the list of suitable ARs, both at +2 to the roll. And while wizards' guilds can follow the craft-guild model, see also *Hermetic Cabal* (pp. 15-16), *Spiritual Society* (pp. 21-22), *Students of the Master* (pp. 22-23), and *University* (p. 27).

WHAT CRAFT GUILDS WANT

Craft guilds, like merchant houses (pp. 18-19), are mostly interested in commerce, but are more interested in the production end than eventual distribution. They've got monopolies and trade secrets, and they want to preserve them.

The most likely reason for a craft guild to bring in a group of delvers is enforcement. Low-powered, *Henchmen*-style heroes could be sent to rough up craftsmen who operate outside of the guild's rules, while full-powered ones might be brought in to take more decisive action against, say, a sorcerer-duke who has reproduced the glassblowers' guild's signature shade of deep purple. Conversely, a sneakier group might be used to perform low-tech industrial espionage. They might be sent to steal another guild's secrets directly, or to escort a defector who knows the secrets to a new home, protecting him from the revenge of his old group.

A bit more honestly, parties of adventurers could be sent out under the auspices of the guild to scout out possible sources of raw materials in dangerous territories or to recover ancient relics related to the guild craft. Alchemists in particular are huge consumers of obscure plants and dangerous monster parts. Medieval guilds typically had patron saints; similarly constituted guilds in a *Dungeon Fantasy* setting could have comparable religious commitments, and so sometimes need to send heroes on the same kinds of quests a congregation (pp. 10-11) would.

Guilds of artificers and alchemists may need to test new inventions. This can require adventurers going to unusual locations and securing dangerous sites while guild members prepare explosive compounds for mining, set up esoteric surveying and astronomical equipment, prepare an ornithopter for flight from a mountaintop, and the like.

WHAT CRAFT GUILDS CAN PROVIDE

Craft guilds can supply training in their professional skills which, unfortunately, are rarely particularly useful for adventuring. As a practical matter, a craft guild can provide training in Merchant and one or two craft skills. Guilds that are more experimental can give full access to the artificer template.

Professional goods for craft guilds include tools for the craft skills the guild offers, and anything the guild can produce. That may furnish unremarkable goods if adventurers are hired by, say, the potters' guild, but be more useful if they're brought in by the blacksmiths' or alchemists' guilds. Moreover, craft guilds can grant *deep* discounts on items they produce: double the usual professional discounts on goods to a maximum discount of 80%.

Requests craft guilds are prepared to fulfill include:

- Accommodations. Guild members have large households, so they can usually find places to put people up.
- Lore. For questions within the guild's professional purview (for example, asking an armorers' guild to identify the maker of a distinctive weapon), the AR is at +4.

Who Marias Are

A mafia can be a diverse though frequently short and hairy-footed collection of lowlifes. Many of its members are related, if only in an extended fashion ("Tsao the Nose is married to Hrothgar the Weasel's second cousin"), and where they aren't, they are often "adopted" into the family with elaborate ceremonies. They use the language of family and other close relations when referring to one another. Immediate superiors may be "big brothers" or "aunties," while mafia members may be distinguished from nonmember partners and allies in conversation as "family" as opposed to "friends of ours."

A mafia is typically run by a senior member who has established a reputation for wisdom and foresight in planning criminal ventures, ruthlessness in carrying them out, and diplomacy in addressing the interests of rival underlings. Low-level mafiosi have a high proportion of brutes, cutpurses, and killers. Many of those in higher positions are built on the thief template, with a liberal addition of assassins and agents; innkeepers to keep supply and demand in sync (and to operate the taverns and inns which are frequently fronts for mafia activities); bards who have turned their social skills to con artistry and shaking down merchants; and a few knights and barbarians providing muscle.

Mafias can reliably get up to a Rank of 4 or 5. Now and again, a *capo di tutti capi* can unify enough mafias to justify a Rank of 6 or even 7, but their reigns are typically short and followed by long interregnums. Use Streetwise to influence mafia ARs.

WHAT MAFIAS WANT

Mafias want money and will get it by any means necessary. If a little quiet burglary or swindling will do the trick, that's fine. However, they find a reputation for violence is useful in discouraging competitors, and individual mafiosi are happy to have obstacles in their way wiped out.

Although mafias have an urban focus, their fondness for contraband can lead them to send people into the wilderness to take care of problems which can't be resolved with veiled threats or, at worst, a quick knife in the dark. Smuggling routes and sources of illegal materials may need to be cleared of monsters, and particularly persistent menaces may need to be tracked down into dungeons from which they originate. Valuable shipments may need to be recovered or hijacked. It's even possible for semi-civilized monsters (say, tribes of goblin-kin) to act as rivals for some of the traffic mafias are trying to control and thus need to be put out of the way.

In addition to performing dungeon-delving tasks for which the average mafioso is unprepared, delvers may be hired as muscle in internal squabbles. Those with no apparent ties to the mafia can be hired without too much worry about word of the criminal group's involvement making it back to rivals, and it provides deniability. Therefore, adventurers might be sent to ambush a problematic capo and his most trusted henchmen on the road or at a remote villa. While the mafia will occasionally provide the same treatment for overzealous

Thieves' Guild

Countless fantasy games feature criminal organizations which have a more traditional guild structure: young apprentices are recruited and trained by more senior thieves, and very senior criminals set policies (for example, defining territories) and mediate disputes among the membership. In particularly corrupt times, the masters of the thieves' guild may even represent the guild's interests in front of civil authorities. Such a thieves' guild is purely fictional, but it has an impeccable literary pedigree going back to Cervantes. It's built less like a mafia and more like a service guild (p. 12). However, the benefits they provide, such as training and ARs, are essentially the same as a mafia.

Ninja Clan

Ninja clans, alluded to in *GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 12: Ninja*, usually resemble mafias more than any other type of guild: they follow a familial structure, and they function by carrying out illegal activities, albeit focused on assassination rather than accumulating wealth. However, they're also a bit like hermetic cabals (pp. 15-16), in that they take secrecy very, very seriously, and they're even less likely to bring in outsiders to work for them. In the unlikely event that they do, they communicate indirectly, using several layers of intermediaries or simply pithy haiku in immaculate calligraphy found on one's pillow in the morning. Although members can receive the full range of benefits for a mafia (with the added benefit of the chance at ninja gear from their guild), about the only currency they traffic in with outsiders is obligation; for nonmembers, ARs are at -5 or worse, *except* for favors, which are at +5.

law-enforcement figures, that tends to cause too much trouble with noble courts (pp. 21-22) and town watches (pp. 24-25).

What Mafias Can Provide

Mafias can offer training for any traits in the thief template. Many also can furnish training in traits on the assassin template.

Professional items on which mafias can grant discounts include poisons, concealable weapons, and the kinds of gear found under *Covert Ops and Security Gear* (*Adventurers*, pp. 25-26) and *Thief/Spy* (*Treasure Tables*, p. 25).

Appeals which mafias are likely to fill include:

- Accommodations.
- Backup.
- Favor.
- Hideout. Mafias do a lot of this. +3 to ARs.
- Immunity. Mafias are used to paying off authorities to keep their own people out of trouble.
 - Mounts and vehicles.
 - Provisions.
- Special orders. It's remarkable what will just fall off the back of a wagon. +1 to ARs.
 - Transportation.

Other ARs are at -3 or worse.

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