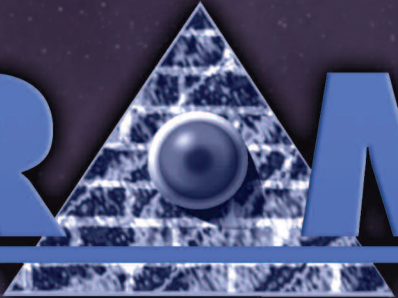


PYRAMID



Issue 3/28 February '11

THAUMATOLOGY II



IT'S PURE CHEMISTRY!

by **Christopher R. Rice**

YELLOW GOBLIN MAGIC
by **Mark Gellis**

**CEREMONIAL MAGIC
MADE EASY**
by **W.A. Frick**

THE PROMETHIANS
by **J. Edward Tremlett**

**TEN WAYS TO DESTROY
THE WORLD WITH MAGIC**
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Article Colors

Each article is color-coded to help you find your favorite sections.

Pale Blue: In This Issue

Brown: In Every Issue (letters, humor, editorial, etc.)

Dark Blue: GURPS Features

Purple: Other Features

COVER ART

Bob Stevlic

INTERIOR ART

Greg Hyland

IN THIS ISSUE

Everyone can use more magic. With this thaumatology-themed issue, you'll spice up your ceremonies, enlighten your labs, and maybe destroy the world once or twice.

Alchemists are constantly looking for new ways to improve existing potions or create entirely new ones. *It's Pure Chemistry!* provides expanded guidelines for **GURPS Magic** alchemy, including 10 new elixirs, three new techniques, and a new spell of interest to potion-pushers. **GURPS Dungeon Fantasy** delvers may find the options for expanding elixir effects to be particularly helpful.

Goblins are well-known on **GURPS Banestorm's** Yrth for their fascination with magic. Although most are simple hedge mages, a few enterprising enchanters have designed their own bag of tricks. Created with the rules from **GURPS Thaumatology: Magical Styles**, *Yellow Goblin Magic* presents its titular style and its nine secret spells – including the awesomely powerful Sunburst!

Do you want to cast ritual magic, but don't have the patience or pals to make it happen? *Ceremonial Magic Made Easy* develops a method for enabling the average – and sometimes solitary – **GURPS** spellcaster to tap into this power.

Some people think that everything should be freely available to everyone. A shadowy subset of that high-minded group has the power to make this happen. Learn how *The Promethians* are working to make magic accessible to everyone – whether the world wants it or not. This article includes light game info for introducing these potential friends or foes into a **GURPS** campaign, but the ideas can be ported to any paranormal period.

Not all magic is beneficial. *Ten Ways to Destroy the World With Magic* explores various ways that tampering with supernatural forces can result in doom for everyone. Each of the 10 systemless doomsdays contains ideas for the before, during, and aftermath of these arcane armageddons.

This month's *Random Thought Table* explores some ways to develop the educational story arc of an arcane academic. Learn how to overcome delusions or dependency on external tools, and find out the pros and cons of on-the-job training.

Do you know how hard it is to find a good moon when you need one? Discover this little-known "fact" with *Murphy's Rules*, then uncover a few other magical tidbits in *Odds and Ends*.

With magic, you never know what you'll witness next. With this thaumatology-themed issue, believing is seeing!

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FROM THE EDITOR

MAGIC IS SCARY CHRISTMAS

Let's say you're face-to-face with some new tattooed warrior wielding an odd-shaped weapon and fearsome-looking armor. If you're not magically minded, your thoughts are likely not to extend any further beyond, "Uh-oh."

Or in modern times, let's say you're an expert safecracker, about to tackle the VaultMaster 6X. As you approach, all kinds of lasers start crisscrossing around the VaultMaster, and an ominous-looking camera begins turning toward you. Again, there is nothing but danger.

However, in a world where magic is real, you approach a glowing dagger. As you touch it, it splits into three individual blades, pivoting around an ethereal center. You hear it whispering your name – your true name – and it feels like it wants to be thrown. You sense it wants to drink deeply of blood.

Sure, you might be scared, but you're probably thinking, "Cool!"

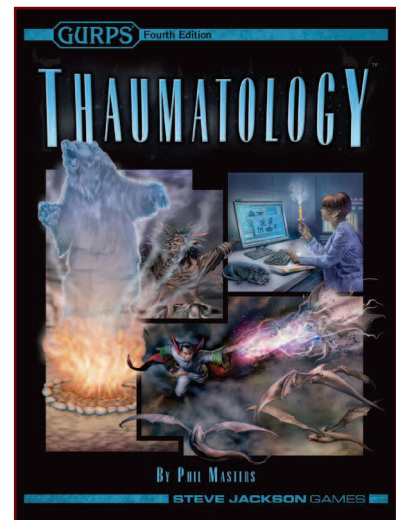
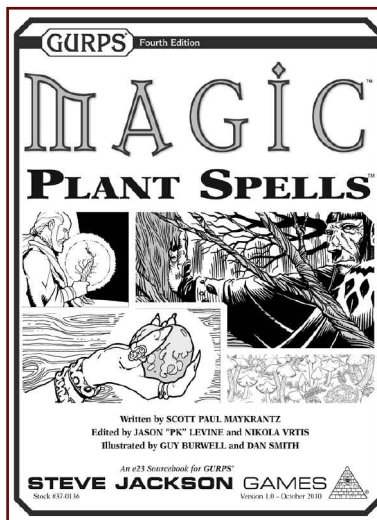
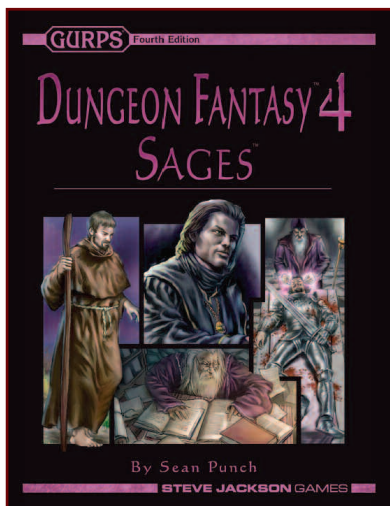
In this way, magic is like "scary Christmas." Yes, an unfamiliar magical effect often represents a potential new threat,

but just often enough it's powerful, useful, or just plain weird. Even if the magical effect *is* dangerous, there's a good chance it can be harnessed – if it can be survived.

Most of the articles in this issue follow the lead of *Thaumatology*, *Plant Spells*, *Dungeon Fantasy: 40 Artifacts*, and the like. They present new facets of arcane arts and magical mysteries that present danger *and* opportunity. Maintaining that spine-tingling "scary Christmas" thrill is a delight for players and GMs alike, each time a new magical effect is encountered. Enjoy!

WRITE HERE, WRITE NOW

Speaking of delights in every bite, did this issue contain a particularly meaty magical morsel? Or was there a bit of gristle that made an article fizzle? You can send your private runes of reproach or renown to pyramid@sjgames.com, or post your public points online at forums.sjgames.com.



Additional Material: Phil Masters and Jonathan Woodward

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EXPANDED ALCHEMY

The small section in *GURPS Magic* leaves a lot of room for expansion, giving fairly good examples of how to make custom elixirs, charms, and so on. *GURPS Thaumatology* further expanded this but didn't have many ready-to-use elixirs, preparations, etc. for game play; the following expands the elixirs available to alchemists.

MORE ELIXIR FORMS

Some variations on the standard elixir forms exist.

Combination Potions

This isn't really a new elixir so much as multiple elixirs created in such a way that all of their effects occur at once and last for as long as the shortest duration of all the combined elixirs. If one or more of the components has a duration of Instant or Permanent, the effects of the *other* components last for the shortest non-instant duration, *halved*.

Examples: A Combination potion of Endurance/Fetching and Carrying would allow a subject to feel no fatigue and multiply his encumbrance levels by 4; it would last up to 1d hours. A potion of Healing/Celerity (see p. 8) would instantly heal 1d damage and give the benefits of Celerity for 3d minutes.

A Combination retains its power for half as long as its normal type (see *GURPS Magic*, p. 213), so a potion would last 12 hours if left open or mixed with something else.

Combinations are hard to make. Roll against the average of your skill (round down) with the elixirs involved, with a -2 penalty per elixir. You may only combine two elixirs if you know Alchemy at IQ or less. At IQ+1, you may combine three, at IQ+3 you may do four, at IQ+5 you may combine five, and so on. The cost of a Combination elixir is equal to the sum of the elixirs' costs, multiplied by 1.8. The time required to create one is equal to the single *longest* time required among all the elixirs, multiplied by 1.2 for two elixirs, 1.4 for three, 1.6 for four, and so on.

Grenade Potions

This is an offensive form of elixir, similar in nature to a potion. However, instead of being drunk, it only needs to hit the target's bare skin, making it a contact agent. Typically, a grenade potion elixir is put in a small, breakable bottle (DR 1, HP 2; \$2, 0.5 lbs.). The resultant "grenade" weighs 1 lb., is targeted at -5, and breaks on 1-4 on 1d on a fall. Hurling it is an attack with the Throwing skill: Acc 0, Range ST×2, and Bulk -2. It shatters on striking DR 3+, such as armor (affects wearer, unless Sealed), a shield (affects shield), or the ground (area effects, if any, only). It will bounce off unarmored (or more lightly armored) targets.

Despite the name, a grenade elixir can be used in many other ways. For example, in a modern setting, it could be dispersed with a handheld sprayer, a squirt gun, or a paintball

gun! Or it can simply be uncorked and splashed on a target; use Throwing at -2 to hit, with Range 1. All of these methods are effective against unarmored victims.

Grenade elixirs cost 1.5 times normal to create, but do not increase production time. Only elixirs that have potion listed as one of their forms can use this option.

Tattoo Elixirs

A new form of preparation that might be available in a setting, especially to primitive tribesmen or other nature types (see *Going Green*, p. 6), tattoo elixirs can take the form of any *beneficial* elixir type. Rather than drinking them, rubbing them on, or the like, they are instead tattooed onto the skin of a subject. While the preparation cost doesn't change, there is an additional \$50 worth of inks, needles, etc. that are needed to tattoo a given elixir.

These accoutrements must all be prepared along with the potion and are as integral to the process as the elixir itself, though they may be reused for the same potion later (reducing the cost of future applications to a mere \$10). After the preparation is created, the alchemist (or someone else) must then use Artist (Body Art) to create the actual tattoo; the tattoo may take any form, but it's usually indicative of the type of elixir it is. To activate a tattoo elixir, you need only *think* about it and take a Ready maneuver; the elixir takes effect immediately as the tattoo glows briefly then fades, leaving bare skin.

You may only have one tattoo elixir per limb, with one on the head (face is typical), two on the torso (one on the chest, one on the back).

Tattoo charms use the same rules as above but cost \$500 for the inks. They are otherwise identical to regular charms as far as recharge rates, cost, etc. Even if the GM doesn't allow Herb Lore to create alchemical charms, it's an excellent skill to permit the creation of tattoo charms.

NEW ALCHEMY TECHNIQUES

Some new techniques for Alchemists may prove useful.

Batching

Hard

Default: Any elixir technique. See below.

When making an elixir, an alchemist may accept a -1 penalty to his skill to brew another elixir of the same type, making a "batch" of that elixir. With this technique, you may buy off this penalty for making larger amounts of a given elixir. You must specialize by elixir type *and* form, which defaults to the base elixir technique; for example, Batching (Endurance/Potion) would be valid but Batching (Endurance) would not. While this technique has no actual limit, you would use the *lower* of this technique or the unmodified elixir technique when making elixir batches (you can't get a bonus for making *fewer* potions).

Plot idea: The heroes find alchemical formulae that don't describe what they do – only how to make them.

Like anything creating an explosion, a Sunburst has an incendiary effect and possesses the potential to set things on fire. Aiming one at combustible targets such as straw, logs, lamp oil, or people who have been covered with tar is a good way to maximize its effect.

Cost: The bolt does 1d-1 impaling damage and creates a low-up explosion doing 1d burning explosive damage for every 3 energy points put into the spell. If it sets anything on fire, this “secondary explosion” of fire will burn normally.

Time to cast: 3 seconds.

Prerequisites: Sunbolt.

Item

Staff or wand; the bolt is fired from the tip of the item. Usable only by mages. *Cost to create:* 1,600 and a sunstone worth at least \$2,000.

True King

Regular; Resisted by HT

The target is endowed with the spirit of kingship, who can lead in war or in peace. Gives the subject +4 to Administration, Broadsword, Detect Lies, Diplomacy, Intimidation, Leadership, Public Speaking, Savoir-Faire (any), Shortsword, Staff, Strategy (any), Tactics, and Two-Handed Sword. The spell has no effect if it is cast on a female subject.

Rumors exist that other schools have developed a True Queen spell, a Perfect Damsel spell, a Warrior Maiden spell,

and a Righteous Maiden spell. However, few details about these spells are available.

Duration: One hour unless made permanent. May be removed by Remove Curse.

Cost: 8 to cast. 6 to maintain. May be made permanent, as an enchantment, for an energy cost of 1,000.

Time to cast: 2 minutes.

Prerequisite: Trusted Fellow.

Item

Crown, Jewelry, or Sword. *Energy cost to create:* 4,000.

Trusted Fellow

Regular; Resisted by HT

The subject is endowed with the native ability to bond with other male characters. Gives +4 to reactions from any sapient males with whom the subject is able to speak or make eye contact. The spell provides no benefits with females or non-sapient creatures and has no effect if cast on a female subject.

Rumors exist that other schools have developed a True Sister spell, but few concrete details exist.

Duration: One hour unless made permanent. May be removed by Remove Curse.

Cost: 8 to cast. 6 to maintain. May be made permanent, as an enchantment, for an energy cost of 1,000.

Time to cast: 2 minutes

Prerequisite: Sense Man and Great Voice

Thousands of men; how they hurried and fought!

Finally they scattered up the foothills and plateaus; then to the prince-peaks; then to the king.

And those who touched the gray rocks were of men no more.

“Why did they come?” asked a crag eagle.

The yellow goblin chuckled.

“Gold,” he said.

– L.H. Bickford, “The Palace Of Poverty”

CAMPAIGN IDEAS

Yellow Goblin Magic is well-suited to campaigns involving politics or intrigue. A magical style that focuses in part on communication and mind control spells allows practitioners to covertly learn secrets and subtly discern lies from truth. Such mages would make excellent spies, thieves, merchants, or diplomats. The ability to fly, telekinetically move objects at will, make random sounds or voices, change appearance or even gender, and gain the trust of strangers are also useful tools. Among other abilities, it is easy to reach or effect escapes from

otherwise inaccessible windows and rooftops, arrange distractions, or attack someone from behind with any random loose objects that might be lying around. Finally, the style’s affinity for music and public speaking gives mages engaged as spies a means to travel without drawing a lot of attention – a wandering minstrel or storyteller, after all, has a perfect excuse to go almost anywhere and to say practically anything (as part of a song or tale) to almost anyone.

The Society of Siege Sorcerers (Pyramid #3/4: Magic on the Battlefield) would be keenly interested in the Sunburst spell; anything that can make a big-enough boom would be a boon (or bane!) for these martial-minded mages.