

PYRAMID[®]



Issue 3/66 April '14

THE LAWS OF MAGIC

ALTERNATIVE RITUAL PATH MAGIC

by Christopher R. Rice

RITUAL PATH SPECIALISTS

by Jason "PK" Levine

THOROUGHLY MODERN MAGIC

by Paul Stefko

THE AZURE DRAGON

by David L. Pulver

THE MATERIAL DIFFERENCE

by Sean Punch

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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 (humor, editorial, etc.)
- Green:* Columnist
- Dark Blue:* GURPS Features
- Purple:* Systemless Features

COVER ART

Kirk Reinert

Play with the laws of magic!

IN THIS ISSUE

In the real world, breaking the speed of light isn't just a bad idea . . . it's the law. In fantasy realms, magic often has similar hard-and-fast rules that are not to be trifled with. This *Pyramid* looks at the fundamental forces of the cosmos and the rules that underlie them.

Test the laws of the mystical realm with *Alternative Ritual Path Magic*, one of the meatiest features ever in *Pyramid*! Starting with the foundation of **GURPS Thaumatology: Ritual Path Magic**, these optional rules explore numerous ways to combine Ritual Path magic with other reality-influencing systems, including Book magic, Divine Favor, effect shaping, realms, symbols, craft, and more. It also provides new perks and advantages.

The author of *Ritual Path Magic* – Jason “PK” Levine – reveals how you can take such versatile generalists and turn them into *Ritual Path Specialists*. Explore new abilities, limitations, perks, specialties, Talents, and techniques that can really help you to focus your energy.

Every occult-themed campaign needs more grimoires, and **GURPS Banestorm: Abydos** author David L. Pulver discusses another tumultuous tome in this month's Eidetic Memory, as he reveals the secrets of *The Azure Dragon*. Discover its history from the 1890s to the present, as well as a few rituals for Book magic contained therein.

In a world where enchanters are common, businesses might mass-produce extraordinary items with *Thoroughly Modern Magic*. Updated from David L. Pulver's industrial-enchantment rules from **GURPS Technomancer**, these guidelines bring such marvelous methods to the **GURPS Fourth Edition** rules – including a new magical style, template, and sample NPC for line enchanters.

Sean Punch – **GURPS Dungeon Fantasy** designer – considers how to turn the normally ho-hum **GURPS** item-enchantment process into something filled with action and adventure. Give your quests *The Material Difference* with tips for resource farming, handling, and preparation, plus a list of sample materials and associated hazards.

The latest installment of Random Thought Table ponders the laws of magic, while Odds and Ends wraps up the issue with suggestions for industrial-enchantment adventures, rituals that have nasty aftereffects, and more.

Whether you want to bend reality in new and unexpected ways, fire up a occult assembly line, or build an arcane artifact from the privacy of your own lab, this issue of *Pyramid* has something for you. It's so magical, it's almost against the law!

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FROM THE EDITOR

RULES MADE TO BE BROKEN?

This issue of *Pyramid* deals with magic, especially as it ties into the laws of the universe . . . those universal rules that you need to be clever, daring, or daft to break. Curiously, this issue also bends one of the rules of the universe . . . at least, as far as *Pyramid* goes. This issue contains one of the largest articles to appear in these fine pages (*Alternative Ritual Path Magic*, pp. 4-14). It's reminiscent of the mini-supplements that used to appear in *Dragon* magazine – oh-so-many years ago – which were printed in the center of the magazine so you could unfold the staples and take it out separately . . . (Curiously, this issue comes on the heels of last month's *Pyramid* #3/65: *Alternate GURPS III*, which contained the third volume's largest assortment of shorter articles we've ever done.)

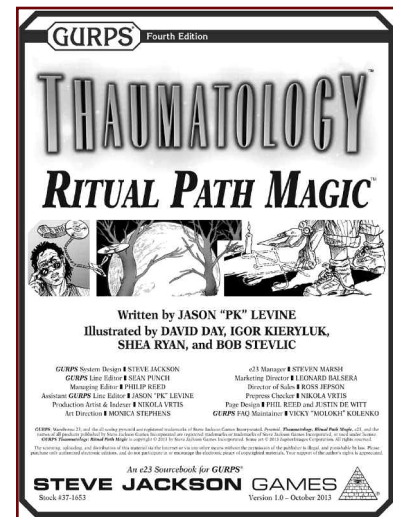
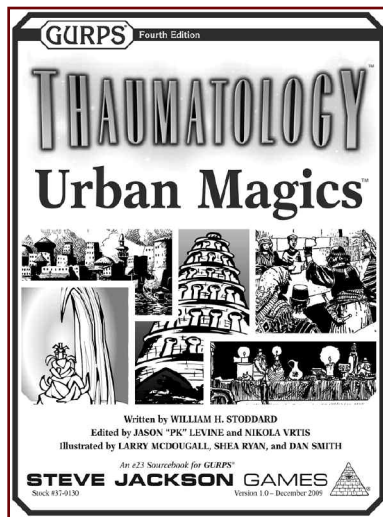
Of course, even if that oversized feature isn't your cup of tea, we tried to make sure the rest of the issue has enough interesting going on. There should be something in our bag of tricks for every armchair mage.

So, what's better for you? Bigger or smaller? Is an occasional "mini-supplement" cool, or do you like a crate of crazy ideas in each issue? Or do you trust us to surprise you? As ever, we want *Pyramid* to be the magazine you're *happy* to buy . . . and that includes presenting material that supports your campaigns and interest. *WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM US?!* Oh, right; this is text. We can't hear your responses. So how *can* we hear from you? Perhaps if we wish hard enough, something magical will happen . . .

WRITE HERE, WRITE NOW

Well, look what we have here! Information on how to contact us! Sorcery!

Was this issue magic for you? Or was it an explosion in the lab that unleashed something unto the world it ought not have? Let us know what you think about our mad experiments by telling us how were doing, either privately at pyramid@sjgames.com, or publicly among the world's coolest gaming fans at forums.sjgames.com.



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EFFECT-SHAPING TRAITS

The following traits are changed or added for this specific variant.

Ritual Adept

30 points

This is cheaper, as there is no need for a second level to reduce time.

Ritual Mastery

Prerequisites: Path skill 10+ and Rote Technique for that spell.

This perk indicates mastery of a specific spell. If you have levels of Rote Technique (below) “left over” after offsetting the penalty for energy cost, you *can* use them for a bonus, gaining up to +4 to skill. For example, if you know Rote Technique (Fireball) at Path of Energy+8, and the energy cost of the spell requires you to roll at -6 to cast it, you roll against Path of Energy at +2!

New Perk: Focused Aptitude

Prerequisites: Path skill 12+ and Ritual Mastery for that spell.

Your skill with a specific spell is such that when determining the time it takes to cast a ritual, reduce the total number of Greater effects by one. If it has no Greater effects, casting time becomes two minutes (two seconds for an adept).

New Technique: Rote Technique

Average

Default: Prerequisite Path skill.

Prerequisite: Path skill for that spell; no upper limit.

This is a separate technique for each ritual. It provides a bonus to Path skill when casting a specific ritual (*Ritual Path Magic*, p. 19), but *only* for the purpose of offsetting the penalty from the calculated energy cost; you cannot get a net bonus. (In other words, apply that penalty to this technique, and then use

the *lower* of unmodified Path skill or effective Rote Technique.) Do this as the first step, applying all other modifiers afterward.

A caster can have as many rote techniques as he likes, but is best off spending points on only a few “signature” techniques and raising his Path skills for the rest.

WORKED EXAMPLE

The following is a typical Ritual Path magic spell, converted to Effect Shaping.

Spontaneous Combustion

Spell Effects: Greater Destroy Body.

Inherent Modifiers: Damage, Internal Burning (Cosmic, Multiple Incendiary Levels; Incendiary; Selective Effect).

Greater effects: 1 (x3).

This ritual makes one subject to spontaneously combust, causing 2d burning damage and treats the flammability class (*Making Things Burn*, p. B433) of the target as *two* steps lower than it actually is. You can also focus your ritual on a specific hit location; add the hit location penalty to your skill roll, if successful, normal wounding modifiers apply. Additionally, as a special effect, you can target any hit location that a tight-beam burning attack could.

Typical Casting: Greater Destroy Body (5) + Damage, Internal Burning 2d (Cosmic, Multiple Incendiary Levels, +50%; Incendiary 2, +20%; Selective Effect, +20%) (22) + Range, 20 yards (6) + Subject Weight, 300 lbs. (3). 108 Energy (36¥3).

Spontaneous Combustion (Effect-Shaping RPM)

Spell Effects: As above.

Inherent Modifiers: As above.

Skill Penalty: Path of Body-11.

Casting Time: 10 minutes.

As above.

Typical Casting: As above.

HIGH CRAFT

Thaumatology (p. 205) suggests that sufficiently skilled artisanship might be indistinguishable from some forms of magic. That system may be used as-is with Ritual Path magic, but the following rules truly merge the two. Note that “craft skills” are defined here as *any* skills that allow you to build or create something from raw materials.

Alternative Magery: Rather than buying Magery 0, the caster buys a special perk: Craft-Mage. This functions identically to Magery 0 (Ritual Path), but *only* for a specific form of craft-magic; it has a prerequisite of the relevant craft skill at 12 or higher. After buying this perk, the caster buys further levels of Magery with the special limitation High Craft Only (-60%). Ritual Adept is *not* available for craft-mages.

No Standard Paths: Craft-mages don’t buy Path skills. Instead, they purchase High Craft (IQ/VH), which requires

specialization: High Craft (Woodworking), High Craft (Masonry), etc. High Craft specialties default to each other at the same penalty as the associated skills; for example, High Craft (Woodworking) defaults to High Craft (Carpentry) at -3.

Skill Cap: High Craft cannot exceed the *lower* of 12+Magery or the relevant craft skill. However, for the purpose of this cap, the craft skill is at -3 if Easy, -2 if Average, -1 if Hard, and unchanged if Very Hard. For example, High Craft (Carpentry) cannot exceed the lower of 12+Magery or Carpentry-3.

Craft Magic: High Craft allows the craft-mage to cast any spell that would logically be related to his craft skill. For example, High Craft (Carpentry) would allow the casting of ritual related to preserving wood, creating a house’s frame, joining two pieces of wood together, and so on.

Secondary Skills: Three of Sewing/TL or Leatherworking, both (E) DX [1]-10; Carpentry (E) IQ [1]-13; Electronics Operation/TL (any), Electrician/TL, Electronics Repair/TL (any), Hazardous Materials/TL (Biological, Chemical, Magical, or Radioactive), Machinist/TL, or Smith/TL (any), all (A) IQ-1 [1]-12; or Artist (Pottery, Sculpting, or Woodworking), Chemistry/TL, Jeweler/TL, Metallurgy/TL, all (H) IQ-2 [1]-11.

Background Skills: 5 points chosen from among Driving/TL (Automobile, Construction Equipment, or Heavy Wheeled), DX/A; Computer Operation/TL or Current Affairs/TL (Business or Science & Technology), both IQ/E; or Administration, Packing, Research, or Teamster (any), all IQ/A.

Spells*: Enchant (VH) IQ+2 [8]-15; and Apportation, Keen (Sense), Lend Energy, Light, Purify Air, Sense Life, and Shield, all (H) IQ [1]-13. ● One of Ignite Fire or Seek Fire, both (H) IQ [1]-13. ● One of Measurement or Tell Time, both (H) IQ [1]-13. ● One of Seek Fuel/TL, Seek Machine/TL, or Seek Power/TL, all (H) IQ [1]-13. ● 6 points to add or improve the above spells or *Advanced Spells* (pp. 26-27) and their prerequisites. At least one spell capable of producing an enchanted item must be known at 15+.

* Thaumatology and all spells include +2 from Magery.

Industrial Enchanter

You work on an industrial enchantment line, creating mass-produced magic items. The job pays well, but is fairly tedious and doesn't afford very many opportunities for advancement.

Prerequisites: Enchant 15+ and at least one spell capable of producing an enchanted item at 15+.

Job Roll: Worst prerequisite. On critical failure, an industrial accident causes the character 1d+1 injury and results in a demotion (decrease monthly pay by 10%).

Monthly Pay: Varies by Tech Level.

Wealth Level: Average (highly trained). Supports Status 1-2.

Sample Line Mage: Melissa Straithairn

150 points

Melissa Straithairn studied enchantment at the University of New Mexico, earning a Bachelor of Arts in Applied Thaumatology. After college, she found herself with a head full of minor spells and a lot of student debt. She suffered through a few rough months of temp jobs before finding work with House Elf Domestics. The company moved her to Pittsburgh and trained her for their new Redd Up line.

Melissa has been with House Elf now for two years. She's a hard worker, valued by her supervisors, but the job is starting to get to her. She lays awake at night working through the spell formulae, trying to find ways to make the process more efficient. She has begun studying Sleep elixirs as a way to combat this.

Melissa works out several days a week. On the weekends, she takes a self-defense class based on Shotokan Karate. Since moving to Pittsburgh, she has avoided romantic relationships. She claims that she is simply too busy to date.

Melissa is an attractive young woman in her late 20s. She wears her blond hair short and stark. She usually dresses in simple, comfortable clothes such as khaki pants and light shirts.

ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 13 [60]; HT 11 [10].
Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 12 [-5]; Per 13 [0]; FP 13 [6].
Basic Speed 5.25 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0]; Dodge 8; Parry 7 (Karate).
5'4"; 125 lbs.

Social Background

TL: 8 [0].

CF: Western (Native) [0].

Languages: English (Native) [0].

Advantages

Appearance (Attractive) [4]; Fit [5]; Magery 3 [35]; Single-Minded [5].

Perks: Magical School Familiarity (Line Enchantment); License. [2]

Disadvantages

Debt 2 [-2]; Insomniac (Mild) [-10]; Workaholic [-5].

Quirks: Careful; Minor Addiction (Caffeine); Obsession (Increase line efficiency); Uncomfortable discussing her sexuality. [-4]

Skills

Administration (H) IQ-1 [1]-12; Alchemy/TL8 (VH) IQ-1 [4]-12; Artist (Pottery) (H) IQ-2 [1]-11; Artist (Woodworking) (H) IQ-2 [1]-11; Computer Operation/TL8 (E) IQ [1]-13; Current Affairs/TL8 (Science & Technology) (E) IQ [1]-13; Karate (H) DX-2 [1]-8; Karate Art (H) DX-1 [2]-9; Research/TL8 (A) IQ [2]-13; Savoir-Faire (Dojo) (E) IQ [1]-13; Sewing/TL8 (E) DX [1]-10; Thaumatology (VH) IQ+2 [4]-15*.

Techniques: Elbow Strike (Karate) (A) [2]-8; Knee Strike (Karate) (A) [1]-8; Sleep (Alchemy) (H) [2]-12.

Spells*

Apportation (H) IQ+1 [1]-14; Clean (H) IQ+3 [4]-16; Enchant (VH) IQ+3 [8]-16; Ignite Fire (H) IQ+1 [1]-14; Keen Vision (H) IQ+1 [1]-14; Lend Energy (H) IQ+1 [1]-14; Light (H) IQ+1 [1]-14; Measurement (H) IQ+1 [1]-14; Purify Air (H) IQ+1 [1]-14; Restore (H) IQ+1 [1]-14; Seek Power/TL8 (H) IQ+1 [1] 14; Sense Life (H) IQ+1 [1]-14; Shield (H) IQ+1 [1]-14; Simple Illusion (H) IQ+1 [1]-14.

* Includes +3 from Magery.

Check out **GURPS Technomancer** (p. 40) for some ideas on what a magical production line might look like.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Paul Stefko bought a Hand of Glory at the mall once, but he's still waiting for a chance to use it. It's just as hard to find candles made from the fat of a hanged man as you would think. Paul lives in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, with his wife Jamie and a wide collection of toys that might be magic. That's what he tells guests anyway.

Any success reveals the material's potential uses, and estimates the amount of energy provided. Any failure doesn't, and allows no repeated attempt.

Extraction

Not all materials are found in a state suitable for transporting and working with them! At the GM's option, skill rolls may be necessary to extract such goods with their magical potency intact. Some suggestions:

Animal parts (blood, bones, pelts, tusks, etc.): Professional Skill (Butcher) or Survival.

Intangible spiritual residues: Entrap Spirit, Solidify, Soul Jar, or suitable Bind Spirit spell. This is a use of thaumatological *knowledge*, not a casting; it demands a roll but no energy. Demonic spirits might also respond to an Exorcism or Religious Ritual roll.

Internal organs or delicate body parts (e.g., eyeballs): Surgery.
Ores or rough gems: Engineer (Mining) or Prospecting.

Sample Materials

The GM must fine-tune a list of specific materials to the campaign. Here are some generic examples inspired by *Magic*, p. 222 and *Thaumatology*, pp. 99, 247-252.

College: This list suggests materials useful for *entire colleges*, not just specific enchantments.

Valuables: Gems, incense, manmade goods, and other treasures that can be sacrificed for energy instead of sold for money.

Dangers: Perils encountered to obtain more unusual substances, or faced by individuals carrying them. Be creative; e.g., anything that requires braving angry beasts to collect, or that attracts vicious animals, might supply energy for Animal enchantments. The associated college's offensive spells are an excellent source of ideas. Failed Hazardous Materials rolls often trigger these effects!

Monsters: Creatures whose body parts, spirit residues, or other remains act as suitable materials.

<i>College</i>	<i>Valuables</i>	<i>Dangers</i>	<i>Monsters</i>
Air	Chalcedony, galbanum, onyx	Falling, storms	Air elementals, giant birds
Animal	Bloodstone, furs, musk	Angry animals, lycanthropy	Giant animals, were-creatures
Body Control	Bone jewelry, ivory	Aging, disease	Foes of noble blood, golems
Communication and Empathy	Ancient tomes, coral, ivory	Muteness, nightmares	Dream entities, telepaths
Earth	Quartz, silver	Cave-ins, petrification, rockslides	Earth elementals, tunneling worms
Enchantment	Magic items, opal	Cursed/disenchanting possessions	Magical constructs
Fire	Carnelian, gold, ruby	Burning, explosions	Dragons, fire elementals
Food	Edible delicacies, peridot	Bloating, starvation	Gluttonous trash-heap dwellers
Gate	Alexandrite, amber	Insubstantiality, teleportation	Extradimensional intruders, TMWNMTK
Healing	Jasper, jet	Bleeding, infection, tumors	Monsters that heal vampirically
Illusion and Creation	Fine art, pyrites, zircons	Hallucination, madness	Doppelgangers, faerie
Knowledge	Agate, diamond	Confusion, forgetfulness	Giant owls, sphinxes
Light and Darkness	Cinnamon, gold, sunstone	Blindness, darkness	Entities of pure light or shadow
Making and Breaking	Fine armor/weapons, finest clay	Decay, disintegration, rust	Creatures that corrode/dissolve
Meta-Spells	Green moonstone, opal, orichalcum	Curses, Magery loss	Natural spellcasters
Mind Control	Amethyst, garnet	Any mental affliction	Dream entities, telepaths
Movement	Fulgurites, wreckage of legendary ships	Paralysis, slowing	Swift creatures (giant hawks, serpents, etc.)
Necromantic	Ebony, jet, onyx	Possession, withering	Demons, undead
Plant	Green jade, rare herbs	Forest hazards, poisoning	Animated plants
Protection and Warning	Alicorn, asafoetida, bronze	Reduced resistance, vulnerabilities	Anything with an armored shell
Sound	Finest seashells, masterwork musical instruments	Deafness, noise	Monsters with sonic attacks
Technological	Brass, fine armor/weapons	Equipment failure	Clockwork constructs
Water	Aquamarine, beryl, pearl	Drowning, rain, waves	Giant fish, water elementals
Weather	Platinum, saffron	Lightning, tornadoes	Energy beings, giants

Hidden Secrets of *Pyramid*

Speaking of necromancy . . . wait, were we? *DEAD BODIES WALKING!* Now we're talking. Anyway, speaking of necromancy, way back in *Pyramid* #3/1: *Tools of the Trade – Wizards*, we had a hidden puzzler.

The footers of each page of that issue included a fictional wizard's name, along with a piece of advice. For example, p. 16 said, "R'sixte En carries a tiny volume of limericks with him . . ." Eagle-eyed readers noticed that each "mage" actually contained a hidden number ("R'sixte En" = "16"); some footers had more than one mage. If the mages were arranged in numerical order, the "extra" letter at the front of their names spelled a hidden phrase: "SEND SECRET WORD FROTZ AND WIZARD JOKE."

We had 26 brave souls send in a wizard-themed joke along with the code word. We've turned the list into a table that you can use to create your own wizardly names. Roll 1d, 1d and consult the table. If desired, roll twice, taking the first name for the first roll and the last name for the second roll. If you get "5, 3-6" or "6, 1-6," you foiled our random list; roll again!

And now, here are those whose names shall be hailed in history as the Finders of the Hidden from the first issue of *Pyramid*:

1, 1	Alain Ducharme
1, 2	Alloni Kramer
1, 3	Andrew Batishko
1, 4	Charlton Wilbur
1, 5	Chris Bowling
1, 6	Chuck Stevens
2, 1	David Cunnius
2, 2	David Trimboli
2, 3	Eric Rossing
2, 4	Gary Roth
2, 5	George D. Stefanowich
2, 6	Graham Brand
3, 1	James Henry
3, 2	Jeff Raglin
3, 3	Jennifer Lange
3, 4	Jeremy Alexander
3, 5	John Hoyland
3, 6	Joseph Mason
4, 1	Martin Johnston
4, 2	Norman Lorenz
4, 3	Rob Kamm
4, 4	S. Manning
4, 5	Scott Harrison
4, 6	T.M. Neeck
5, 1	Taper Wickel
5, 2	Volker Marx

Thank you for being part of the crazy experiments from the earliest days of *Pyramid*, a half-decade ago!

Here are some favorites that were sent in.

From David Trimboli

Q: Why did the wizard run away from the black cat?

A: He wasn't *familiar* with it.

From Martin Johnston

Q: What kind of tests do they give in the Mage's Guild?

A: Hex-aminations.

From Scott Harrison

A wizard walks into a bar. He walks over to the biggest, ugliest troll in the place and says to him, "50 Gold says that I can drink you under the table!" The troll scoffs at the idea, places a sack of gold on the bar, and downs a large ale in one gulp. The wizard chants softly and the troll transmutes into a glass of water. The wizard then sits underneath the closest table and drinks the glass dry. He then picks up the sack of gold from the bar and walks out.

From Chris Bowling

Marvin the Mage was working in his lab one night when he was stunned by a blow to the head. When he recovered, his secret Elixir of Wondrousness was missing. Marvin immediately went to the City Watch and informed them that one of his wizardly rivals must have sent an arcane servant to steal his work. The City Watch acted quickly and gathered up all the stray animals they could find in the area for Marvin to examine in a line up. Looking up and down the line of ravens, cats, snakes, and toads, Marvin shook his head sadly and said, "I'm sorry; none of them looks familiar to me."

From Chuck Stevens

Q: What do you call an angry wizard wearing pink earmuffs?

A: Anything you like! He can't hear you!

From Others . . .

There were also several jokes with variations of "Violators will be toad . . ." and an old man who wants to have the curse of "I now pronounce you man and wife" removed.

Hidden Among Heroes

Pyramid #3/2: *Looks Like a Job for Superheroes* also had a hidden puzzler. Let's go ahead and list all those winners:

•

. . . Um. Yeah, we didn't have any. It seems this one was a bit *too* hidden.

On page 28 of that issue, there were sample superhero newspapers as part of that issue's props. In the text for the sample "Fire Boy Has Allergies," there was Lorem Ipsum text that – starting with its second line – had this text written backwards:

This is the hidden contest. Send an awful name for a hero or villain, along with a power that is really useless.

And thus ends the era of hidden puzzlers in the era of the new *Pyramid*. But we do still love to hear from you; see p. 3 for more info!

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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.

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