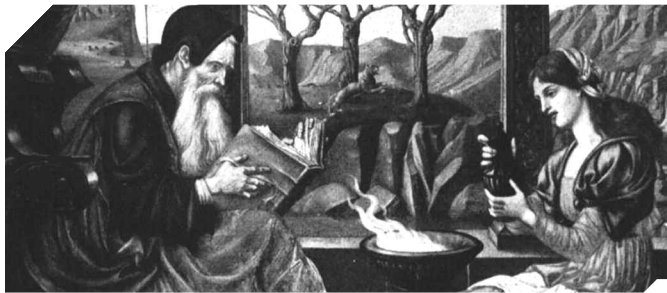


GURPS

Fourth Edition

THAUMATOLOGY™

Alchemical Baroque™



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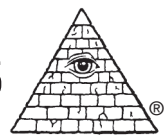
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*Fairy: . . . I do wander every
where,
Swifter than the moon's sphere;
And I serve the Fairy Queen,
To dew her orbs upon the green.*
– William Shakespeare,
**A Midsummer
Night's Dream**

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to a fairy-tale world of muskets, ghosts, and strange magics. *GURPS Thaumatology: Alchemical Baroque* describes a fantasy setting with a difference. It avoids the medieval technology and orcs-and-elves stereotypes of most fantasy games in favor of something a little more technologically advanced and yet driven by a sense of wonder. It's *alchemical* because the magic of the setting has a formal, quasi-scientific flavor, and *Baroque* because stories set here

should have a sense of style drawing from history's Baroque period – a fever dream of the world as of the early 18th century.

In addition to the *GURPS Basic Set*, GMs looking to run games in this setting will usually need *GURPS Magic* for its *Alchemy* rules (pp. 210-222 of that book), and *GURPS Thaumatology*, primarily for Path/Book magic (see pp. 121-165 of that volume). It's possible to run quite a lot of *Alchemical Baroque* games without those systems coming into play, but they do define significant parts of the world. Some rules reference *GURPS Powers*, but most games should be able to get by without that supplement.

*When evil stalks upon the land
I'll nyther hold nor stay me hand
But fight to win a better day
Over the hills and far away!*

*So fall in lads behind the drum
With colors blazing like the sun
Along the road to come-what-may
Over the hills and far away!*

– John Tams/traditional,
“Over the Hills
and Far Away”

PUBLICATION HISTORY

Alchemical Baroque originally formed one chapter of *GURPS All-Star Jam 2004*, where it was presented in *GURPS Third Edition* terms. This treatment has been updated for *Fourth Edition* and slightly expanded in the process. Aside from the details of characters and technology, the magic has been brought into line with *GURPS Thaumatology*.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Phil Masters is the author-compiler of *GURPS Thaumatology* and admits responsibility for a certain amount of other *GURPS* stuff, such as *GURPS Dragons* and parts of *GURPS Banestorm* and *GURPS Powers*. He's also worked on other roleplaying lines and products, including material for Atlas Games' *Ars Magica* product line and a chapter in *Dreaming Cities* from Guardians of Order. He lives close to where two ancient roads cross and where a king once built a hunting lodge.

About GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of *GURPS* players. Our address is SJ Games, P.O. Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! We can also be reached by e-mail: info@sjgames.com. Resources include:

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more. To discuss *GURPS* with our staff and your fellow gamers, visit our forums at forums.sjgames.com. The *GURPS Thaumatology: Alchemical Baroque* web page is www.sjgames.com/gurps/books/alchemicalbaroque.

Bibliographies. Many of our books have extensive bibliographies, and we're putting them online – with links to let you buy the resources that interest you! Go to each book's web page and look for the “Bibliography” link.

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.

CHAPTER ONE

THE WORLD

Once upon a time, there was a troll. He spent most of his time sitting on a bridge that he considered his own, like a fat king sitting on his throne. He had been sitting there a long time, occasionally standing up to fight anyone who wanted to cross. Today, though, the fellow who appeared driving a cart did not seem to want to cross.

"Oh ho ho" said the troll, "I think that I have seen you before!"

"Yes," said the farmer's boy, "you saw me five years ago." And he turned his cart around as if to go straight away again.

"Oh ho ho" said the troll, "and what have you been a-doing in those five years?"

"I went for a soldier," said the farmer's boy. He got down off the cart, unhitched the horse, and drew a deep breath through his pipe.

"Oh ho ho" said the troll, "Did you take up the spear? Did you shoot the bow? Did you ride with the cavalry?"

"I did none of those things" said the farmer's boy, and he began to pull the canvas cover off the back of the cart.

"Oh ho ho" said the troll, "then what sort of soldier were you?"

"I was in the artillery" said the farmer's boy, and he tapped a hot spark from his pipe into the touch-hole of the cannon that was loaded on the cart.

The cannon gave a mighty roar, and the farmer's boy smiled. The troll had nothing to say to any of that.

Although this setting is conceived as an entire world, this treatment focuses on one region, based on Europe and its culture, climate, and society. Other regions are described from that perspective; the more distant they are, the more vague the impression. Likewise, although the setting and this particular region have a substantial historical past, the description is kept loose in this text. "Common folk" know that a wider world exists, and that history goes back centuries, but they are vague about the details. Other parts of the world and its past *could* be developed, but that isn't done here.

Also, most PCs are assumed to originate from this region. Interesting characters certainly could come from elsewhere, and the game world has huge scope for expansion – it's a *world*, after all – but for now, this supplement keeps a narrow focus.

OVERVIEW

This supplement concentrates on the *Known Lands*, about which PCs can be expected to know a reasonable amount. Plenty of other inhabited regions exist, and explorers from the Known Lands have visited many of them, but they remain rather mysterious. The Known Lands are divided into numerous states and one fairly substantial empire. Most, but not all, governments are monarchies, some of which are downright feudal (although those are considered rather backward). Aristocracies still wield considerable influence, but monarchs are claiming ever-more-absolute power, and revolutionary movements aren't unknown.

Most of the population lives in villages or small towns. Country dwellers are often free peasants, although they usually rent rather than own their land, and there are a few outright downtrodden serfs. Every village worthy of the name has a blacksmith (invariably a big, amiable fellow) and an inn.

Towns are centers of trade, commerce, and small-scale manufacturing, governed by mayors or councils of burghers. Larger towns and cities center around palaces and other government buildings, or great universities. Most crafts are dominated by urban guilds; a poor lad who wants to make something of himself usually has to persuade a guild-master to take him on as a 'prentice.



TECHNOLOGY

This setting is very late TL4, teetering on the brink of TL5, with less-advanced communities on the fringes. As a consequence, heroes of most tales and campaigns will not be sword-brandishing barbarians but sturdy peasant lads; soldiers with muskets and bayonets; and the occasional younger son of the nobility with an old sword – or maybe village witch-girls, 'prentice warlocks, and venturesome students of philosophy.

As technology develops, it's very likely that the setting will actually go to TL(4+1) rather than "conventional" TL5. There's a lot of alchemy around, it works very well, and it's quite *scientific*, so it's more than likely that technology will come to incorporate a certain amount of arcane weirdness. Nonetheless, things haven't got that far yet.

Most nations have small standing armies, hastily enlarged in time of war. They consist of reasonably well-drilled infantry wielding musket and bayonet (plus a few grenadiers), dashing cavalry armed with sword or lance, and small artillery trains. Generals like to give the impression that tactics is a sophisticated and subtle art, but only a few talented commanders go beyond rote methods.

Civilian technology is very much at the handicrafts level; wealthier towns have large workshops, but no real mass production exists.

The best craftsmen do very fine work indeed; jewelers, watchmakers, and the most skilled artillerymen are the setting's leading technologists. Every substantial town has at least one printing press, and most people can read a little. However, printing remains quite slow, and books are expensive. Still, many farmers have one or two around the house, for show, and villages of average size or larger may boast one-teacher schools.

THE SUPERNATURAL

Supernatural powers definitely exist in this setting, and everyone knows it. Most villages have a witch or cunning-man, although he usually has only weak, subtle powers, and sometimes is downright fraudulent. Religious belief – in a single, transcendent, vaguely imagined God – is universal; every village has its church and its priest. However, priests don't necessarily possess any sort of overt supernatural powers. Some philosophers have such *strange* ideas that they're considered atheists.

Magical beings – ghosts, fairies, and devils – are regarded with extreme nervousness, as those that aren't actively malevolent are still extremely whimsical or simply disturbing. (This makes life hard for the significant minority of fairy folk who are compulsively benevolent.) One thing that makes people not only believe in the power of religion, but be devoutly grateful for it, is that these beings tend to avoid holy ground and religious symbols.

Magic is, to some extent, a *science*. Natural philosophers, alchemists, and some physicians study these matters methodically and analytically. The results they achieve are sometimes impressive, sometimes catastrophic. A few of them have even constructed magical clockwork devices.

COSMOLOGY

The world is round and revolves around the sun; every peasant knows and accepts this. Beyond that, however, ideas get fuzzy, even among scholars. Theologians speak of the universe as a giant clockwork or a great work of architecture, shaped by God – and these aren't necessarily metaphors. Many philosophers also speak of “the crystal spheres of the heavens.” While they may not believe in literal physical spheres, they may imagine a system of magical forces and manifest symbols that come down to much the same thing. Mostly, all this is a matter of abstruse theory with no impact on people's routine lives, but some hubristic visionaries are talking about going off to investigate in person.

Ghosts exist in a shadowy realm “overlying” or “interpenetrating” the material world. This isn't really a parallel universe, just an intangible overlay on physical reality. Ghosts can perceive physical reality without being perceived, except by

Medicine and Physician Skill

While medicine in the Known Lands is literally painfully crude by the standards of higher-TL worlds, it is making significant progress, at least in theory. Physician skill *does* exist at TL4 in this setting. Still, anesthesia is limited to strong alcoholic drinks in most hospitals, and surgeons are trained to work *fast*. Also, many diseases are blamed on demons or evil spirits – but this is often correct! Fortunately, alchemy and herbalism can cure many problems, thanks to their magical aspect.

those with appropriate advantages. Fairies are sometimes said to operate in a *different* “spirit world,” but this has no distinct characteristics of its own; for practical purposes, fairies in spirit form are in the material world, but invisible and intangible. There are, however, numerous fairy realms and “hidden lands”; these appear to be completely separate realities with no direct relationship with the human world. Whether these are all linked or related, forming a single great fairyland, or whether each is a distinct “pocket dimension,” is unclear, but their inhabitants are *mostly* unable to move quickly from one fairy palace or glade to another. It's generally easiest to regard them as one big parallel universe but with very strange geography and major internal barriers to movement. In some cases, the passage of time in fairy realms differs markedly from that in the human world; a night in fairyland may equate to a year, a decade, or even a century in human time.

Likewise, there appear to be other separate spirit worlds where human souls go after death. The Heavens accessible to virtuous souls remain a high mystery, spoken of in metaphors by theologians; it's *impossible* for magic to contact one who has gone there. However, there is certainly a Hell, a place of punishment for the wicked and the home of countless devils.

MUNDANE WILDLIFE

The flora and fauna of the Known Lands are much like those of Europe in the real world, except that large animals tend to be slightly more common and bolder. The most formidable natural creatures are wolves, wild boar, and some large wild cattle. However, because some fairies take the form of mundane animals, and ordinary creatures are occasionally possessed by minor spirits or “augmented” physically or mentally by contact with supernatural forces, few people are *too* surprised to encounter magical or talking animals.

Cats are sometimes particularly unusual; see p. 17.

BRIEF HISTORY

The ages after God created the world were a time of myth and legend, when prophets and superhuman heroes were commonplace, and God spoke directly to humanity. However, accounts of these eras are scarce and, it is observed by cynics, often

contradictory. Actual history begins with the classical Golden Empires, which spread across much of the Known Lands and Sutherlands, fought great wars with each other, laid down the principles of philosophy, and built the Gogian Wall (p. 8).

Weariness and decadence ultimately eroded even the greatest of the Golden Empires, which fell to civil wars and invasions over the Wall. After what are now known as the Centuries of Darkness, many feudal kingdoms arose. This was an age of knights and wizards, when swords and plate armor were the key to political power.

Eventually, an unknown alchemist-philosopher developed gunpowder, which could bring down the proudest knight or the strongest castle. Other philosophers began propounding strange ideas about law and government, ultimately leading to the fall of kings in some lands. Meanwhile, cunning political

theories from the cities and islands of the south enabled the creation of the Solar Empire, so named because it revolves around its emperor as the planets revolve around the sun.

The Solar Empire expanded rapidly for a while, until it ran into determined resistance. It was forced to adopt more cautious policies when the nations on its borders entered into the Great Pact: Any invasion of one of their territories by the Empire would cause the others to launch raids and incursions on the Empire's other borders. In truth, all these powers together are not strong enough to stop the Empire from conquering any other land if it *really* wants to – but they can make such wars intolerably expensive. Furthermore, the Solar Emperor dare not strengthen his army as much as he'd like, as its commanders would then become dangerously powerful – and while they're in the field, they aren't safely under his eye in the Palace of the Sun.

Today, the Known Lands are in a delicate and unstable balance, with spies and agitators lurking everywhere, and a détente that occasionally flares into border wars. An age of global exploration is underway, and the wealth beginning to flow back from colonies and trading posts is causing upheaval. Life for the peasants in the fields is not much affected by this yet, in truth – but it may be, in time.

Napoleonic Overlap

GURPS Age of Napoleon covers the very end of the real-world historical period that inspired this setting. Much of the general information it contains can be used for games set in the Known Lands. For that matter, decline followed by revolution in the Solar Empire could easily lead to an era of great wars, complete with (magical) espionage and secret (alchemical) weapons . . .

GAZETTEER

The main regions of the Known Lands and what lies beyond them are described in this abridged gazetteer.

THE GREEN ARCHIPELAGO

The westernmost of the Known Lands, the Green Archipelago consists of a few large islands (up to 150 miles in length), dozens more that are smaller but still substantial enough, and hundreds of tiny rocks and outcrops. The largest islands lie nearest to the continent, and their inhabitants sometimes don't think of themselves as living on islands at all (after all, many of them can go for years without even seeing the sea). The term "Islanders" actually indicates the inhabitants of remote outlying parts, who are seen as rude, rather primitive, violent, rebellious, and unconventional in religion.

The Green Archipelago produces the finest sailors and navigators of the Known Lands. It possesses a large and successful merchant fleet and a smaller but formidable military navy. Both merchantmen and military ships are used for global exploration.

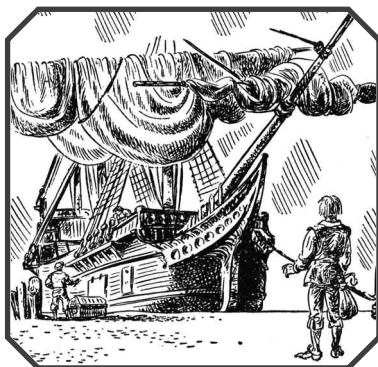
The government is known as the *Domiciliary Republic*. Once, the islands were ruled by a weak monarchy. The nobility, well able to defend their individual holdings against royal power, treated the king or queen as an equal, not a superior. Hence, the legal maxim grew up that "a lord's house is always a castle, and a castle is always a palace." However, social unrest and the growth of a merchant class in the last two centuries left the old

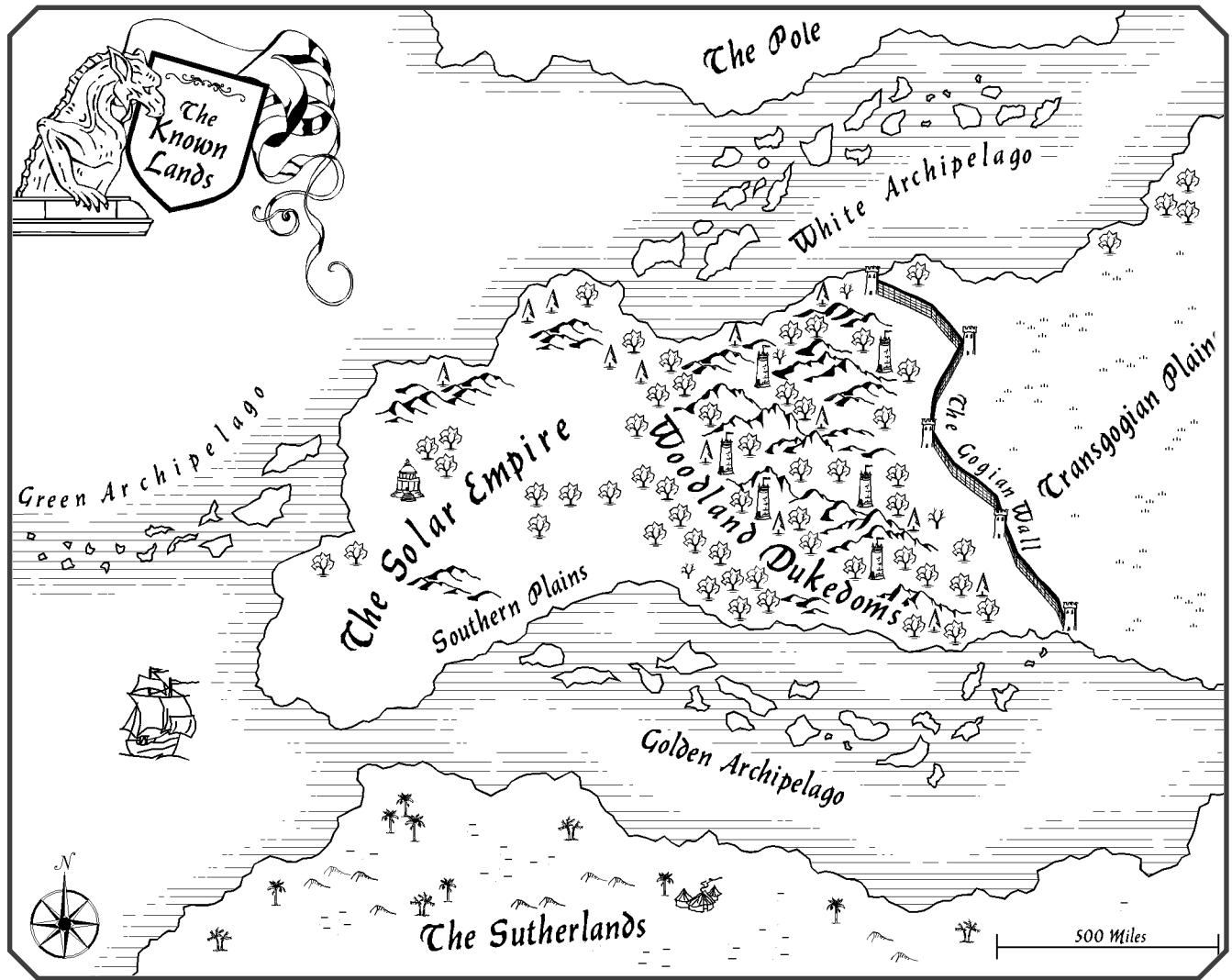
aristocracy weakened and facing many new "upstart houses." The old lords mustered around the king, and a civil war ensued – which the upstarts won. They deposed the king and drew up new laws that seemed (intentionally) to bear a resemblance to the old laws, but that were actually quite different. Nowadays, anyone with the wealth to build a great house and muster followers (and servants) from the surrounding district can claim the status of a lord, becoming part of the loose confederation which rules the Archipelago from the disorganized Parliament in the old royal palace.

"Domiciliaries" are proud of their "traditional" (decades-old) freedoms – even though most of them are firmly under the thumb of great-householders – and are happy to make war against any foreigners who criticize the system. One reason why "Islanders" are so despised by other Domiciliaries is that most of the smaller islands are too poor to support a great house, and hence have no representation in Parliament. Islanders, in turn, see themselves as free of "great lords," giving loyalty instead to an incomprehensible system of clans and families (and in a few cases to powerful and proud local fairies). They also positively revel in fighting, making life difficult for Parliamentary tax-gathering ships.

International Relations

Although the Green Archipelago is threatened by the Solar Empire, which lusts for its trading wealth and despises its lack of a king, its fleet keeps it relatively safe. Hence, the Domiciliaries sometimes seem smug. However, they are crucial to the pact that keeps the Empire in check; any time it goes to war, Domiciliary ships enthusiastically turn privateer, playing havoc with Imperial trade.





THE SOLAR EMPIRE

The Great Majestic Solar Empire is a nation with pretensions to imperial status. It is ruled from the Palace of the Sun, an awe-inspiring building that, with its outbuildings and stables, holds the population of a full-sized town. Although the Palace is the scene of seemingly unending balls, masques, and entertainments, the government that operates from the same location is far from frivolous. Courtiers compete for influence and the ear of the king, and cultivate subtlety, deviousness, and amorality.

Most of the rest of the Empire consists of rich farmlands, dominated by lords whose power is only mitigated by the fact that most of them spend the majority of their time at the Palace. Unfortunately for their tenants, they traditionally leave their estates in the hands of mean-spirited, paranoid bailiffs, who excuse all sorts of ill treatment of the peasantry by saying that they're "merely serving their lords." There is also a degree of prejudice against conquered peoples, although the Empire imposes a uniform culture across its lands.

The Empire's infantrymen are the best-drilled in the Known Lands, and its cavalry are dashing and brave, if undisciplined. However, the Solar Emperor fears ambition among his generals and rotates command of every part of the army regularly –

so, while the commanders know the standard tactical manuals from cover to cover, few of them have the experience or sense of independence to try anything innovative. The Solar Navy is poorly funded and lacks status in this status-obsessed society.

International Relations

The Empire desires power above all and reveres its traditions of conquest and diplomacy. Rendered cautious by the Great Pact, it preserves a façade of politeness and sweet reason while running countless devious plots.

The Cities of the Southern Plains

On the southern edge of the Empire, on the dusty plains facing the sea and the Golden Archipelago, a number of city-states preserve a precarious independence, as much because they aren't worth the effort of conquest as anything else. They're old and run-down, full of large, shabby houses, but they preserve grand traditions of philosophy and scholarship dating back to the days of the Golden Empires.

THE GOLDEN ARCHIPELAGO

South of the mainland, sun-drenched islands lie scattered across a shallow sea. They are ruled by a number of old, slightly backward states, which dream of their Golden Era. Most of the people survive by fishing or agriculture; their farms get by, despite thin soils. A fair amount of local trade also occurs, conducted by small ships using a combination of sail and oars. Government, such as it is, is mostly the work of a large class of impoverished knights, fiercely protective of their honor and given to dueling.

The Solar Empire makes occasional attempts at conquest, and it has absorbed a few islands. The more powerful Golden Dukes are now part of the Great Pact, and their ships, few and small as they may be, are a match for the Solar Navy, with pilots who know the tricky local reefs and currents. The Solar espionage service desperately wants better charts of this region.

Golden Archipelago fairies seem especially curious and tricky to visitors. In fact, they are simply *different*, including a large number of chimeras, goat-legged “fauns,” fish-tailed mermaids, and so on. Many claim to have dwelled on the same spot for centuries. Some have friendly relationships with neighboring humans, while others are arrogant and dangerous.

International Relations

Recognizing the Solar threat, the wisest Golden Dukes try to cultivate Domiciliary allies and even friendships in the Sutherlands. However, many are complacent and introspective. They ought to ally with the cities of the Southern Plains (p. 7). Unfortunately, ancient rivalries and enmities make this difficult.

THE WOODLAND DUKEDOMS

The eastern edge of the Known Lands fades into sinister forests, broken only by high mountain ranges. The forests in the north and east suffer long, snowy winters; those in the south are simply dark and tangled.

Human communities scratch out livings in clearings and valleys. Where great rivers carve through the lands, the narrow alluvial plains can be quite fertile. However, this terrain does not promote the growth of mighty kingdoms; the region is a patchwork of baronies and dukedoms. Each town, even each village, seems to be dominated by a glowering castle – and a significant proportion are in the hands of fairy folk, who either rule openly or manipulate matters from behind the scenes. The nobles whose castles stand on the great rivers are wealthier and more cosmopolitan, but, perhaps as a result, greedier. They charge heavy tolls and are often little more than river pirates. The forests and riverside rocks are also the haunts of dark-natured fairies, adding to the region’s bad reputation. Even the kinder fairy folk tend to be melancholy and melodramatic.

International Relations

Caught between the Solar Empire and the Transgogian nomads, thinking (anachronistically) that the seas to south and north are swarming with pirates, the Woodlanders are deeply suspicious of foreigners. It’s said that even those dukes who

have signed the Great Pact have only done so for the excuse to raid Solar territory. Some petty statelets deep within the forests barely acknowledge that a wider world exists, let alone have dealings with it.

The Gogian Wall

To the east, the woodlands and hills of the dukedoms flatten out into the Transgogian Plains (see p. 9). The division between the two regions has a marker: the vast stone Gogian Wall, the greatest creation of the Golden Empires. Between 30’ and 50’ high and 40’ thick, the Wall runs for thousands of miles and is punctuated only by occasional gatehouses. The Wall is said to have been built when the Empires realized that they could never conquer the tumultuous Transgogians. It should have served to protect the settled lands forever.

Unfortunately, the Golden Empires no longer exist to maintain it. The nomads still have difficulty crossing it, but in some places, powerful chiefs of local tribes have destroyed sections or thrown earthen ramps up and over it. The gatehouses are usually occupied by strong Woodlander nobles or tax-farming lordlings, who use them as customs posts and bar invasion forces as bad for business, but such lords are often corruptible. Sometimes the gatehouses have been captured or left unoccupied until some Woodlander duke has seen the advantage to retaking and restoring them.

THE WHITE ARCHIPELAGO

The northernmost human-inhabited realms are a long chain of islands, stretching from the coast of the continent toward the pole. They are inhabited by hardy, dour folk, who farm the rocky land or go out in small boats to fish the dangerous subarctic seas. In the small port towns, houses have triply thick wooden walls to keep out the cold.

The archipelago is ruled by a monarch known as the White King. However, northern folk are independent by nature, and cannot afford much in the way of taxes – even the White King’s palace is simply an especially large wooden house. Most islands are governed by barons who are barely distinguishable from their subjects. Still, the poverty of this realm should not be overstated; hard work and careful building keep its people comfortable in their furs.

Several smaller islands are ruled either by powerful, cold-natured fairies, or by witches or warlocks with great powers over the climate. Wise northerners avoid them.

International Relations

Northerners can seem introverted, although they aren’t actually xenophobic; they appreciate the benefits of trade and are friendly once a visitor gets to know them. All this is reflected in their diplomacy. The White King has signed the Great Pact, although whether he could raise much of a military force is doubtful – as is the question of whether the Solar Empire would even be interested in extending its conquests into this region.

BEYOND THE KNOWN LANDS

While the people of the Known Lands are unclear about regions beyond their own, their ideas aren't *totally* inaccurate . . .

The Sutherlands

South of the Golden Archipelago lies a land of deserts and oases, occupied by dusky-skinned people who mostly seem to be desert nomads or merchants. (In truth, the majority are peasants, much as elsewhere.) They are ruled by sultans and sheiks. The strongest states sometimes fight wars with the Known Lands; although their military technology is rather behind the times, determination, magic, and strategic skill make them formidable.

Their religion is a wildly divergent form of Architecturalism (p. 14); rather than building spires towards Heaven, their temples have great domes, in respectful emulation of the sky. However, they regard both Known Lands Architecturalists and Horologicalists (p. 14) as equally misguided (and do not recognize the authority of the Architecturalist Hierophant). The dominant magical creatures of the region are *genies*, akin to the fairy folk but almost all with great physical and magical power; if GM needs details for such a creature, give it the Intangible Fairy meta-trait (p. 16), high ST, respectable DX and HT, Flight, and whatever other magical abilities fit the needs of the game plot. (Many appear to have the Snatcher advantage, often with the Permanent enhancement, and quite a few have some kind of shapeshifting abilities.) However, genies are relatively rare compared to the fairies of the Known Lands. They seem especially prone to being magically trapped and controlled, which may be reflected by appropriate disadvantages.

The Transgogian Plains

Beyond the Gogian Wall are vast steppes, home to a race of nomads with green skins and sharply pointed ears. These people are fully human, however; the differences are literally only skin deep. They are horsemen and warriors, who like to raid their neighbors. The worst problems for the rest of humanity come when some great chief unites the Transgogian tribes, declares himself Emperor of the World, and sets out on a campaign of conquest. This hasn't happened for a while, though, and the people of the Known Lands *think*

that their new muskets and cannons would ward off such an invasion; the nomads can't easily adopt modern technology.

Transgogian folk should be *very* rare in the Known Lands; any who do appear in games set in that area should have Unnatural Features 3 (Green skin and pointed ears), Social Stigma (Minority Group), and, in most cases, a level of Low TL. Most Transgogians encountered in their homelands would have some level of Claustrophobia; they find buildings other than flimsy tents intolerable. They despise settled folk, calling them "burrowers" and "less-men." However, those who travel abroad may well lack this phobia, or at least only have it at quirk level. Nomad characters should also have good levels of Riding (Horse) and combat and weapon skills.

The Pole

Beyond the White Archipelago lies a blasted land of ice, snow, and glassy black rocks – which was all that anybody needed to know for a long time. A few years ago, however, a party of explorers ventured into this territory and brought back a strange tale. Although they came nowhere near the pole, they came close enough to see what was located there: a great and perfectly regular tower, rising up around *200 miles*. The tower had a dazzling light on the top, casting permanent illumination, and possibly some warmth, on the regions nearby. Examination by telescope showed that the tower had the look of gray stone, but no more.

The natural philosophers of the Known Lands have scores of competing theories as to how this tower came to be, and what purpose it serves for men or God. Some are arranging expeditions to investigate it more closely, while others fear that the very idea is blasphemous.

Far Beyond the Seas

Elsewhere on the globe, it is said, are some *very* strange lands. Many are apparently inhabited and ruled by fairy beings. Reports speak of kingdoms of giants, of tiny folk, and of talking animals; flying islands; empires ruled by insane immortals; jungles and deserts occupied by tribal peoples who worship strange gods and wield strange magics; and places where the very laws of nature seem to be different. If PCs go roving far, GMs should feel not only entitled, but duty-bound, to throw almost *anything* at them.

Swashbuckling?

The Known Lands are in *some* senses a swashbuckling setting, and the "swashbuckling era" is often considered to run up to the 18th century. However, it's not a particularly good idea to bring much swashbuckling detail – such as use of fencing combat rules out of *GURPS Martial Arts* – into an *Alchemical Baroque* game, unless you want to change the flavor significantly.

A focus on intricate melee combat implies that the typical hero of the campaign should be a master swordsman. The "default" hero of the Known Lands, meanwhile, is a lucky peasant lad, a quick-witted soldier with a musket, or a ritualistic magician. Much of the flavor of the setting comes

from being based on a historical period when firearms were supplanting swords. Combat should be quick and simple, leaving more time for magical wonders or social climbing.

Still, slender swords *are* part of the milieu; GMs who want to mix fencing with fairy stories can do so. For those using *Martial Arts*, the most appropriate style, especially for the Solar Empire, would be French Smallsword; old-fashioned fighters might use the Transitional French School. "Italian" or "Spanish" styles might be known in the Golden Archipelago; indeed, the knights of those islands might have a near-monopoly on advanced fencing techniques, or at least the cinematic versions.

CHAPTER TWO

MAGIC AND FAITH

Once upon a time, a witch lived in a cottage in the woods, with only her cat for company. There was nothing unusual about any of that, you understand; witches often lived in such places, and cats liked to live with them, for the conversation. But this witch was different. She was neither terribly wicked nor terribly good, and she was neither especially beautiful nor hideously ugly. This suited her fine, as it meant that few of her neighbors thought that she was much of a witch, and so they rarely bothered her much.

Once a week, though, a boy from the nearby village came past to deliver her letters, and to collect any that she wanted sent. She paid him with potions and lotions that helped heal the bruises and scrapes and colds that active boys tend to collect, and with the excuse to tell terrifying tales to his friends.

One day, the boy brought another visitor – a tall, thin, scholarly fellow, with spectacles perched on his pointed nose. The witch and the newcomer fell into deep conversation, while the boy waited to

guide the visitor back to the village. As he waited, the witch's cat strolled up to him, sat down, and began to wash itself.

"Do you know if they'll be long?" asked the boy, who was growing a little bored.

"Hard to say," said the cat. "Do you know who this thin fellow might be?"

"Well, some say that he's a priest in disguise" said the boy, "and he does talk like a priest, only with longer words."

"Ah," said the cat, "in that case, you should have brought a book. When herself talks about religion, it takes forever. Why, sometimes, when she's talking to the higher powers, she forgets to sleep and stays up all night."

The metaphysics of the Known Lands places significant supernatural power in the hands of certain mortals. How closely the different manifestations of this power are related is a matter of debate among philosophers, but not everyone cares; there is a lot to be said for just using whatever works.

FORMAL MAGIC

Magic, as worked by humans, is built around two aspects: matter and spirit. Matter magic is expressed in the form of herbal and alchemical concoctions (and the very occasional artifact), while spirit magic is worked through lengthy rituals. However, the two, while seemingly very distinct, are entwined in a way that puzzles even their practitioners; a person cannot advance in one without advancing in the other. It seems that effective magic demands a detailed and practiced insight into both things of the spirit and the subtleties of the physical universe. This pattern is repeated in all schools and styles of magic.

The two general types of magic-workers encountered in the Known Lands are, first, witches and cunning-men, who brew herbal potions and have dealings with minor nature spirits; second, natural philosophers and master warlocks, who study the high arts of alchemy and perform ritual magic to commune with arcane entities. The difference between the two *styles* is substantial; the underlying *principles* are apparently identical.

If uncanny foreign wizards appear in games, the GM should give them their own

paired specializations of Ritual Magic and Alchemy or Herb Lore, setting limitations and prerequisites comparable to those applying to witches and natural philosophers.

RITUAL MAGIC

This uses the Path/Book magic system described in *GURPS Thaumatology* (pp. 121-165). Specifically, this is *Effect Shaping* magic, using Paths rather than Books. The following options and special conditions apply.

Magical Advantages: Magery (Path/Book) is mandatory and adds to rituals, as discussed on p. 123 of *Thaumatology*. Hence, this is obviously the key advantage for witches, magic-working natural philosophers, and the like. Path/Book Adept (*Thaumatology*, pp. 123-124) is also known, but it cannot take enhancements or limitations, and it has a special prerequisite: Ritual Magic skill at 18+ for one level, at 24+ for two levels, and at 30+ for three. It may, however, be purchased with bonus character points after the requisite level is achieved.



Ritual Magic Skill: This may never differ by more than two levels from the character's "potion-making" skill – either Alchemy or Herb Lore, depending on the character's magical tradition. *Ritual Magic (Witchcraft)* is used by witches, cunning-men, and some rustic warlocks; it must be within two levels of Herb Lore. *Ritual Magic (Esoteric Philosophy)* – employed by natural philosophers, a few physicians, and the more urbanized sort of warlock – cannot differ by more than two levels from Alchemy. It has Native-level written comprehension of at least one language, Philosophy (Neoclassical)-12, and Theology (Known Lands)-12 as prerequisites. No Rule of 20 applies in this setting; practitioners can benefit from learning this skill up to very high levels, although most hedge-witches and dabbling philosophers have nothing like that much power.

Elements: These are required, as described on pp. 127-128 of *Thaumatology*. Ritual space mostly consists of locations consecrated by magic-users for their own use. A few covens of witches or warlocks have secret temples that grant +1 or +2 to rituals, but anything better is rare or nonexistent. (The same sacred spaces turn out to work equally well for both traditions, to the puzzlement of some practitioners.) Churches do *not* qualify as ritual space, cannot be consecrated for this purpose (unless first deconsecrated by a high-ranking priest), and impose a penalty of -8 on anyone foolish enough to attempt rituals within their confines.

Ritual Parameters: These generate skill penalties, as usual. Also, many workings can and should use the *Variant Durations: Conditional Termination* rule (see *Thaumatology*, p. 242), which creates a distinctly fairy-tale effect. *Multiple Simultaneous Effects* (*Thaumatology*, p. 132) are usually possible without penalty. However, each charm that a magician has created and that is still functional and not yet activated gives a cumulative -3 penalty to any rituals that create further charms.

Known Paths

Most of the Paths detailed in *GURPS Thaumatology* (pp. 140-162) are available, but a few are prohibited and some have special features or rules applying.

- *The Path of Cunning* is available but has no default from Ritual Magic (Esoteric Philosophy). Characters with that specialization can only use this Path if they specifically learn it.

- *The Path of Dreams* works as listed, but the "Dream World" is *not* a spirit world. Characters who "enter others' dreams" simply make deep telepathic contact with those people's dreaming minds, and the Dream Sanctum ritual merely protects against other Dream rituals.

- *The Path of the Elements* is unavailable.

- *The Path of Form* is available, but *most* users don't know the Skinchange ritual; for them, the Path has only minor uses. However, a few wild cunning-men and mighty magicians not only *have* mastered this ritual, but use it to legendary effect. This requires a 10-point Unusual Background; the practitioner can then use and improve his skill in multiple versions of the ritual. Stories speak of magicians changing into every animal known in the Known Lands, including wolves, bears, horses, and many kinds of bird.

- *The Path of Gadgets* is unavailable.

- For characters using Ritual Magic (Esoteric Philosophy), skill with *the Path of Health* cannot exceed skill in

Magic Items

Magic items can be found in the Known Lands, but few of them resemble those in conventional fantasy games. To begin with, aside from alchemical elixirs and levitation devices, a few items may be created by or related to path-based magic; see *GURPS Thaumatology*, p. 139 and p. 161. However, *fetishes* are actually rare; binding ghosts is widely classified as illegal necromancy, and is generally seen as immoral, while other spirits (such as fairies) tend to be too powerful to bind or to have vengeful allies who *will* seek to free them.

On rare occasions, magic items are created more or less accidentally, through *Enchantment Through Age* or *Enchantment Through Deeds*; see *GURPS Thaumatology*, pp. 110-113. This process isn't really well understood by anyone, and cannot generally be deliberately accomplished, by PCs or anyone else; such items are rare wonders, not routine technology! They should usually be detailed as advantages with gadget limitations, or very occasionally as characters (see *GURPS Thaumatology*, pp. 113-120; the Silver Harp from that book could easily exist in this setting, with Cultural Familiarities and Languages changed as appropriate). Also, a few powerful fairies are occasionally able to create or acquire strange items with unnatural properties, perhaps from other worlds, perhaps through their own version of *Enchantment Through Deeds* (which *may* even be more deliberate, and involve naming the item). These are sometimes given to or otherwise acquired by mortals. However, fairy artifacts tend to be *very* strange, and they are often loaded down with prohibitions, bizarre conditions, and outright curses.

Physician/TL4. Those using Ritual Magic (Witchcraft) can learn it freely.

- *The Path of Knowledge* is available, but the Know Fault, Locate Spares, and Read the Manual rituals are unknown and excluded.

- *The Path of Luck* is available, except for the Gremlins ritual.

- For characters using Ritual Magic (Esoteric Philosophy), skill with *the Path of Nature* cannot exceed skill in Naturalist.

- *The Path of Protection* is available.

- *The Path of Spirit* is available. However, relatively few spirits are known by name or defined by type well enough to summon; the GM should treat any such name as a secret and a treasure. PCs might learn the names of spirits who they've bought as Patrons or possibly Allies. Additionally, if the GM permits them to start playing knowing any other names at all, each should be treated as a perk, and the summoning should be tricky and dangerous. (Note that most summonable spirits will in fact be devils – even if they pretend otherwise!) Witches and cunning-men only ever have dealings with minor local spirits; scholarly natural philosophers may find greater names in their books, but these come with accordingly greater risks attached.

ALCHEMY AND HERB LORE

Alchemy and Herb Lore use the rules in *GURPS Magic* (pp. 210-222), including use of Herb Lore as an alternative elixir-making skill (albeit without the ability to analyze potions or magical items), with some special conditions and variations: Treat this setting as normal mana for Alchemy and Herb Lore purposes. Use the elixir costs listed for “common magic” campaigns. Ignore the mythological names for elixirs – Known Lands mythology is not that of the real world.

Alchemy and herbalism operate at TL4; no one has yet integrated enough advanced philosophical concepts or techniques into these fields to raise them further. Likewise, Alchemy skill gives no default to Chemistry.

Herb Lore may never differ by more than two levels from the character’s Ritual Magic (Witchcraft) skill. In addition, it cannot exceed the character’s Pharmacy (Herbal) skill (so it effectively has that other skill as a prerequisite). *Alchemy* cannot differ by more than two levels from Ritual Magic (Esoteric Philosophy), and it cannot exceed the *average* of the character’s Chemistry, Philosophy (Neoclassical), and Physics skills. (It’s perfectly possible for one or even two of those skills to be zero, but that will reduce the average severely!) Note that these rules usually mean that alchemists and potion-makers must have the Magery (Path/Book) advantage, as Ritual Magic skill is no use without it. It might *just* be possible to have such a character who has learned Ritual Magic skill as a theoretical system, to support his alchemical studies, but who can never get any actual rituals to work.

Prices for potions made with Herb Lore use the rules on p. 104 of *GURPS Thaumatology*; reduce materials costs for elixirs by 50%, to a maximum reduction of \$100. Reduce final prices by the same, or by slightly more at the GM’s option to represent general ease of production. Likewise, again as per *Thaumatology*, a Herb Lore home laboratory costs just \$500 to equip, although better labs have costs as for Alchemy. Likewise, per *Thaumatology*, alchemical formularies are no use to characters manufacturing elixirs using Herb Lore. The Herb Lore equivalent – *herbals* – are rare and can’t offset the penalties for working without a formulary. Characters who use Herb Lore mostly learn formulas from each other, rather than from books; indeed, some witches are illiterate. A PC advancing in Herb Lore skill and wanting to learn new formulas will usually have to seek out an NPC teacher.

Formularies are sold openly, but good ones are scarce and expensive, despite the existence of the printing press; *herbals*

are just as openly available and uncommon, being the work of eccentric scholars or even rarer herbalists with enough literary and technical skill to create them. The problem is that no standard alchemical or herbalist notation exists, and many of the best alchemists seem to be crazy, or at least eccentric and willfully obscure. Hence, there are a lot of poor formularies around, and *all* herbals are strange at best.

*My husband is a proud man,
who’s delighted to be associated with
every brick and every tree of his
property at every moment of his
waking life – and no doubt in his
dreams as well . . .*

– Mrs. Herbert, *The Draughtsman’s Contract*

Only a few booksellers know how to identify the good volumes – and they sell at a premium. The typical base cost for either type of book is \$200 per formula, and the GM can be downright whimsical about availability, especially for herbals. Cheaper books exist, but for each -10% reduction in price (to a maximum of -70%), apply a -1 to any attempt to make an elixir using formulas from the book. An alchemist or herbalist may add such formulas to his personal list when advancing in Alchemy skill, but he takes the penalty whenever making that elixir until he can find and study a better text. However, there are no secret formulas and no central “Alchemist’s Guild”; any formula *might* show up in a formulary or herbal somewhere, although the chance of finding reliable formulas for some of the unusual and more powerful elixirs may be slim.

Some university libraries hold formularies, but access tends to be limited to members of the institution in good standing or to high-Status visitors vouched for by a member. (“Donations to library funds” can help.) Herbals will only appear in slightly eccentric collections; most university libraries are far too intellectually snobbish to hold them. Also, libraries only permit *study* of books, not removal – certainly not removal for use during elixir creation in chemical-filled, dangerous laboratories!

Other Optional Alchemy Rules

GURPS Thaumatology includes additional optional rules for alchemy (pp. 100-107). However, GMs should be cautious about using some of these in *Alchemical Baroque* games. Options such as alchemical *Quick Gadgeteering* (p. 103) or *Alchemical Gizmos* (p. 104) may make practitioners more aggressive and combat-oriented, whereas *Alchemical Baroque* magic-wielders are supposed to be scholarly lab rats. Certainly, alchemist gadgeteering can explain who invents new potions, but such inventions should be rare.

Nonetheless, some of the other rules in *Thaumatology* may be very appropriate. The rules for *Alchemical Inventions* (p. 103) can certainly be used in games where alchemists are conducting innovative research, including the creation of *Binary Elixirs* (p. 106), while GMs can apply whatever rules they wish in cases of *Ad Hoc Mixing* (p. 106). Also, alchemy is definitely related to medicine; the rules for *Alchemical Cures* (pp. 106-107) can apply. Lastly, the new TL4 *Elixir Delivery Methods* (p. 107) in that book – smoking and pills – can certainly fit with the style of this setting.

Flying Vehicles

Levitational Salts (see below) permit the creation of expensive, flimsy, unreliable, very limited flying vehicles. These have seen occasional use by messengers and for military reconnaissance, but they are mostly seen as “philosophers’ toys,” and they are accordingly rare – a person might be able to locate one somewhere in a large university town or royal palace. Operating one requires Piloting/TL4 (Lighter-Than-Air) skill, very few people have that, and very few have more than a point in it.

More dramatically, one new type of exceptionally powerful “magic item” has recently been invented in the Known Lands. An alchemist in the Green Archipelago has created a machine that can fly by day or night, albeit better after dark. The clockwork at the heart of this “*Spherical*

Chariot” (so named because its creator’s declared intention is to use it to investigate the functioning of the celestial spheres at first hand) is made of strange alloys, and can direct energies through its metal structure to lift and move the vehicle; it appears to slide along shafts of moonlight. Operated by an expert, the mechanism can also, somehow, interfere with the operation of similar devices nearby. The Domiciliary Republic is struggling to keep the Chariot’s design closely secret, but rumors suggest that either spies have obtained the crucial information, or alchemists elsewhere are recreating the invention from first principles. Anyone who gets such a craft working will also need to master Piloting/TL(4+1) (Contragravity) skill to operate it.

Gaining access to many libraries should be a minor adventure in itself, and the quality of their books can be determined at whim by the GM. Furthermore, most Known Lands library catalogs give penalties of -3 or worse to Research rolls.

Specific Elixirs

Most of the elixirs listed in *GURPS Magic* are available in the Known Lands, with costs determined and modified as described above. Some special notes apply.

- Elixirs of *Fire Resistance*, *Transformation*, *Flight*, and *Invisibility* may be made up as unguents; indeed, this is the *only* form in which they can be made using Herb Lore. Furthermore, the unguent must be applied all over the user’s body. Thus, witches and cunning-men (and their customers) have to strip naked to use such powers. They can dress again afterward if they choose (unless they are transformed into a different shape . . . and note that clothes will not be rendered invisible or fire-resistant), but some consider this a waste of valuable effect duration.

Also, when an *Elixir of Flight* is made using Herb Lore, it grants rather unstable abilities. The user makes any Flight or Aerobatics skill rolls (including those from default) at -3. When attempting to land, he must roll against Aerobatics (with that penalty) or suffer a fall of 1d yards. These problems may be negated if he uses a moderately bulky “prop,” selected when first learning the skill, to stabilize his flight; most witches favor broomsticks, but some prefer weirder options, such as giant pestles-and-mortars.

- Herb Lore cannot be used to make elixirs of *Magic Resistance* or *Hybridization*.

- Elixirs of *Lichdom*, *Resurrection*, *Universal Antidote*, *Reanimation*, or *Foresight* are completely unknown in the Known Lands.

- An elixir of *Dragonslaying* can be made with a drop of blood from the heart of any man-sized or larger reptile or reptilian chimera – not necessarily a dragon. This ingredient costs around \$200, if purchased on the open market (such large reptiles *are* quite rare); reduce the price for the elixir by \$300 accordingly. It will affect a dragon even if ignited by a normal flame.

- Elixirs of *Regeneration* and *Youth* are notoriously unreliable. Anyone using one must make a HT roll at +2. On a normal failure, the potion doesn’t work; on a critical failure, the user *ages* 1d years and takes 1d damage.

- The secret of transforming lead into gold is very much a mystery still, although plenty of natural philosophers claim to be coming close.



- *Levitational Salts* are an alchemical potion, requiring \$1,000 in materials and 15 weeks, giving a market price of \$3,700 per dose; the skill needed is Alchemy at -1 (Herb Lore cannot be used). Porous materials treated with this preparation will rise when exposed to the air, provided that the sun is not in the sky (visible or otherwise!). Each dose can be used to treat 25 square feet, and the substance provides 5 lbs. of lift per square foot. If the material is folded over on itself, the effect is seriously diminished; the outer hull of a vehicle is all that can be usefully treated. This permits the creation of very flimsy flying devices for nighttime use, usually propelled by sails or drawn by harnessed birds.

RELIGION

In the past, all of the Known Lands shared a common (if vague and abstruse) faith. However, over the centuries, this has divided into sects, and today, a religious undercurrent adds to international conflicts.

The most important sects – more or less completely distinct faiths these days – are the *Architecturalists* and the *Horologicalists*. The former, strongest in the Solar Empire and the south, hold that the universe was created by God the Architect, and that humanity has a duty to embellish its fabric and to emulate the deity by building many magnificent buildings. Architecturalists are fond of churches and cathedrals with great spires, which they see as reflecting and emulating the Creator's most impressive handiwork. The faith also assumes that God, like any architect, may occasionally return and adjust his handiwork, allowing the rare miracle. The favorite portable Architecturalist symbol is a detailed miniature painting – a map or landscape image. Dedicated Architecturalists suspect any clockwork device of representing the Horological Heresy, although most permit the creation of such mechanisms for purely secular purposes.

Conversely, the Horologicalists of the north and west see the universe as a *mechanism*, a great clock that God created, wound up, and left running. Because the mechanism is perfect, He doesn't need to manifest his power to sustain it – although attempted damage is blasphemous nonetheless. Very respectful study of the clockwork is a lawful way to understand God better. Horological churches tend to be plain and unembellished, to emphasize their difference from Architecturalist constructions, although some have striking clocks of great precision, seen as holy symbols. (However, a small subset, the Humble Horologicalists, see any clock as a blasphemous imitation of perfection.) Devout Horologicalists regard painted art as symbolic of Architecturalist vanity.

One specialty of Theology skill, Theology (Known Lands), actually covers both these sects; they share many underlying ideas, although believers may differ violently about interpretation, and any competent scholar will know about both sides of the argument, if only to be able to debate with “heretics.” However, the radically divergent Architecturalist beliefs of the south have their own specialty, Theology (Sutherlander).

Doubtless the strange believers of distant lands also have their own unusual theologies.

THE POWER OF FAITH

While priests hold that the power of religious artifacts and prayers over the spirit world is a divine mystery, some philosophers have analyzed the matter objectively. They conclude that saying that this power comes from God is as good a theory as

any, but God seems much more impartial between various sects than the sects themselves would suggest. Some downright atheistic scholars wonder if the power of mortal belief is effective by itself.

Certainly, anything that clearly and specifically symbolizes religion to a group of worshipers – a church, the sound of its bells, a religious service, or a holy symbol – causes difficulties to many spirits, and severe pain to devils. A very few humans (with the True Faith advantage, in *GURPS* terms) manifest this power directly, by virtue of personal holiness. Burial with proper religious ceremonies *sometimes* prevents a dead soul from returning as a ghost, although this is unreliable.

All this is slightly more useful than it sounds. For example, *some* diseases in this setting (about one in six) actually involve the presence of malevolent spirits. In such cases, religious ceremonies, holy symbols, etc., may give the patient from +1 to +4 on HT rolls to shake off the disease, and attending doctors the same bonus to Physician skill.

THE PRIESTHOOD

Both Architecturalist and the Horologicalist churches employ full-time priests with Clerical Investment. The hierarchy of the Architecturalist faith runs from Rank 0 brothers, through priests, high priests, monsignors, deans, bishops, archbishops, and cardinals, to the Rank 8 Hierophant, who exercises supreme authority. In the Horologicalist faith, the hierarchy runs from brothers, through preachers, vicars, canons, deans, and bishops, to archbishops at Rank 6, but there is no Rank 7 or 8, and no one supreme authority. Horologicalist archbishops try to settle details of doctrine among themselves in council, but they often disagree over fine details.



People not only believe in the power of religion, but they are devoutly grateful for it because malevolent beings tend to avoid holy ground and religious symbols.

CHAPTER THREE

SPIRITS AND OTHER BEINGS

Once upon a time, all the devils in Hell fell to arguing over which of them was the worst. While they were quarreling and shouting at each other, they forget to guard the gates of Hell, and a score of the worst damned souls sneaked their way out and returned to the world. There, they proceeded to haunt the places they knew best, making trouble for living folk every way that they could.

Of course, this threw the living people of the world into terrible confusion, and they didn't know what to do. So it was left to the cats to solve the problem . . .

With the exception of domestic cats, all nonhuman sapient beings in this setting are explicitly supernatural – spirits, either intangible or permanently garbed in flesh.

GHOSTS

If a person dies with some great mission unfulfilled or a pressing need for vengeance, or in especially bizarre circumstances, he *may* become a ghost – or at least leave a residue of psychic energy. Determining whether this happens if an adventurer dies in play is left to the GM; even if a PC becomes a ghost, it should usually then be played as an NPC. If the GM really wants to roll dice at such times, a Will roll at -5 might enable the individual's spirit to stay around. GMs can impose further modifiers for proper burial rites or lack thereof, pressing Vows, an overwhelming need for revenge, and so on.

Ghosts are spirits with access to their own “spirit world” (see p. 5) and a wide range of “spirit powers” (represented by assorted supernatural advantages in game terms). Typically, a ghost has the Spirit or Astral Entity meta-trait (see p. B263), plus an Obsession disadvantage or possibly a peculiar Compulsive Behavior – often accompanied by other disadvantages such as Hidebound, Killjoy, or No Sense of Humor, as death quickly or slowly strips away all the being's personality, leaving just its single obsession. A ghost also has susceptibility to Exorcism, True Faith, etc. as a feature, although an individual spirit may be able to disregard or work round such things in pursuit of its compulsions. However, ghosts are very

diverse; many can affect the material world in some limited ways, even if they can't actually materialize, with advantages such as Mind Control (perhaps with the No Memory enhancement or the Puppet limitation), Telekinesis, or Terror. Conversely, not all ghosts are Unaging, and some have Short Lifespan, fading over the years or months – particularly once their great purpose is accomplished. GMs should be both creative and traditional when defining ghosts; anything that shows up in folklore or horror stories *may* be possible.

In fact, although ghosts are the only actual undead in this setting, the sheer range of their abilities can bring them close to other fantasy undead. For example, a ghost with Telekinesis with a very limited version of the Animation enhancement from (*GURPS Powers*, p. 83) might be able to animate its old body, in effect functioning as a zombie or skeleton. Likewise, a “vampire” might be a ghost with little trouble becoming substantial for fairly long periods (i.e., no limitations on its Insubstantiality), very likely Vampiric Bite, and a substantial list of Dreads, Uncontrollable Appetite, Vulnerabilities, or Weaknesses; its Obsession could be with remaining on the material world at any cost.

FAIRIES

Enigmatic, whimsical, often powerful, fairies exist on the border between flesh and spirit. Some grant wishes; others steal babies. Their physical forms are to some extent malleable projections, but many lesser fairies are fixed to one shape; sometimes, the effort of manifesting physically drains their powers so much that they can't change back. There are even reports from

far-off lands of whole races of permanently manifested fairies, whose current generations have never been anything other than physical beings. Fairies who take physical form, permanently or temporarily, often seek to imitate human forms, but they do so imperfectly. Quite a few have a serious problem with size; hence, some become giants, and others become “little people.”

The reasons why minor fairies adopt physical forms vary; mostly, it's because weak spirits can't accomplish very much or experience much sensation. A physical body may be vulnerable, but it can also have lots of fun. Also, oddly, while spirit-fairies are physically repelled by iron and utterly terrified by the symbols of human religion, those who adopt permanent physical forms often lose such constraints.

Some fairies have access to "spirit realms" or fairyland; see p. 5. Many who retain the ability to become intangible can travel to at least one such realm. Even those who are locked into a physical shape sometimes know of hidden gates or paths. The most powerful fairies rule such realms as absolute monarchs. A few, usually the darkest and most twisted, can seemingly also enter the shadowy world of ghosts and phantoms (see pp. 5 and 15). Some *might* be able to travel to Hell, but all absolutely refuse to do so; devils enjoy pulling off their delicate wings far too much.

Although they are often whimsical, fairies may fixate on one particular issue or individual. Sometimes, powerful fairies assign lesser "subjects" to specific tasks, which they *must* accomplish. A fairy may follow a human object of its attention around in invisible spirit form, using magical abilities such as Telekinesis or Illusion (*GURPS Powers*, p. 94) to help, hinder, or confuse the mortal. The victims of "fairy curses" (or "fairy blessings") may sometimes be driven mad.

*Fairies exist on the border
between flesh and spirit.*

New Meta-Trait: Intangible Fairy

252 points

All fairies who haven't lost their basic magical power have a number of features in common. They are all whimsical but rather uncreative spirits with the power to clothe themselves in flesh and an aversion to both iron and the power of human faith.

Intangible Fairy includes Doesn't Breathe [20]; Doesn't Eat or Drink [10]; Immunity to Metabolic Hazards [30]; Insubstantiality (Affect Substantial, +100%; Can Carry Objects, Light Encumbrance, +20%) [176]; Invisibility (Substantial Only, -10%) [36]; Unaging [15]; Dread (Iron; 6 yards) [-30]; Hidebound [-5]; and Feature (Susceptible to True Faith).

Note that, unlike many spirits, fairies *do* need to sleep. Some may eat or drink, sometimes choosing strange foods such as flower petals, but this is purely for amusement; they don't need food to survive. Almost all of them also display further mental disadvantages such as Absent-Mindedness, Callous, Clueless, Compulsive Behavior, Curious, Distractible, Impulsiveness, Indecisive, Jealousy, Kleptomania, Laziness, Low Empathy, Manic-Depressive, Short Attention Span, Trickster, or Truthfulness, sometimes progressing as far as Split Personality with several personalities – but individuals vary considerably. Some can enter fairy realms by a simple mental impulse – the Jumper (World) advantage, usually limited to the one destination-realm. Others merely know the location of local "fairy gates." A few lose track of how to return to the fairy lands, which they see as a terrifying and tragic fate – although their ensuing misery doesn't stop them from being whimsical and unpredictable.

EXAMPLE INTANGIBLE FAIRIES

A vast variety of fairies lives in the world; the following are just a couple of well-known types. Note that fairies of any type often have *many* more mental disadvantages in addition to those listed.

Flower Fairies

241 points

Flower Fairies manifest as tiny, glowing humans with gauzy wings and colorful costumes. The following is a typical version, but fairies do vary quite a bit from place to place. Their wealth represents odds and ends accumulated over the years; they don't really have much interest in material possessions, except when they feel like stealing something.

ST 3 [-70]; **DX** 13 [60]; **IQ** 10 [0]; **HT** 11 [10]
Damage 1d-5/1d-4; BL 1.8 lbs.; HP 6 [6]; Will 10 [0]; Per 10 [0];
FP 20 [27].
Basic Speed 6.00 [0]; Basic Move 1 [-25]; Dodge 9; Parry 9
(unarmed).
16"; 5 lbs.; SM -4.

Social Background

TL: 4 [0].
CF: Known Lands (Native) [0].
Languages: Local human language (Native/Broken) [-2].

Advantages

Appearance (Beautiful) [12]; Flight (Small Wings, -10%; Flying Move 12) [36]; Intangible Fairy [252].
Perk: Can emit light equal to a lantern. [1]

Disadvantages

Absent-Mindedness [-15]; Dread (Devout prayers, holy ground, the sound of church bells, humans with True Faith, etc.; 6 yards; Common) [-30]; Innumerate [-5]; Wealth (Poor) [-15].
Quirks: Distractible. [-1]

Fairy Queens

460 points

The dominant figures in most fairy realms are coldly beautiful beings, with the power to use supernatural abilities dramatically if they wish. Indeed, they often display a range of additional magics. This represents a fairly typical local "fairy queen," albeit without such extra abilities; many also have local Reputations of various sorts.

ST 9 [-10]; **DX** 13 [60]; **IQ** 10 [0]; **HT** 12 [20]
Damage 1d-2/1d-1; BL 16 lbs.; HP 9 [0]; Will 10 [0]; Per 10 [0];
FP 35 [69].
Basic Speed 6.25 [0]; Basic Move 5 [-5]; Dodge 9; Parry 9
(unarmed).
5'9"; 110 lbs.

Social Background

TL: 4 [0].
CF: Known Lands (Native) [0].
Languages: Local human language (Native) [0].

Sapient Cats

Known Lands domestic cats appear much like those in the real world, but *some* of them are rather different. This is not actually supernatural, in local terms; these aren't spirits, fairy beings, or possessed creatures, just an unusual natural species – although this setting can stretch the definition of “natural.” Smarter cats often associate with witches, leading to talk of “familiar,” but in fact this is simply a way for them to get interesting conversations from people who don't mind talking to nonhuman beings, in exchange for use of their exceptional senses.

Typical cats in the Known Lands are, in fact, very much like those of the real world, apart from being maybe a little more intelligent and slightly longer-lived on the average. Many, perhaps most, also possess a certain innate sense for supernatural phenomena. Some are *far* more intelligent or otherwise exceptional. To reflect this, truly exceptional “sapient cats” may be treated as characters, with the following racial template.

Sapient cats behave much like ordinary cats in most ways, although they may be slightly lazier and more cautious. They don't have a full-scale culture of their own, preferring to attach themselves to human society; when two of them meet, they tend to interact with ironic looks and sarcastic body language. They regard territorial marking and suchlike ordinary cat behavior as the height of vulgarity.

Cats can make interesting Allies or PCs. Although many are selfish, even solipsistic, they aren't usually actively evil. Even so, a truly villainous cat can be dangerous, ruthless, and sadistic.

Known-Lands Sapient Cat

-33 points

Attributes Modifiers: ST -6 [-60]; DX +4 (No Fine Manipulators, -40%) [48]; IQ -4 [-80]

Secondary Characteristics Modifiers: SM -3; Will +5 [25]; Per +6 [30].

Advantages: Acute Hearing 2 [4]; Acute Taste and Smell 2 [4]; Catfall [10]; Claws (Sharp) [5]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Discriminatory Hearing [15]; Enhanced Move 1/2 (Ground) [10]; Flexibility [5]; Medium [10]; Night Vision 5 [5]; Perfect Balance [15]; Teeth (Sharp) [1]; Ultrahearing [5]; Vibration Sense [10].

Perks: Fur [1].

Disadvantages: Cannot Speak [-15]; Dead Broke [-25]; Quadruped [-35]; Short Lifespan 2 [-20]; Sleepy (1/2 the time) [-8]; Social Stigma (Valuable Property) [-10]; Stubbornness [-5]; Quirk (Dislikes Getting Soaked) [-1].

Racial Skills: Acrobatics (H) DX [2]-14*; Brawling (E) DX+2 [4]-16; Stealth (A) DX [2]-14.

* Includes +1 for Perfect Balance.

Some cat characters buy their IQ up significantly or have fortune-related advantages such as Luck or Serendipity. A few buy off Cannot Speak, sometimes replacing it with Disturbing Voice, and some can eliminate at least one level of Short Lifespan. Some have up to eight levels of Extra Life.

Advantages

Appearance (Very Beautiful) [16]; Intangible Fairy [252]; Status 5* [20]; Walk on Air [20]; Wealth (Very Wealthy) [30].

Disadvantages

Callous [-5]; Dread (Devout prayers, holy ground, the sound of church bells, humans with True Faith, etc.; 6 yards; Common) [-30]; Jealousy [-10]; Selfish (12) [-5].

Quirks: Distractible. [-1]

Skills

Connoisseur (Poetry) (A) IQ+2 [8]-12; Dancing (A) DX [2]-13; Erotic Art (A) DX [2]-13; Garrote (E) DX+2 [4]-15; Interrogation (A) IQ [2]-10; Intimidation (A) Will+2 [8]-12; Knife (E) DX [1]-13; Naturalist (Earthlike) (H) IQ-1 [2]-9; Riding (Horse) (A) DX [2]-13; Savoir-Faire (High Society) (E) IQ+2 [4]-12; Sex Appeal (A) HT+6 [2]-18†; Singing (E) HT [1]-12; Stealth (A) DX-1 [1]-12.

* Includes +1 from Wealth.

†Includes +6 from Appearance.

OGRES

63 points

Ogres are technically fairies, but they've burned out their spirit powers taking a large physical form, reducing their

minds to a parody of intelligence in the process. Hence, they don't have the fairy meta-trait; treat them as a normal material race. They could even be used as PCs, although they're invariably stupid and dull, and wouldn't usually be very interesting to play. They do represent an example of a permanently manifested fairy type, as well as making good opponents for adventurers.

These stats represents a typical ogre.

ST 20 (Size, -10%) [90]; **DX** 9 [-20]; **IQ** 7 [-60]; **HT** 13 [30]
Damage 2d-1/3d+2; BL 80 lbs.; HP 20 [0]; Will 8 [5]; Per 7 [0];
FP 13 [0].

Basic Speed 5.50 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0]; Dodge 9; Parry 9
(Axe/Mace).
8'; 450 lbs.; SM +1).

Social Background

TL: 4 [0].

CF: Known Lands (Native) [0].

Languages: Local human language (Native/Illiterate) [-3].

Advantages

Acute Hearing 5 [10]; Acute Taste and Smell 7 [14]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Damage Resistance 4 (Tough Skin, -40%) [12]; Discriminatory Smell [15]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Medium [10].

Disadvantages

Appearance (Monstrous) [-20]; Bad Temper (12) [-10]; Ham-Fisted 1 [-5]; Impulsiveness (9) [-15]; Low Empathy [-20]; Social Stigma (Minority Group) [-10]; Wealth (Struggling) [-10].

Quirks: Alcohol Intolerance; Attentive; Dull. [-3]

Skills

Axe/Mace (A) DX+2 [8]-11; Brawling (E) DX+3 [8]-12; Intimidation (A) Will+4 [4]-12*; Two-Handed Axe/Mace (A) DX+2 [8]-11.

* Includes +3 for Monstrous Appearance. Note also that most ogres using Intimidation get bonuses for displays of brutal violence!

Trolls and Giants

Creatures referred to as *trolls* are usually similar to ogres, if even uglier and a bit tougher-skinned. Fairies with more power who adopt similar permanent forms may become giants, similar to ogres but bigger, with vast ST and increased DR. Some even preserve a little more intelligence through the transformation.

SUPERNATURAL ANIMALS

Some fairies assume animal form, either temporarily for fun, or permanently, becoming irreversibly changed, like an ogre. In either case, they may accidentally reduce themselves to animal

intellect; they also often have trouble with consistency. Thus, they may become oversized or oddly colored animals, or *chimeras*, merging body parts and characteristics from several different species. Also, occasionally, spirits of various types possess natural animals and then become permanently bonded to the creature. Hence, all sorts of strange animals infest the woods and wildernesses of the Known Lands, displaying unnatural size, coloration, powers, intelligence, or numbers of legs or heads. A GM can take the details for any natural species and adjust them at whim; he can even permit adventurous players to take such animals as PCs, if they really wish.

Dragons

Dragons are a rare, dangerous type of chimera – a huge reptile with the wings of a bat or bird. Contrary to legend, dragons cannot breathe fire, but they do often possess acidic or poisonous venom. A typical monster with acidic venom has a Melee Attack doing 1d to 3d of corrosion damage with the Cyclic enhancement with 10-second intervals and two to five cycles. A creature with poisonous venom has a Follow-Up to its bite attack, doing similar amounts of toxic damage, again Cyclic, with one-minute intervals and three to six cycles. Some dragons may also be able to spit venom; this makes the acidic version a ranged attack, while the poisonous type becomes a Contact Agent instead of a Follow-Up. Either ranged type will probably do a bit less damage than the version used in melee.

A typical dragon has ST 25-40, DX 11, IQ 7, HT 13, Basic Speed 7.00, DR 5, Fangs, Talons, and Flight (Winged). However, there is a *lot* of variation.

ARCANE AND NATURE SPIRITS

Some “wild” spirits transcend the capricious nature of fairies. They are typically closely associated with natural phenomena or locations. In addition, natural philosophers sometimes make contact with spiritual beings associated with “higher realms” and even abstract concepts.

Encounters with such beings should be rare and unnerving; most have great power and regard themselves as beyond mortal concerns. However, some are sympathetic, few are actually malicious, and they *are* a key to higher levels of magic. Each should be defined as an individual, with lots of interesting abilities and advantages.

DEVILS

While the “higher metaphysics” of the Known Lands remains obscure, Hell (p. 5) and its devils are demonstrably real. These beings are malicious and dangerous, although less formidable individually than their counterparts in many fantasy settings.

They are spirits who can *sometimes* travel to the mortal world (or the realm of ghosts). When they manifest physically, they can only manage one shape: bright red humanoid figures, somewhere between six inches and two feet tall, with wings, short horns, and chattering voices. In this guise, they scurry around, often seeming comical, even pathetic. However, they have an infinite capacity for petty malice.

Dealings with devils are a major taboo *everywhere*. Nonetheless, they are competent tempters, and cautionary tales

may dwell a little too much on the short-term benefits that mask the danger; this taboo is all too frequently broken. Hubristic warlocks and philosophers adopt overly subtle metaphysical ideas or think they can outwit Hell, and talk themselves into disaster. Other people are simply stupid or just plain evil.

Such devils are ST 2-8, DX 12, IQ 10, and HT 12, with HP and FP often increased by 50-100% over the primary statistic, Damage Resistance 5-10, and a Move of 8 on the ground or 16 when flying. They have powers of Insubstantiality and Invisibility and sometimes other powers, such as the ability to breathe fire or cause Unluckiness (via Affliction). They also have a powerful Dread of anything holy or sacred (including humans with True Faith), with a five-yard radius; even their powers cannot penetrate this protected zone.

CHAPTER FOUR

CHARACTERS

Once upon a time, there were three brothers who set out to make their fortune. One was clever, one was handsome, and one was lucky. Sadly, the clever one was shy, the handsome one was greedy, and the lucky one was forgetful. So, on the advice of their friends and relations, they set out together. For as everyone said, there was a chance that each of them could make up for the others' manifest deficiencies.

As they walked down the road, they fell to talking, then to arguing, and then to not talking to each other at all. So it was that at the next town, they each sought out a different inn, and each went to sleep and dreamed about making his fortune alone . . .

Most **Alchemical Baroque** PCs should be human. While members of various other species are technically playable,

the default style of plot in this setting should owe most to traditional fairy stories, which assume that humanity is their central focus.

Point Values

A 100-point base is perfectly reasonable for games in this setting. Indeed, lower starting points may be appropriate for fairy-tale “peasant lads making good.” More heroic adventures and those centered on higher levels of society can have PCs of 150 points or more. Any campaigns set among the great courts of the Known Lands might have more again, with a lot of those extra points going into Status and Wealth.

Having been condemned by Nature and Fortune to an active and restless life, in two months after my return I again left my native country . . .

– Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

Humans should mostly come across as quite straightforward in the **Alchemical Baroque** world. Occult or paranormal advantages related to spell-based magic are unavailable to human characters, as is Magic Resistance. Likewise, most “paranormal religious” advantages, such as Blessed and Faith Healing, are banned, although True Faith is permitted. Channeling and Medium are available, but not only are they not mandatory for witches or natural philosophers, they actually seem quite rare in those professions – which is why some natural philosophers hire talented mediums as assistants, tolerating their frequent eccentricities. Spirit Empathy is available, often taking the Specialized limitation, and it is useful for those who have dealings with the fairies. Destiny seems downright common.

See p. 10 for discussion of Magery (Path/Book) and Path/Book Adept – the advantages appropriate to a ritual magician.

GMs can feel free to set fairly tight limits on total disadvantage values for PCs; most are supposed to be ordinary-seeming human characters, at least at the start of play. However, fairy-tale heroes do sometimes have interesting and colorful peculiarities!

LANGUAGES

Major languages spoken in the Known Lands are *Greenspeech* in the Green Archipelago, *La Langue* in the Solar

Empire, *Norderwerten* in the Woodland Dukedoms and White Archipelago, and *Modern Golden* in the Golden Archipelago and the Southern Plains. Other languages and dialects may be found in minor kingdoms and remote provinces. Scholars frequently study *Old Gold* (also known as the *Classical Tongue*), as used in the Golden Empires, although it has no native speakers today. Merchants and explorers sometimes have a smattering of *Sutherlander* or various Transgogian tribal dialects. The remote corners of the world have dozens more languages, of course.

Reducing a characters' literacy level with his native language doesn't count against disadvantage limits, although illiteracy is rare among characters with Status 1 or higher.

CULTURAL FAMILIARITIES

One Cultural Familiarity covers all of the *Known Lands*. East of the Wall, *Transgogian* culture has its own Cultural Familiarity – a set of barbaric, nomadic traditions – while to the south, *Sutherlander* culture holds sway. Beyond the oceans, countless lands follow countless strange customs; the total number of Cultural Familiarities available in this world is impossible to estimate. Many apply only on a single small island, or in a single city deep in the jungle.

COMMON CHARACTER TYPES

The following are some plausible “adventurer” character types.

ARISTOCRAT

Younger sons of the nobility routinely set out to make their own way in the world, for instance by pursuing a military career or making a good marriage. Even oldest or only sons may have to pursue quests, petition at court on behalf of their families, or fight for their country or their family name.

An aristocrat always has Status and usually Wealth. In most cases, they may have been trained to run an estate or to fight as a cavalryman. Code of Honor (Gentleman’s) is common, though not universal.

NATURAL PHILOSOPHER OR MASTER WARLOCK

Students of higher and arcane powers, natural philosophers may be drawn into adventures that demand their specialized knowledge and skills, or the need for funds may lead them to the mercenary life of the freelance warlock.

In addition to the advantages and skills appropriate to their profession, scholars have enough standing in society to qualify for a level or two of Status. Most also have a range of scholarly mental skills, and they are often Curious.

PEASANT LAD

An archetypal fairy-tale hero, the sturdy young peasant may be boldly seeking fortune, or he may be a “holy fool” with a strange Destiny. Average to low Status, negligible Wealth, and a lack of sophisticated knowledge leave PCs with plenty of points to spend on attributes or advantages such as Fit.

PEDDLER

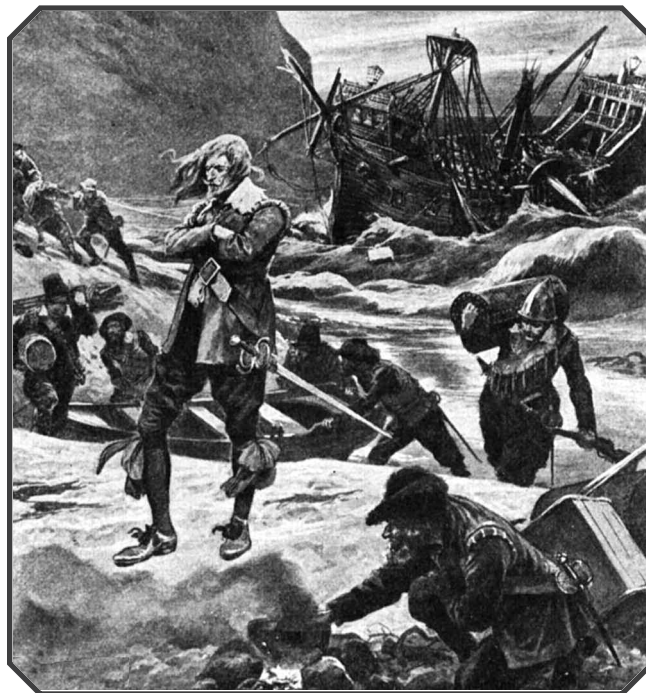
Wandering between villages, with one eye out for profit and the other scanning for danger, peddlers often have adventures even if they aren’t *looking* for trouble. A good IQ, Area Knowledge, Fast-Talk, and Merchant skill can go a surprisingly long way.

SAILOR

Bold to the point of recklessness, sailors are adventurers by default. They need Seamanship and Boating skills, of course; many possess Gunner (Cannon) and multiple levels of Fearlessness. Merchant seamen may learn Merchant skill; military sailors may acquire Axe/Mace, Guns (Pistol or Shotgun), or Shortsword. Either may have learned some specialization of Survival. Carousing and Brawling fill the time between voyages, sometimes leading to Alcoholism. Officers may know Leadership, Navigation, Shiphandling, Tactics, social skills, or a fencing weapon to go with their Rank and Status, while ships’ surgeons and carpenters have their own professional requirements.

SERVANT

Some servant PCs are faithful companions to higher-Status characters; others may be downtrodden kitchen skivvies. The luckiest of those latter have fairy godmother Patrons. Again, low Status and Wealth leave plenty of points for assorted abilities, including perhaps some job-related skills.



SOLDIER

While the serving soldier has little time out of barracks and away from the drill square – even in peacetime – the veteran bound for home, the straggler cut off from the army, the hero given leave as a reward, or the deserter all make fine PCs (especially if they somehow keep hold of their weapons).

Military training implies fair physical attributes, advantages such as Combat Reflexes and Fit, and skill in Savoir-Faire (Military) and Soldier as well as in weapons. An ordinary foot soldier has Guns (Musket) and Spear, while a grenadier has good strength, perhaps strictly average intelligence (or at least little imagination) combined with improved Will or Fearlessness, and Throwing and Shortsword skills. Cavalrymen having Riding (Horse), Broadsword, and maybe Guns (Pistol) or Lance. Artillerymen have Gunner (Cannon) and probably some combination of Animal Handling, Armoury, and Teamster.

NCOs and Officers

Along with appropriate Rank (if they are still with the colors), sergeants add Intimidation, Leadership, and possibly Teaching, while commissioned officers have Status, Broadsword (or a fencing skill), Riding, Savoir-Faire, and *maybe* Leadership, Strategy, and Tactics.

STUDENT

While the natural philosopher has mastered powerful arts, the student still has the freshness and vitality of youth. His mental skills may be patchy, but his IQ may suggest some promise, and his physical attributes can be respectable. Good Carousing skill is mandatory. Most students have some Status, and either a little Wealth or a wealthy Patron (usually family), but poor, determined scholars also exist.

WITCH OR CUNNING-MAN

Although most pragmatic rural magic-workers are too busy looking after their villages or their own interests, some

go adventuring to fight evil, aid friends, seek new materials for their workings, or acquire magical secrets.

In addition to Magery, Path/Book Adept, and appropriate specializations of Herb Lore and Ritual Magic, a witch probably has medical knowledge. Good witches (with a Sense of Duty to their neighbors) usually have social skills, a little Psychology, and perhaps Meteorology or Naturalist. Evil ones (typically with Bully, Lecherousness, or Megalomania) favor Intimidation, Poisons, and Stealth. Aerobatics and Flight skill are also quite popular; note that the flying witch needs to choose a “prop,” such as a broomstick. “Cunning-men” traditionally have similar skills with less power and more subtlety, while minor warlocks usually share the same powers but with less subtlety.

WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT

This setting is very late TL4; the GM may allow some characters to raise their personal tech level to 5 (or 4+1), or to take perks that permit them to take one or two skills at the higher TL. Available equipment is similar to that in the real world around 1720. Base starting wealth is \$3,000, possibly described in a bewildering variety of local currencies. Many characters, especially the wealthiest sorts, must put at least 80% of starting funds in a home, land, furniture, etc., as per p. B26. For example, a settled peasant, renting his farmland, may have Average Wealth, but with most of it tied up in the form of a cottage and tools. However, some poorer wandering adventurers can have entirely portable resources; in such cases, though, if the wanderer should lose much of his gear, he will be reduced to penury.

Flintlock firearms are the standard military weapons. Use the statistics for the flintlock pistol (p. B278) and flintlock musket (p. B279). Blunderbusses (p. B279) are mostly limited to use in shipboard boarding actions, although some stagecoach guards also carry them, especially if escorting mail, and something similar may also be used for hunting.

Crude grenades are used as a specialist weapon by armies of the Known Lands; reference the TL5 grenade details on p. B277. Grenadiers are troops selected to wield such things. They are typically big, strong fellows, chosen for the ability to throw a grenade a good long way, and they are generally very brave, if sometimes in an unimaginative way. They make excellent PCs, although they may need someone with more mental agility to point them in the right direction.

An infantryman’s socket bayonet costs \$2, weighs 1 lb., and takes four seconds to fix or detach. When it is fixed to a musket or blunderbuss, the combination can be used as a two-handed spear at -1 to skill (limited to Reach 1 with a

blunderbuss). A detached bayonet can be used as a large knife, but at -1 to skill due to the clumsy grip, and it can only be used to thrust, not to cut. If a bayonet is fitted, loading a firearm takes 10% longer, and shots are at -1 to hit due to poor balance.

Melee weapon types widely available in this setting include hatchets and axes (essentially tools), broadswords (the standard cavalry arm), smallswords (a gentleman’s weapon, mostly for lightness, convenience, and show), knives and daggers, lances (among a few cavalry), and shortswords (among artillerymen and grenadiers). Some infantry sergeants carry polearms as a badge of rank, but most lack the relevant skill to use them very effectively. Wood-cutters *always* wield two-handed axes.

Anything described in other *GURPS* historical technology sources as appearing by 1730 should usually be available in the Known Lands. Items specifically from early TL4 or before are likely to be rare and rusty, though. Armor and shields are generally considered to be out of date; anyone seeking to acquire such a thing in the course of a game may have to place a special order with a craftsman, with a marked-up price and ensuing delivery delay at the GM’s whim. The GM might go so far as to double or triple the standard prices, particularly for metal armor, or require adventurers to have an Unusual Background to have routine access to a supplier. However, a Status 3 or higher character might have some archaic items among his starting equipment, salvaged from the junk room or trophy gallery at home. Some fairies also wear willfully archaic plate armor, made of strange metals.

Luxury items – especially formal clothing, carriages, and banquets – have virtually no upper limit to cost. Wealth should be dazzlingly visible!

STATUS

Known Lands society is structured and formalized, although the old systems are failing a little these days. There are impoverished knights and aristocrats, and some peasants and merchants have wealth far above the norm for their class.

Use the *Cost of Living Table* on p. B265 for this setting. Status 8 is limited to the Solar Emperor, 7 is for a king, 6 is

for a prince or duke, 5 is for an earl or bishop, 4 is for a viscount or baron, 3 is for a knight, 2 is for a priest or lawyer, 1 is for a comfortable farmer or craftsman, 0 is for a typical small farmer or journeyman, -1 is for an “understairs” servant or poor peasant, and -2 fits beggars, vagrants, and “street scum.”

CHAPTER FIVE

CAMPAIGNING

Once upon a time, there was a soldier who didn't want to be a soldier any more. So he took off his uniform, and he said his polite goodbyes to his comrades and officers, and he sat down in an inn for one drink of beer, for the road. "I'm done with campaigning" he said as he nursed his beer. "I've fought my wars and suffered my wounds and now I want to go home to my old village and remain a farmer for the rest of my life."

"That's all very well" said his friend the merchant, who was sitting next to him, "but it's a long road we have to walk to get there, and doubtless there will be many distractions on the way. And you may be in for some surprises when you arrive. That's always the way of things."

"That's the truth" said their friend the witch. "And along the way, we'll have to persuade the Fairy Queen to let us pass."

That was news to the soldier and the merchant. But they didn't argue with the witch, because they knew that she knew things which they didn't. So they drank a toast to meetings on the road, and set out on their way . . .

This setting is partway between "standard fantasy" and the modern world, and campaigns and scenarios should reflect this fact. Characters may battle monsters and discover magical treasures; they may also engage in international espionage and explore strange new lands. Kings and princes rule most areas, but they do so through bureaucracies. Witches and warlocks have significant power, but it is to some extent the power of *science*; they must research and prepare, and they operate best out of well-stocked workrooms.

Infinite Baroque

In the *GURPS Infinite Worlds* setting, "Marchen-1" (a Quantum-3 world) is a puzzling place, with magical rules, beings, and geography that don't correspond directly to the supernatural laws of any other known parallel. It may have been as heavily disrupted by reality quakes as Madland, if not to quite such terrifying effect. As there is no worry of a Centrum incursion, Infinity has adopted a cautious, gradual study of the world, starting from a small "village" front established in the Woodland Dukedoms.

Some Homeline corporations would like to run tourist trips to Marchen-1, but Infinity thinks that would be a Bad Thing – any world with magic is automatically restricted, and besides, Paralabs is still trying to "fix" the last Scout group who encountered a fairy with an odd sense of humor. Between that and the errant crewman who brought a cat back with him (triggering a very discreet yet intense hunt), Infinity is handling this parallel with kid gloves.

CAMPAIGN TYPES

The following are some campaign patterns that can work well in this setting.

Seeking Destiny: Peasant youths and soldiers home from the wars go out on picaresque quests for fortune, often aided by witches and friendly fairies. Wandering the countryside or the great cities, they encounter human villains, fairy ogres, or magical wonders.

Spy vs. Spy: With the threat of war hanging over the Known Lands, black-cloaked agents jostle and plot. Alchemical secrets, military plans, and the names of traitors and secret friends are the treasures in such games, sought by agents, warlock-intelligencers, and the smarter class of aristocrat.

College Life: In great universities, students and philosophers carouse, debate, and occasionally study. Alchemical powers or ancient lore attract the interest of some; prospects of noble patronage are the immediate concern for others.

Gone for a Soldier: When war does break out, life may be harsh for the common soldier, but a clever lad can prosper, if he's prepared to bend a few regulations.

Away With the Fairies: Dealings with supernatural creatures are rarely safe, but sometimes, the rewards *almost* justify the risk. Just be careful about visiting fairyland.

The Age of Exploration: Take to the high seas! If the magic and mysteries of the Known Lands aren't enough, who knows what strangeness lies beyond the horizon?

SCENARIO SEEDS

Country House Mystery: PCs traveling in the Green Archipelago visit one of its great houses. Shortly after they arrive, the Householder turns up dead in a ditch. Suspected of murder themselves, the heroes must disentangle a web of greed, jealousy, inheritance, old lawsuits, and secret correspondence.

The Haunting: Crossing a windswept moor, the PCs are confronted by a ghost, which desires to resolve unfinished business from its life. But what rewards (or threats) can a ghost offer? How long ago did it die? Can a ghost's word be trusted?

Hall of Mirrors: Fate takes the PCs to the Palace of the Sun. Once there, they must thread the maze of the Solar bureaucracy, acquire patrons and allies, identify duplicitous enemies, and perhaps gain the favor of the Emperor himself – or foil his grandiose schemes of conquest.

Playing Godmother: The PCs encounter a fairy who serves as guardian to some innocent young NPC in a nearby town. Unfortunately, enemies have cast spells of warding that prevent her from entering the place. In return for the promise of fairy favor, can the PCs provide mundane substitutes for magical aid?

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The elfin maidens were already dancing on the elf hill, and they danced in shawls woven from moonshine and mist, which look very pretty to those who like such things. The large hall within the elf hill was splendidly decorated; the floor had been washed with moonshine, and the walls had been rubbed with magic ointment, so that they glowed like tulip-leaves in the light.

– Hans Christian Andersen, “The Elfin Hill”

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