

Supernatural Personifications as Characters

Some of the protagonists of the chronicles are not only nonhuman, but *very* supernatural. These include actual gods and anthropomorphic personifications (see pp. 291-304). In a campaign with generous starting points, it would be possible to take such beings as PCs – especially if the GM allows use of the full rules in the *GURPS Basic Set* and *GURPS Powers*. The small god template (pp. 144-145) could be a useful guide. There are even some weaker entities at the bottom end of the scale, such as Tooth Fairies (p. 303).

Whether this is a *good* idea is a serious question, its answer dependent on the GM's intentions for the game. Small gods, one-off fairies, and other manifestations of the Disc's flaky metaphysics have peculiar concerns and even more peculiar relationships with other beings – and often full-time occupations running cults or maintaining aspects of reality. Unless the campaign is going to be built around the entity's functions, this is probably too much of a distraction. On the other hand, if the campaign *is* all about that metaphysical work, everyone needs to decide what the *other* PCs are going to do. Will they be assistants, priests, or other supernatural beings with compatible duties?

Campaigns about the lives and work of personifications could be interesting and very *different*, but they aren't likely to be simple to run, and the PCs may well be quite complex in game terms. This sort of thing isn't recommended for first-time gamers or GMs.

New Personifications

Newly shaped personifications might be easier than playing something that's been around for millennia. Even on the Disc, though, it takes a great deal of belief and emotion to form a personification. An existing figure may have to be banished or suppressed for enough psychic energy to come free, and any subsequent rebalancing process tends to eliminate the new personifications. Still, some survive – mostly by chance. The last time new personifications were created was in the course of the story of *Hogfather*.

be interested in them.) Notably, goblins believe that some of their own body products – particularly snot, earwax, and nail clippings – are in a sense sacred, and they carefully collect and preserve them in “unggue pots” to be entombed with the goblin after death. Goblins make these containers for themselves, and all seem to possess an uncanny ability to create amazingly beautiful pots from whatever crude materials are to hand. This does them little good, though; no goblin would ever sell an unggue pot, and any found in the hands of other races have likely been stolen, usually after the owner-maker was slaughtered. Still, it's *just* possible that a sympathetic employer could persuade a goblin to apply some of this skill to more mundane work.

Stolen unggue pots may not be safe for humans. In particular, the finest – called “soul of tears,” made by female goblins who've been obliged by brutal necessity to eat their own infants – may have genuine supernatural power. There have been cases where humans who handled such pots found themselves possessed by a goblin spirit and unable to let go of the pot. The only way to save a human in this state from wasting away within a few days is to take him to a goblin community, where the spirit can find release.

Golems

438 points

Golems are supernaturally powered “robots.” They take the form of large, humanoid clay statues, clearly identifiable as pottery at a casual glance (and in fact partly hollow). They're superhumanly strong and surprisingly fast. Burning red lights glow from a golem's eyes – and from its mouth, if and when it speaks. Golems often end up repairing themselves, and most show signs of centuries of patching. A typical golem is about 8' tall (SM +1) and weighs on the order of 350 lbs.

Golems weren't created by magic as such, though there's evidence that some ancient wizards were able to build something similar. They're actually a product of *religion*. They were originally constructed by priests, holy men, or religious scholars who wanted to prove something about the power of words and to get some heavy work done. A given golem isn't empowered directly by any particular god, but by a holy word, written on parchment (its “chem”) and placed inside its hollow skull. Golems are made with hinged tops to their heads to facilitate this.

In any case, the secret of golem creation seems to have been lost to humanity for the last millennium (although some *golems* remember it). Modern priests insist that the creation of things that act like living beings is blasphemous, and ordinary Discworlders tend to agree. It's an open question whether this is a sign of insecurity, based on the fact that golems are much stronger than humans, but even trolls and undead look down on golems. There are *lots* of golems still around, however – more than many people realise. For example, quite a few can be found down drainage shafts, operating pumps continuously, day and night (golems use the rules under *Supernaturally Powered Beings*, p. 92).

Golems are initially bound to obedience by the power that creates them; details vary, but normal golems are absolutely law-abiding, and they were created as servants for their makers and anyone to whom they're lawfully assigned. The only common limitation on a golem's absolute obedience is the requirement that it take time off for some kind of minimal rituals on holy days of the religion which created it. Denied this, it simply stops working. (A golem can't be forced to do anything; neither threats, nor torture, nor actual destruction will make it diverge from its assignment.)

GOBLIN NPCs

A typical rural goblin may have a point in the *spoken* form of the local human (or dwarf) language, plus skills such as Axe/Mace, Camouflage, Climbing, Stealth, and Survival (Woodlands). Goblins' usual behaviours when other races are around involve running, hiding, and sneak thefts. If they must fight, they prefer quick, opportunistic attacks from behind, but may occasionally switch to berserk desperation.

UNGGUE

Traditional goblin “religion” is a reincarnation-based belief system called “Unggue.” (Goblins don't think that any god would



MAGICAL FORM SKILLS

A Magical Form is a “branch” of magic – skill at getting it to do useful things in one of eight different ways. The Forms are listed under *Magical Forms* (pp. 76-77). For examples of what each can do, see *The Forms* (pp. 202-217).

Which Forms you put points into indicates what sort of magic your character does best. This can reflect his personal interests or prejudices, or the nature of his particular style of magic. And this is where the system gets a bit abstract – while no student of magic on the Disc necessarily thinks in terms of these eight Forms, they can be used to represent a whole lot of loosely related things about magic.

Still, remember that *anyone* trained in magic can potentially use *any* Form – though perhaps not reliably. Some people with Magic skill know so little about certain Forms that they honestly don’t believe that they can use them, but that’s a personal error.

MAGIC POINTS

Magic Points (MP) represent the raw thaumaturgical *stuff* that you must use to produce all but the smallest effects. They aren’t exactly “energy,” but they often substitute for it; for example, by pumping more MP into a fireball, you can get it to do more damage. Sometimes, though, MP are less about raw horsepower and more about the degree to which a spell abuses the structure of reality.

It’s possible to pull raw magic out of the ether and put it into a spell as part of the casting process; long-winded ritual magic does this, and that’s sometimes the only way to get really powerful spells to work. However, individuals with Magery automatically accumulate a little raw magic around themselves – or can see and manipulate the raw magic that settles on anyone, which comes to the same thing – and can use it to power quick spells. Non-mages *can’t* do that; they can *only* get magic to work by using long-winded rituals.

To find the maximum number of MP which someone with Magery can carry about with him, add his Will to his Magery level, divide the sum by 3, and round to the nearest whole number. For example, Will 16 and Magery 0 give 5 MP, while Will 9 and Magery 2 give 4 MP.¹

Spending MP

When a magic-worker successfully casts a spell, he usually has to put a number of MP into it. Deduct this cost from his personal total and/or the total in his staff (if any); *Ritual Casting* (p. 200) and some other methods provide alternative MP sources. If the caster lacks sufficient MP, his spell fizzles and fails automatically.

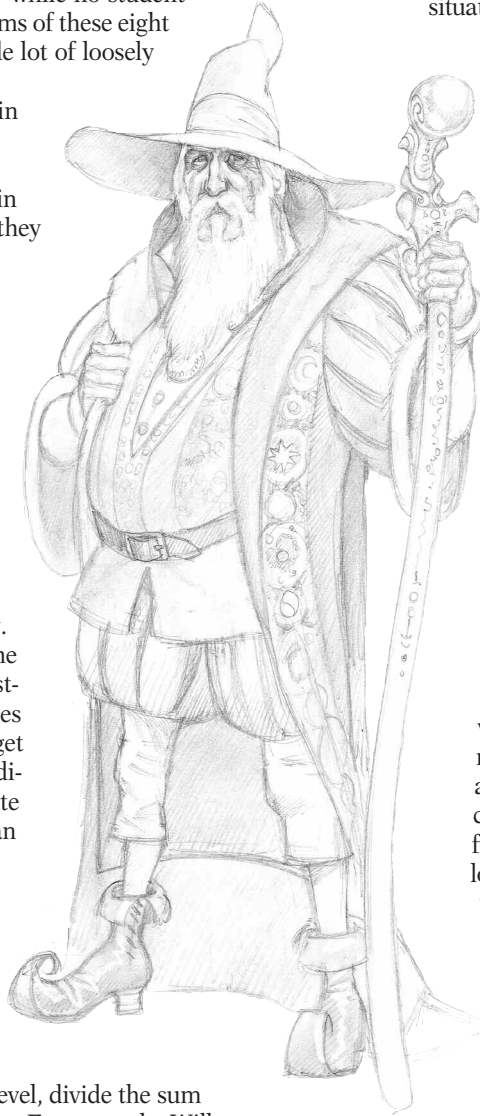
1. For atmospheric purposes, gamers can refer to Magic Points as “thaums” if they wish. It doesn’t really fit the Discworld meaning of the word (p. 270), but never mind. This looks right for wizard characters, less so for witches.

For further details, keep reading – *General Power Rules* (pp. 195-196) and *Casting the Spell* (pp. 198-200) are especially relevant.

Recovering MP

If you have fewer than your maximum number of MP, thanks to having used them to cast spells, you regain them at a rate of 1 MP per 10 minutes. If you’ve used up some of your staff’s MP, these recover at the same rate, *separately* and *simultaneously*.

Neither you nor your staff can recover MP in areas or situations where magic doesn’t work, though.



THE WIZARD’S STAFF

Wizards never regard their personal MP reserve as enough, so they’ve come up with a way to augment it: the magic staff. Every fully qualified wizard has one of these – one is formally presented to each student graduating from Unseen University, and a recognised wizard can take a personal student who has attained graduate level to UU and request that he receive a staff. It acts as a Magic Point “battery.” No wizard can have more than one working staff attuned to him at a time.

A standard staff can hold MP equal to the wizard’s IQ + Magery level; the Superior Staff advantage (p. 47) adds to that. A wizard can tap his staff for MP so long as it’s within two yards of his person and not being held by anybody else. In addition, a spell that requires the wizard to *touch* an opponent or object works just as well if he touches it with his staff. Further, magical telekinesis and similar effects can’t affect a wizard’s staff so long as it’s in physical contact with him. Enemy wizards can fireball the heck out of each other and then loot the body, or even hurl each other around with magical force if they can get a lock-on, but magical disarming doesn’t work.

A wizard PC gets his staff for free, without spending cash, and it has the nice bonus that it also works just fine as a support while taking long meditative walks, and as six foot of bashing weapon. A typical staff is made of oak or ash; sapient pearwood (p. 158) is highly desirable but *rare*. A *very* few wizards in the past had metal staffs, which held eminently adequate charges of energy and were certainly durable, but the magic in those tended to become dangerously corrupt – and anyway, that trick has been lost these days.

Losing Your Staff

A wizard would have to be *extremely* careless to lose his staff by accident – although he might deliberately break his staff, as a way of formally giving up magic (sometimes to get married). However, a staff can sometimes be taken away, or hacked apart by opponents. Striking a staff in combat requires an attack at -3 to hit. The wielder can attempt to dodge or parry, the latter representing deflecting the attack in a way that doesn’t damage the staff. A staff has DR 5 and can sustain 12 HP of damage before break-



Other Items

The GM who wants to throw *odd* magical items into the game is free to do so – the Disc *does* have a long history of eccentric tinkering. Two examples appear below.

Seven-League Boots

A search round UU's museum will turn up one or two pairs of Seven-League Boots, kept for emergencies and to illustrate to students why high-powered magic isn't always a good idea. The Boots enable the wearer to teleport up to 21 miles with a single step, at a cost of 1 FP. However, this requires careful control; roll against IQ+Magery, at a penalty equal to encumbrance level, for each step (at the GM's option, distractions may give *further* penalties). On a failure, roll vs. DX, again penalised by encumbrance level; success indicates that the wearer

restrains the attempt at the last unstable moment, merely losing the FP, while failure means he succeeds in placing one foot 21 miles ahead of the other without properly controlling the dimension shifts. Anyone observing the latter outcome must make a Fright Check. The wearer himself is very, very dead.

Tiny Salad Bar Bowl of Holding

Invented by a student from UU's Faculty of Thaumic Engineering when an Ankh-Morpork restaurant (briefly) instituted an "All you can get in the bowl for 10 pence" offer, the Bowl of Holding can retain up to three tons in a pocket dimension, without becoming any heavier to carry. However, it only works for lettuce and tomato.

Magic Levels

The Discworld is obviously very magical, but exactly *how* magical varies from place to place. While no regions are entirely lacking in magic – that would be impossible – there are certainly areas where there's more of the stuff. Occasionally, this is raw creative energy, generated by some cosmic power; more often, it's *residual magic* (p. 270). Sometimes it indicates a weakness in the structure of reality – the magic is seeping through – and in other cases it causes such a weakness by abrasion. Either way, the effects are much the same.

SIGNS AND PORTENTS

Zones of residual magic vary in area from the county-sized region dominated by the Wyrmborg (pp. 233-234) to small clearings in old-growth forests. There can be no *simple* examples; they all have *personality*, which as anyone who has been sold a crumbling old house by a silver-tongued property dealer can attest, isn't entirely a good thing in a piece of geography. The only sure way to judge their exact extent is by experiment or use of spells or magical instruments, and it's perfectly possible to wander into danger without realising it, but there are often indicators. All such zones should be custom-designed by the GM, with their own quirks, including possible warnings.

The most obvious hints may include a greasy feel to the air and stray sparks of various colours (including octarine) appearing around people's fingernails. These might be obvious to all parties (a *very* strong sign) or only to observers with Magery. Some areas are in perpetual twilight; others are sweltering hot, or freezing cold. Slightly less self-evident, but usually quickly noticeable, are distortions in probability: coins landing on their edges, flying pork (living or cooked), and so on.

Other indicators are the magic's longer-term effects. Natural effects may again be blatant (six-legged rabbits, teleporting ducks, talking trees, and so on), or they might require a successful Naturalist skill roll to spot (such as bushes with the wrong

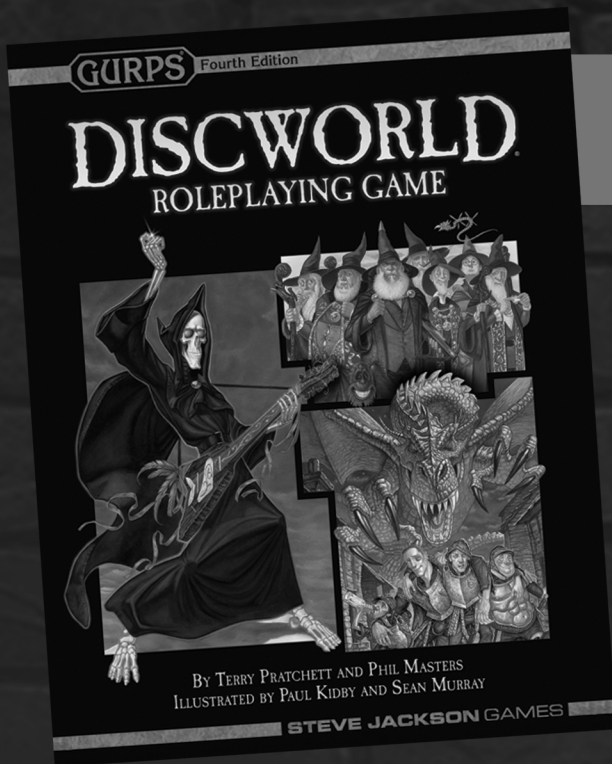
type of fruit, or birds which sing perfect scales). The GM should be imaginative rather than cruel; apples filled with prussic acid are boring, while apples loaded with lysergic acid are *interesting*. Dangerous zones tend to be plastered with large Keep Out notices, signed by famous senior wizards. Sadly, that may be counterproductive. Senior wizards are terrible at explaining their reasons, leaving younger wizards with a natural, often accurate – but more often fatal – suspicion that the old swine are hogging the good stuff.

Lastly, architectural indicators are the result of humans (or other races) being foolish enough to exploit the effect. The traditional witch's gingerbread cottage needs lots of magic to stay intact. Rather less amusing are Twisted Blasphemous Chthonic Temples dedicated to Unspeakable Beings From Beyond Sanity. Such Beings are most likely to show up in these sorts of areas (needing the magic for sustenance, or the associated weak dimensional barriers for ease of manifestation), and somehow acquire a fan club with a taste for heavy, dank pillars and ample cellar space.

In other words, the GM ought to be creative with such regions, and possibly poetic, but more often creatively destructive. With an increased risk of critical failures to worry about, witches and wizards should learn caution. If their casting skills are too high for this to present a serious problem, the GM can always rule that, as they move deeper into an unstable zone, they must roll against IQ at -5 to stop *any* casting from also generating the equivalent of a critical failure.

Incidentally, in a few *highly* magic-saturated zones, such as the immediate vicinity of Cori Celesti (p. 242), any attempt at working magic is akin to lighting a match in a room full of explosive vapours. The GM should always make sure that at least some members of the party realise this – otherwise, you're just going to kill off the lot of them without warning, which is no fun. If a few of them don't, though, you can have the amusing sight of wizards A and B screaming and dog-piling wizard C when he starts muttering and twiddling his fingers.





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