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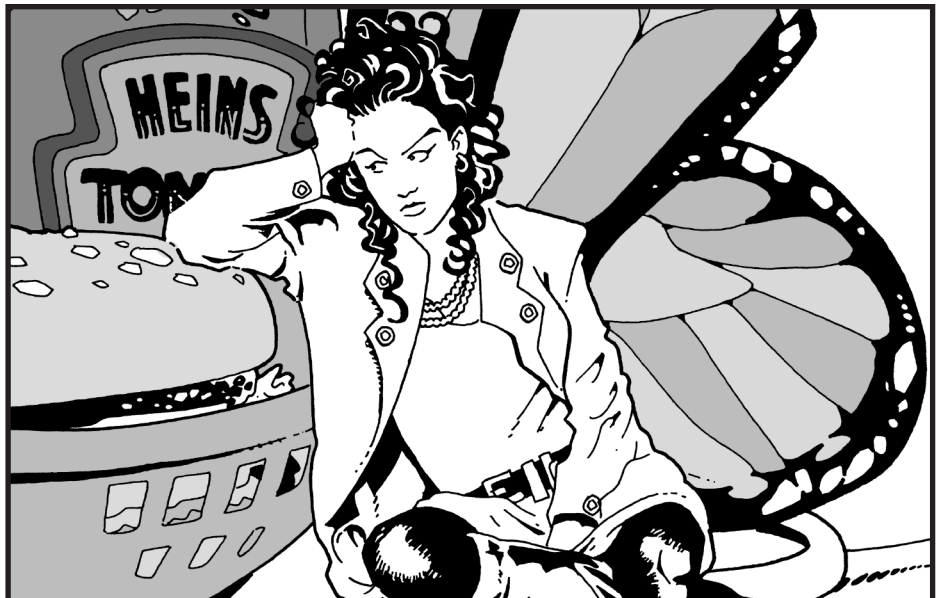
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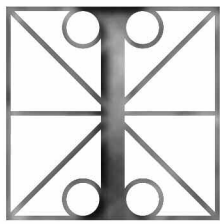
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INTRODUCTION

GURPS stands for “Generic Universal RolePlaying System.” The name was originally a joke . . . a code-word to describe the game while we looked for a “real” name. Years went by – literally! – as the game developed. We never found a better name. **GURPS** may sound strange, but it really fits.

“*Generic.*” Some people like quick, fast-moving games, where the referee makes lots of decisions to keep things moving. Others want ultimate detail, with rules for every contingency. Most of us fall somewhere in between. **GURPS** starts with simple rules, and – especially in the combat system – builds up to as much *optional* detail as you like. But it’s still the same game. You may all use it differently, but your campaigns will all be compatible.

“*Universal.*” The basic rule system emphasizes realism. Therefore, it can fit any situation – fantasy or historical, past, present or future. I’ve always thought it was silly for game companies to publish one set of rules for fantasy, another one for Old West, another one for science fiction and another one for super-powers. **GURPS** is *one* set of rules that’s comprehensive enough to let you use *any* background. There are world-books and supplements that “fine-tune” the generic system for any game-world you want. But they *are* still compatible. If you want to take your Wild West gunslinger and your WWII commando and go fortune-hunting in Renaissance Italy . . . go for it!

“*RolePlaying.*” This is not just a hack-and-slash game. The rules are written to make true roleplaying possible – and, in fact, to encourage it. **GURPS** is a game in which you take on the persona of another character – and pretend, for a little while, to *be* that character.

“*System.*” It really is. Most other RPGs are *not* “systems” – they started out as a simple set of rules, and then were patched and modified, ad infinitum. That makes them hard to play. **GURPS** is a unified whole. We’ve gone to a great deal of effort to make sure that it all works together, and it all *works*. **GURPS** will let you create any character you can imagine, and do anything you can think of . . . and it all makes sense.



I’ve wanted to do this game for a long, long time. Several years ago, I designed my first fantasy roleplaying system.* It was good, but it had flaws. For one thing, like other RPGs, it “grew” from a simple set of rules, and had many inconsistencies. And, though it had the potential to be a universal system, it was never developed past the basic “fantasy” game-world. When the publisher went out of business, the game went out of print. I was disappointed . . . but it motivated me to start on a new and better system.

I’ve never tried to design in a vacuum; every game builds on the ones that came before. We learn from our successes – and from the successes of others. I think the best games are those that are simple, clear and easy to read, and I’ve tried hard to make **GURPS** “friendly.” One important influence was Hero Games’ *Champions*, for the flexibility of its character-creation system. Another was Flying Buffalo’s *Tunnels & Trolls*, for its appeal to solitaire gamers. Finally, M.A.R. Barker’s *Empire of the Petal Throne* is noteworthy for the detail and richness of its alien game world.

But there’s more to **GURPS** than trying to repeat past success. The failures of earlier game systems are important, too. In **GURPS**, I’ve tried to achieve several things I think earlier designs missed.

**The Fantasy Trip* (Metagaming), comprising several products released from 1977 to 1980.

How to Learn GURPS

Most of you have some experience with roleplaying games already. You should find **GURPS** easy to pick up. But if this is your first RPG, you’ll have a little more to learn. Relax; if you got this far, you’ll be fine.

Don’t be alarmed by the thickness of the book. There’s a lot of material here – 250,000 words, more or less – but we’ve done our best to make it easy to use. Both the Table of Contents and the Index are as detailed as we could manage.

Several features have been designed specifically to make the rules easier to learn. These include:

The *Quick-Start* section (p. 9). This is a one-page description of the basic **GURPS** game mechanics.

The *Glossary* (p. 250). This is a listing of definitions of the terms used in the game, along with page references.

“*All In A Night’s Work*,” the introductory solo adventure, which starts on p. 218. This adventure is designed for one player (no Game Master is needed). You can play it as one of the pre-generated characters (pp. 214-217), even if you don’t yet know the rules. It’s written to help you learn as you go; it can also be used by an experienced GM to teach the game to friends.

Here’s a good way to learn **GURPS**: Start by skimming through this book, just to get the flavor of the game. Don’t worry about the details yet.

Then read the *Quick-Start* section to understand the basic game mechanics. After that, read through the *Characters* section, just to get an idea of the different things characters can do.

Then play *All In A Night’s Work*. Any time something is unclear, use the *Glossary* or *Index* to find the rule sections you need.

Then try creating your own character, and play again. Try to design a 100-point character that can best survive the adventure.

Finally, read the rest of the rules in detail, including Chapter 21, *Game Mastering*. Now you can be the GM and run a few of your friends through the solo adventure . . . either one at a time, or all cooperating at once to play the thief! You’ll find that you already know enough to get along, and you’ll learn fast. These rules were designed to fade into the background and let you play the way *you* want to.

Now you’re ready to invent your own adventures – see Chapter 23. You can do whatever you want . . . that’s the whole point of the system.

Have fun!