

GURPS®

Fourth Edition

DISCWORLD®

ROLEPLAYING GAME



BY TERRY PRATCHETT AND PHIL MASTERS
ILLUSTRATED BY PAUL KIDBY AND SEAN MURRAY

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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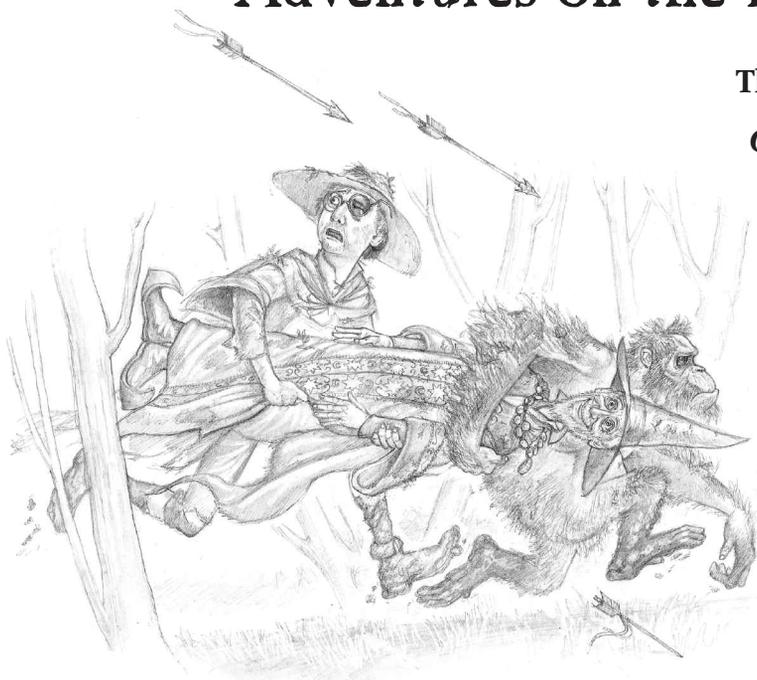
Adventures on the Back of the Turtle

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INTRODUCTION

Somewhere . . .

There is a flat, circular world which rests on the backs of four elephants, which in turn stand on the back of a giant turtle, which swims through space. Magic works here. Well, most of the time. Some of the time, anyway. There are gods and heroes.

It is a fantasy world, albeit with odd similarities to our own, and a setting for fantasy stories. Some of these stories have been told over the last quarter-century or so in a series of novels – and the occasional short story, novella, and so on – by Terry Pratchett. (For convenience, this body of stories is hereafter referred to as *the chronicles*.) The **Discworld Roleplaying Game** enables you to create Discworld stories of your own, in the form of games, with the collaboration of your friends.

The Discworld is a comedy setting, but with room for occasional bits of tragic relief. Hence, this book is about running comedy games, and getting the atmosphere right. But these stories are also about people, and stories told and games played in this setting can be as complex and character-driven as any you could set anywhere else.

So dive in. Don't eat the meat pies, don't frighten the swamp dragons, and be careful how you refer to the Librarian.

What Is a Roleplaying Game?

As some Discworld fans who buy this book may not know much about these “roleplaying game” things, a word of explanation is in order.

Non-computer roleplaying games (RPGs) – sometimes called “tabletop” or “pencil-and-paper” RPGs – go back to the 1970s, preceding the Discworld by just a few years. They've sometimes been described as “collaborative improvised radio drama”; a group of people get together, take the parts of characters, and create a story by describing what happens and what those characters do in response to events. But it's just as accurate (somewhat, but not very) to compare them to computer games, including “first-person shooters” and, yes, “roleplaying games”; the game provides an environment, in which each player operates one character, usually an adventurous sort, who can go through the game world, exploring or fighting or trading or talking to other characters. Apart from anything else, unlike radio dramas but like computer games, tabletop RPGs have rules and systems to determine whether the characters succeed or fail in their actions.

An important way in which RPGs differ from either of those other things, though, is in the presence of a Game Master (GM). Like the designer of a computer game, the GM defines settings, creates situations to which the player characters (PCs) must respond, and manages the use of the rules. Unlike a computer-game designer, however, the GM is present in person; among other things, he gets to play all the non-player characters (NPCs), giving them dialogue and personality. He's a bit like the director of that radio drama, except that he plays characters – often *many* characters – and he doesn't have the right to *tell* anyone else what to do, although he does make rules decisions and subtly steer events to keep the story interesting.

And that's why tabletop RPGs are so exciting. As there are humans on both sides of things, every character can have personality and individual mannerisms. Since the GM has the freedom to make decisions and improvise, the PCs can go off track or try unexpected tricks – but because there are rules and systems, things are fair, and the PCs' successes have the taste of real victories. You can fight monsters if you want, and those fights can be as exciting as in any computer game or radio play, but you can also talk, trade, or sneak around, and that's just as important as fighting, if you want it to be.

“How can you hope to win without sacrificing the occasional pawn?”

“Oh, I never play to win.”
She smiled. “But I do play not to lose.”

*– Fate and the Lady,
in Interesting Times*



ROLEPLAYING ON THE DISC

The **Discworld Roleplaying Game** does what it says; it enables you to play an RPG with the Disc as its game world. Over the decades and dozens of novels, the Disc has developed into a huge and detailed setting – an ideal location for roleplaying. (Actually, it's a whole *collection* of settings, from the scholar-pirate nation of Krull to the jungle kingdoms of Howondaland, the snows of the Ramtops, the swamps of Genua, the ancient Agatean Empire, and the Fourecksian Outback.) At the same time, the legion of readers who've enjoyed the chronicles provide a ready-made supply of players who are familiar with the world, and who therefore won't need many explanations before they start – although it's perfectly possible to play here without having read any of the stories, and indeed to treat a game as your introduction to the Disc.

The only snag with this is that some people may feel intimidated by the idea of creating their own stories in a setting with so much depth, which people love so much. Please don't! The Disc is meant to be a place for readers to enjoy, where stories happen. The entire point of this book is to help you have fun making up your own.

THE GURPS RULES

This game uses a set of rules based on the current (fourth) edition of **GURPS**, the *Generic Universal RolePlaying System*, from Steve Jackson Games. See Chapters 2-5 for these. **GURPS** is versatile and allows you to define characters in enough detail to make them interesting individuals, with real advantages and problems, and unique abilities, skills, and flaws.



There are plenty of other **GURPS** books (starting with the two-volume **Basic Set**, which contains a more comprehensive set of rules), which will be of interest to those who want to get deeper into the system or who desire more detail in particular areas of play. See the Bibliography (pp. 402-403).

WHAT ELSE YOU WILL NEED

To use the rules, you'll need at least three ordinary six-sided dice, pencils, and scratch paper. You may want to run off a few photocopies of the blank character sheet on p. 24 (you have our permission to do so for your personal use) – at least one copy per player – or download a similar sheet from the Steve Jackson Games website and print copies of that. Other Discworld-related books are of course strongly recommended; again, see the Bibliography (pp. 402-403).

This Book

The first chapter of the **Discworld Roleplaying Game** is a basic introduction to the Discworld, for the benefit of gamers who don't know the setting well and anyone who wants a refresher. Chapters 2-5 are about the *game* part, providing most of the rules. The next five chapters explore the setting in greater detail, with

reference to those game mechanics; they cover society, nonhuman races, geography, the supernatural side, major characters from the chronicles, and animals. Chapter 11 puts everything together, discussing how to run games set on the Disc, and illustrating this with a number of example settings and adventures. The book wraps up with a bibliography.

PUBLICATION HISTORY

The original **Discworld Roleplaying Game** was released in 1998, initially under the title **GURPS Discworld**, and was followed in 2001 by a companion volume, **GURPS Discworld Also**. The book in your hands is the second edition, which combines content from both of those earlier works, adds material from the latest novels, updates the rules to the most recent version of **GURPS**, and includes a new magic system. All of which should answer the question of *why* there's a new edition – the Discworld doesn't stand still, and neither do we.

This book refers to all of the “adult” Discworld novels published up to the time of writing, plus a few short stories and such. For practical and stylistic reasons, though, it doesn't encompass any of the “younger readers” books set on the Disc.

Some Warnings

Spoiler Alert: We don't set out to spoil anyone's pleasure in the chronicles, or to give away the plots gratuitously. We'd rather that you read and enjoyed everything. However, it's impossible to talk about the current state of the Disc without mentioning how things got that way and how important events turned out. In other words, reading this book from cover to cover means you're in for fewer surprises if you read the novels later.

What It's Not: This book isn't an attempt to retell the entire history of the Discworld, or even the entire history-so-far of the chronicles. It merely attempts to give a feel for most parts of the Disc, with some interesting specifics.

About the Authors

Phil Masters has been roleplaying and writing for RPGs for more than three-fifths of his life, which is a thought he finds . . . very strange. He is the author, co-author, or compiler of several books for **GURPS** and other RPGs (including **Champions**, **Ars Magica**, and **Eclipse Phase**), and is line editor for the **Transhuman Space** hard-SF, near-future **GURPS** sub-line. He lives in England with a wife who is smarter than him and a computer which he still suspects of ambition.

Terry Pratchett, it turns out, wrote his first RPG scenario when Phil Masters was still running around the playground. It had a toilet in it. It also had an intelligent box called The Luggage, which walked around on legs. Some ten years later, when he had the idea of writing a fantasy novel that'd be an antidote to too many bad fantasy books, he remembered it . . .

Since then, the Discworld series has sold about 85 million copies (but who's counting?) in 38 languages worldwide, the books have achieved bestseller status in the U.K. and U.S. mainstream lists. *Sir Terry* was knighted for services to literature by Queen Elizabeth II. His numerous awards include a Carnegie Medal, Locus Awards, and an Andre Norton Award, while his documentaries have garnered a Grierson Award, several BAFTAs, and an International Emmy.

(More) 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:

New supplements and adventures. **GURPS** continues to grow – see what's new at gurps.sjgames.com.

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Internet. Visit us on the World Wide Web at sjgames.com for errata, updates, Q&A, and much more. To discuss **GURPS** with our staff and your fellow gamers, visit our forums at forums.sjgames.com. The web page for the **Discworld Roleplaying Game** can be found at gurps.sjgames.com/discworld.

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.

